Grounded Theory

Introduction to Analysis in Qualitative Research

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Assignment

- Code a limited subset of the material you have chosen for this session. 20 minutes.
  - Each group member works on his or her own.
- Compare codes. 10 minutes.
  - Do not argue for or against, simply add codes even when they contradict each other.
  - "Fracturing the data forces preconceived notions and ideas to be examined against the data themselves" (Strauss & Corbin 1990, p. 13)
- Either individually or by pairs (your choice) work to establish categories by combining codes. 15 minutes.
  - Remember to write memos (e.g. taking brief notes) on your decisions.
- Compare your categories – and argue for them. 15 minutes.
- Make hypotheses about the categories and about connections between categories as a group and remember to record your analysis as memos. 15 minutes
  - Include in the discussion the distinction between formal and substantive theory.

Overview

- The briefest of backgrounds
- Central concepts and techniques
- From positivism/pragmatism to pragmatism/postmodernism

The Briefest of Backgrounds

- The discovery of Grounded theory, 1967

- Barney Glaser – positivist and quantitative background

- Anselm Strauss – pragmatist background

- Adele E. Clarke – pragmatist/postmodernist

- Kathy Charmaz – Constructivist
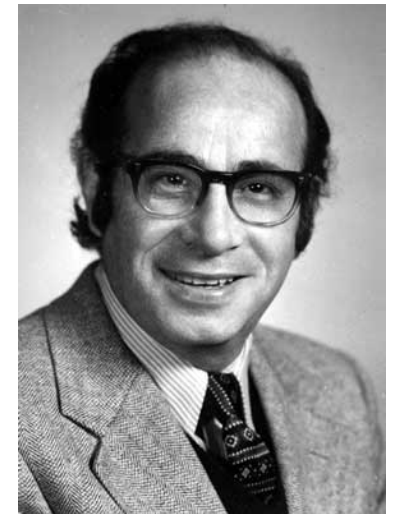
To what issue(s) are Grounded Theory the answer?

- Division between theory and data:
  - Sometimes theory is simply added on in qualitative research (and thus also treated as such by reviewers and editors).
    - Theoretical icing on an empirical cake.
  - Theory not 'grounded' in the data but rather in e.g. a hypothesis coming from somewhere else (e.g. grand theories).

- The overemphasis on verification of theories over creation (generation) of theories.
  - Research is also about generating new perspectives and challenging existing canon.

Some af the answers (reasons for using GT)

- *"Grounded theory is a general method of comparative analysis"*
  (Glaser & Strauss 2012, p. 1)
  - Comparative meaning the ongoing comparison of the different elements of analysis with each other to ensure that the categories and concepts are valid.

- *"Grounded theory is a systematic yet flexible method that emphasizes data analysis, involves simultaneous data collection and analysis, uses comparative methods, and provides tools for constructing theories"* (Chermaz 2011, p. 165)

- *Grounded* Theory
  - That our theories about the 'explanations of behavior' is *grounded* in data and not in prior theories or conceptions.
  - Inductive – our statements come from analyzing the data rather than from already formulated theoretical framework (or our own prior ideas).
- Grounded *Theory*
  - The (principal) aim of the method is to <u>generate</u> *theory* about the area of study (e.g. explain types of behavior).
  - Theory "is a strategy for handling data in research, providing modes of conceptualization for describing and explaining" (Glaser & Straus 2012, p. 3)

"In discovering theory, one generates conceptual categories or their properties from evidence; then the evidence from which the category emerged is used to illustrate the concept" (Glaser & Strauss 2012, p. 23)

"Conventional grounded theory has focused on generating the "basic social process" occurring in the data concerning the phenomenon of concern—the basic form of human action in the situation of concern." (Clarke 2003, p. 558)

What is it good for …

- Accurate evidence
- Empirical generalizations
- Specification of concepts
- Verifying theories
- Generating theory

- Do you have an initial idea of which of the above describes your research?
- Are the ones that apply compatible in what they demand?

Substantive vs. formal theory

- **Substantive**: an empirical area – e.g. patient care, education, delinquency (from the view of 'practice')

- **Formal**: Conceptual – e.g. stigma, socialization, power (from the view of conceptual categories).

"Substantive theory faithful to the empirical situation cannot, we believe, be formulated merely by applying a few ideas from an established formal theory to the substantive area" (Glaser & Strauss 2012, p 33).

Elements of theories

- Categories
  - Properties – the 'content' of categories.
- Hypotheses
  - questions posed on the basis of the categories – suggesting 'definitions' of categories.
- Relations between categories

- Concepts – elements of the theory emerging from the analysis.
- Theory – a connected set of concepts covering the area studied.

"As categories and properties emerge, develop in abstraction and become related , their accumulating interrelations form an integrated central theoretical framework – *the core of the emerging theory" (Glaser & Strauss 2012, p. 40)*.

The constant comparative method

- Comparing incidents applicable to each category
- Integrating categories and their properties
- Delimiting the theory
- Writing the theory

A closer look at 'how to do it'

Inductive: codes (categories) arising from the data, not applied to it.

Iterative: when needed (and it will be), the researcher return to the field to collect further data (focused on select categories).

FIGURE 1.1 The grounded theory process

Chermaz 2006, p. 11

You all have an initial question and at least some data pertaining to that question.

Initial data collection and initial coding of collected dat

"[Initial] coding need consist only of noting categories on margins, but can be done more elaborately" (Glaser & Strauss 2012, p. 106)
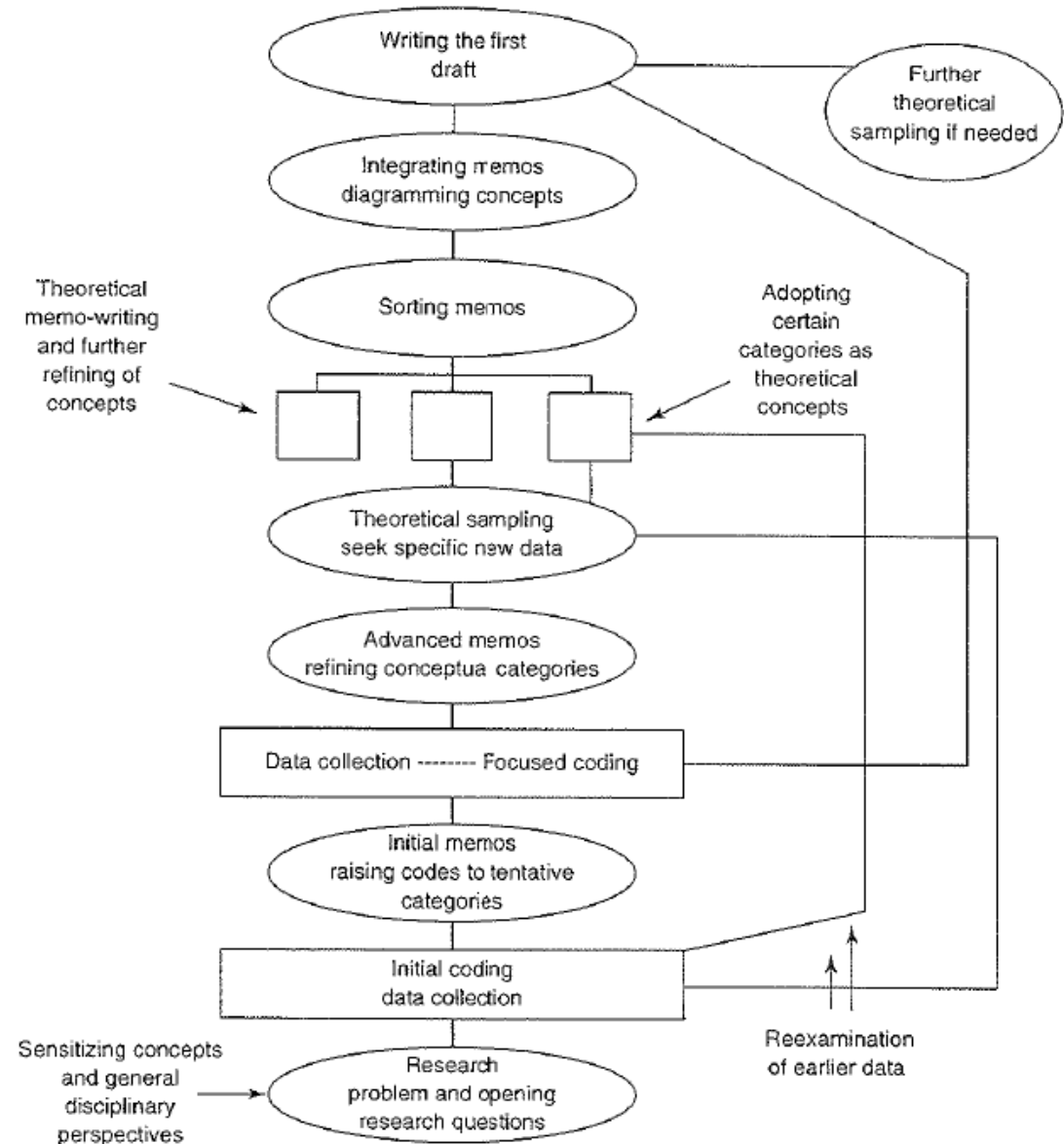

FIGURE 1.1   The grounded theory process

Initial coding leading to categories

Continuing conflict complicating voice problems	mean we didn't argue, which just complicated things with my voice. Following the surgery, there was a notable
Externalizing her inability to speak coherently	inability to speak well for about a month, when my
Experiencing altered speech	phonation was very definitively affected. Slowly, it started
Defining certain impairment	coming back here and there, but something had definitely
Receiving no definitive explanation; not asking why; info withheld?	changed. I got everything checked, but no one could tell what changed. It's been theorized that the surgery was responsible for shifting some things around, so things
Reciting possible loss	were just going to be different from that point on. That
Implying distress	was difficult . . . healing physically and coming to terms with the fact that things would have to be so different
Defining permanent loss	from then on. I wasn't even myself anymore after that.
Experiencing forced loss	My voice was gone, so I was gone, and I'd never been
Voice and self merge; losing valued self	anything but my voice. So, yeah, that was really hard.
Acknowledging suffering	

FIGURE 6.1. Initial grounded theory coding.

Memos

- Compare the incident with the others within the same categories.
  - "After coding for at category perhaps three or four times, the analyst will find conflicts in the emphasis of his thinking. He will muse over theoretical notions […] At this point: *stop coding and record a memo on your idea*" (Glaser & Strauss 2012, p. 107).

- A memo is a tool for recording and developing interpretations of the categories that emerge during the coding process.
  - "Memo writing is the pivotal intermediate stage of analysis between coding and writing the first draft of a paper or chapter" (Charmaz 2011, p. 166)

Axial coding

- "In axial coding, categories are related to their subcategories, and the relationships tested against data" (Strauss & Corbin 1990, p. 13).

Integrated codes:
- **(What is) loss of self**
  - Defining loss of self
  - distinguishing between loss and disruption of self

- **Facing loss**
  - Discerning loss
  - receiving bad news
  - telling news

- **Regaining a valued self**
  - Making a comeback
  - Drawing lessons from the past
  - Discovering an audible voice
  - Learning to live with uncertainty
  - Realizing the dream

- From codes to categories to concepts
  - Returning to the field
    - Theoretical sampling: gathering further data related to specific categories
  - Rewriting, sorting and specifying memos
  - Focusing on relations between concepts.

- Theory-as-process: results are described as emerging from the data rather than presented as a detached finding.

FIGURE 1.1   The grounded theory process

From positivsm/pragmatism to postmodernism

- "Broadly framed, the postmodern turn has provoked an array of concerns about the nature of inquiry and crises of representation and legitimation." (Clarke 2003, p. 553)

- "I am deeply committed to "situating interpretation." With Hall and McGinty (2002:304), I am asserting that "interactionists [and others] can and should expand their theoretical environment, broaden their perspective to be sensitive to and analyze more general, larger domains of social action." *Action is not enough*. Our analytic focus needs to be fully on the situation of inquiry broadly conceived." (Clarke 2003, p. 556 – my emphasis)

- That is: what also determines/influences/frames practice may better be captured by looking at the context of the context that action is situated in.

Types of 'maps' – Clarke 2003 (p. 554)

1. *situational maps* that lay out the major human, nonhuman, discursive, and other elements in the research situation of concern and provoke analyses of relations among them;
2. *social worlds/arenas maps* that lay out the collective actors, key nonhuman elements, and the arena(s) of commitment within which they are engaged in ongoing negotiations, or mesolevel interpretations of the situation; and
3. *positional maps* that lay out the major positions taken, and *not* taken, in the data vis-à-vis particular discursive axes of variation and difference, concern, and controversy surrounding complicated issues in the situation.

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