

Grounded Theory : An overview

Prof. M.Pradhan
Department of Psychology
Lucknow University
Lucknow.

Outline

- What is Grounded Theory ?
- What is it aimed at ?
- How did it begin ?
- How did it evolve ?
- Its present form
- How does it see the researcher and the researched ?
- Important Procedures
- An overview
- Outcome
- References

What is Grounded Theory ?

- Logically consistent set of data collection and analytic procedures aimed to develop a theory.
- Grounded theory methods consist of a set of inductive strategies for analyzing data.
- We start with individual cases, incidents or experiences and develop progressively more abstract conceptual categories to synthesize, to explain and to understand the data and to identify patterned relationship within it.

What is it aimed at ?

- Grounded theory is a methodology that seeks to construct theory about issues of importance in peoples' lives.
- The overarching research goal is to understand the social processes that underlie a phenomenon in socially or experientially relevant domains of human life.

How did it begin ?

The origin of grounded theory can be traced back to the work of Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in 1967 in their book -*Awareness of Dying*

Although it originated in the field of sociology, it has gained wide popularity in the fields of nursing, anthropology, psychology, medical sciences etc.

How did it evolve ?

- Grounded theory's stance toward inquiry evolved from objectivism to constructivism (Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006).
- There are three major approaches to GT :
 1. Glaser's Classical Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967)
 2. Straussian Grounded Theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990)
 3. Constructivist Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2000)

Grounded Theory Definition

Glaser and Strauss(1967)

- GT is the discovery of theory from data systematically obtained from social research.
- The strategy used in this discovery process is method of constant comparative analysis.
- The purpose of GT is to explain the data (concepts)

Grounded Theory Definition

(Strauss and Corbin 1990)

- GT is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents (instead of starting out with a theory and proving it)
- Data, analysis and theory are constantly interacting (having a “dialogue” with each other not isolated but are parts of a conversation)
- The purpose of using GT method is to develop a theory from the data being examined (theory fits what is seen in the data)

Constructivist Grounded Theory (Charmaz,2000))

Philosophical Underpinnings

• Constructivism

Begins with the premise that the human world is different from the natural, physical world and therefore must be studied differently (Guba & Lincoln, 1990).

Constructivists study the multiple realities constructed by people and the implications of those constructions for their lives and interactions with others.

• Symbolic Interactionism

A dynamic theoretical perspective that views interpretation and action as reciprocal processes, each affecting the other, recognizes that we act in response to how we view our situations.

Constructivist Grounded Theory....contd.

- Places priority on the studied phenomenon and sees both data and analysis as created from shared experiences and relationships with participants and other sources of data.
- Seeks to learn how , when, and to what extent the studied experience is embedded in larger and, often, hidden structures, networks, situations and relationships (e.g. Clarke, 2005).

Basic Principles

- Simultaneous data collection and analysis,
- Pursuit of emergent themes through early data analysis,
- Discovery of basic social processes within the data,
- Inductive construction of abstract categories that explain and synthesize these processes,
- Sampling to refine the categories through comparative processes,
- Integration of categories into a theoretical framework that specifies causes, conditions, and consequences of the studied processes.

(Charmaz, 2003)

Grounded Theory: Getting Started

Getting Started: Asking the Research Question

Two concerns:

C1: Finding a researchable question that is flexible enough to allow for in-depth investigation (Broad)

C2: Narrowing down the question enough to allow us to work with it.

A: Based on the nature of grounded theory a research question starts out broadly but then in the data analysis stage (remember the “dialogue”), the question narrows and becomes a statement that specifically identifies what is being studied

Getting started: Theoretical Sensitivity

Theoretical sensitivity: The ability to understand what is going on with data; what is relevant and what is not; having insight; found in the researcher; it is conceptual

- Takes place before analysis of data and during the analysis of data.

Getting Started: Theoretical Sensitivity

Sources of Theoretical Sensitivity:

- Professional experience
- Personal experience of an event
- Analysis process itself: become sensitive to concepts, meanings and relationships
- Literature

Getting Started: Theoretical Sensitivity

Theoretical sensitivity is a good thing in that it helps us connect what we know to what we don't know about what we are studying (awareness of our biases)

Forces us to step back and make sure what we are truly seeing is FOUND in the data.

Think of it as a “grounding tool” for conducting grounded theory...

Getting Started: The Role of Literature Reviews

Debate on whether or not to read existing literature before conducting one's study

- Most suggest reading beforehand to gain minimal knowledge in the beginning stage of your research project and increase literature reading/knowledge during the data analysis stage because the data itself will lead you to further literature about “what you are seeing” (“dialogue”)

Review of Getting Started Section

- Asking the research question- broad to narrow due to the nature of GT
- Theoretical sensitivity- to keep you on track and focused on what the data is saying
- Role of literature- can review minimally before your study and then the data will show you what to research further

Doing Grounded Theory: An Example

Doing Grounded Theory

Two exemplary articles we will be looking at:

Noonan, B.M., Gallor, S.M., et al. (2004). Challenge and success: A qualitative study of the career development of highly achieving women with physical and sensory disabilities. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 51(1), 68-80. (actual study)

Fassinger, R.E. (2005). Paradigm, praxis, problems, and promise: Grounded theory in counseling psychology. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 52(2), 156-166.

Doing Grounded Theory: Asking the Research Question

Broad Question: RQ: What are the career experiences of women with sensory and physical disabilities who have achieved vocational success? (what does it look like)

Huge question - they have not focused on any particular factors of success (external and internal factors) although some are known from reading the literature.

Doing Grounded Theory: Theoretical Sensitivity

Theoretical Sensitivity :

- All female research team. Two members with hidden disabilities were on the team.
- Held extensive discussions as a research team on research expectations and biases
- Researched literature and were aware that of little research done on the career development of women with disabilities the research focused on obstacles

Doing Grounded Theory: Coding

Three steps of coding are used in Grounded Theory:

- Open Coding
- Axial Coding
- Selective Coding

Doing Grounded Theory: Text example to code

Fassinger article: p. 160 upper right hand corner

3 different women responding to, "How they thought about their disability."

Participant responses

Fassinger article: p. 160 upper right hand corner

- “The adjustment process is a lifetime project.”
- “I should have picked up the pieces and made the adjustment, and not dwell on it...You have to work through a lot of stuff in a continuing way.”
- “There is no adjustment process... There is no sense of not being whole if this is how you are born.”

OPEN CODING

Coding

Naming segments of data with a label that simultaneously categorizes, summarizes, and accounts for each piece of data.

Coding is the first step in moving beyond concrete statements in data to making analytic interpretations.

Doing Grounded Theory: Coding

OPEN CODING

First level coding- gives units meaning based on labeling concepts. Focus on the words of the participants. Unit to analyze varies from an individual word, line-by-line, several sentences or paragraphs; (circle words, reflective memos about potential interpretations of data)

- “adjusting to disability occurs over a lifetime” (AB, 47- the way they coded answers)
- “adjusting to disability is an ongoing process”
- “no adjustment process due to being born with a disability”

Doing Grounded Theory: Coding

Open Coding: next step

Organize relationships among and between Categories (concepts become categories)

“Adjustment to Disability”

- Over lifetime
- Ongoing process
- No adjustment

AXIAL CODING

Example of Doing Grounded Theory: Axial Coding

AXIAL CODING

Second step of coding: Identify Properties and dimensions of categories (key categories subsume sub categories & specify interrelationships). Constant comparative method used. Saturation reached when no new information appears about categories or their properties

Previous category: “Adjustment to disability” (result of open coding)

Category:

“Disability Identity”

- Disability adjustment process
- Acquisition/development of disability

Example of Doing Grounded Theory: Axial Coding Cont.

Properties of “Disability Identity”

- “Acquisition/development of disability”
- “Disability Adjustment Process”

Dimensions:

Congenital birth _____ Acquired in
adulthood

No Adjustment _____ ongoing
adjustment

Example of Doing Grounded Theory: Axial coding Cont.

“Acquisition/development of disability” & “Disability Adjustment Process”

Congenital birth _____ Acquired in
adulthood

No Adjustment _____ ongoing
adjustment

Can see relationship and connection between properties
and dimensions of acquisition and adjustment process

Example of Doing Grounded Theory: Axial Coding Cont.

Category groupings:

- “Disability Identity” with Gender identity;
racial/ethnic/cultural identity

Broader Category of “Identity constructs”

Other constructs that came out of the data

- Family influences; career attitudes and
behaviors; disability impact

Continue this process until saturation (no new
relationships among categories pop up)

SELECTIVE CODING

Example of Doing Grounded Theory: Coding cont.

Selective Coding

Final stage of coding: Where we create
substantive theory from “core” categories”

- Generate category that integrates all other
categories (tells the whole story)
- Theory shows up as either diagrams or
narratives (broad question now becomes your
statement about what is found)

Example of Doing Grounded Theory: Core Story of the Data

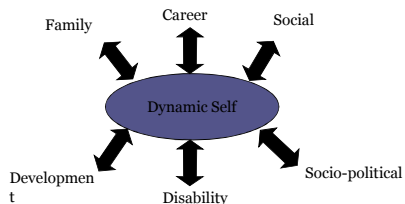
Meetings held with all research team members
and they each came up with a model/theory

Dynamic Self was the core story (category) and it
was made up of 6 domains of influence (identity
categories): family, career, social,
developmental, disability, and socio-political.

Final model seen as dynamic and mutual (self
influences domains and vice versa)

Example of Doing Grounded Theory: Laying out the Theory

Model of career development of women with disabilities that has 6 domains of influence - (see Noonan et al. article for actual model p. 71)



Important Procedures...contd.

Memo Writing

Informal analytic notes

Prompt the researcher to analyze the data and codes early in the research process.

Chart, record and detail major analytic phases of the journey.

We can start by writing about our codes and data and move upward to theoretical categories and keep writing memos throughout the research process.

Important Procedures...contd.

Constant Comparison

A method of analysis that generates successively more abstract concepts and theories through inductive processes of comparing:

- Different people (such as their views, situations, actions, accounts, and experiences)
- Comparing data from the same individuals with themselves at different points in time,
- Comparing incident with incident,
- Comparing data with category,
- Comparing a category with other categories.

Important Procedures...contd.

Theoretical Sampling

Main purpose is to elaborate and refine the categories constituting the theory.

The researcher seeks people, events, or information to illuminate and define the properties, boundaries, and relevance of a category or set of categories.

Important Procedures...contd.

Theoretical Saturation

Refers to the point at which gathering more data about a theoretical category reveals no new properties nor yields any further theoretical insights about the emerging grounded theory.

An overview

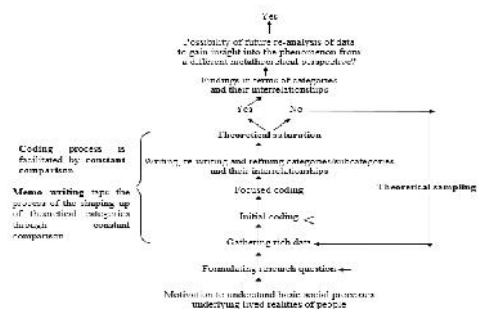


Figure 1: General Procedures of Grounded Theory (Adapted from Deyk, 2011)

Outcome

Jane Hood (2007) summarizes the final outcome of the procedures of GT-

“The substantial and/or formal theory outlined in the final report takes into account all the variations in the data and conditions associated with these variations. The report is an *analytical product rather than a purely descriptive account. Theory development is the goal.*”

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