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This paper is one of a growing number in nursing research to use experiences from a research study to examine broader methodological issues. In this case, the experiences and insights of a researcher struggling with the problem of when and how to use the literature in grounded theory are used very effectively to illuminate wider issues about theoretical sensitivity.

The use of Benner's work on the development of expertise is very cleverly employed, not only to inform theory-building in the substantive area of the research (the transition from student to staff nurse), but also to illustrate ideas about the expert researcher and the ways that she brings her wider experience to bear on theory development. This leads on to a welcome discussion of 'diverse reading' and the ways in which theorists tend to restrict themselves to the 'relevant' literature and their own 'pet theories'. The author makes an appeal for theorists and researchers to read much more widely, and makes the valid point that it is not until we have done so that we are truly in a position to decide what really is relevant. In the case of nurse researchers, I would suggest that this entails reading well outside of our narrow disciplinary boundaries.

As the discussion broadens out, it begins to take on a significance beyond grounded theory to encompass all qualitative, and perhaps even quantitative, methodologies. For example, the exploration of inductive and deductive theoretical sensitivity highlights the reflexive nature of all research and the impossibility of coming to a study in a purely objective frame of mind. Not only does our prior reading inevitably influence our approach to the project, but as the author points out, the emerging theory from the project also influences what we subsequently read and what we consider to be significant to our own study.

The strength of this paper is the way that the author's own studies are used both as sources of these emerging ideas and theories, and also as illustrations of how they work in practice. The case of 'Dick' works particularly well in describing the way that the author embraced the challenge presented by the existing literature to her emergent theory, and how existing theories might, or might not, shape the theory emerging from the researcher's own data.

Overall, this paper makes some new and significant contributions to our understanding of a very difficult, contested and elusive concept in grounded theory, and does so in a way that is true to the grounded-theory ethos. The focus of the paper

is the influence of the existing literature on the emerging theory, and thus the author presents and challenges the writing of eminent grounded theorists by contrasting it with her own data and experiences of conducting her own study. As with all successful grounded theory, the outcome is some tentative new theoretical constructs.