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Constructivist Grounded Theory?

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Abstract

I refer to and use as scholarly inspiration Charmaz's excellent article on constructivist grounded theory as a tool of getting to the fundamental issues on why grounded theory is not constructivist. I show that constructivist data, if it exists at all, is a very, very small part of the data that grounded theory uses.

Introduction

Constructivist Grounded Theory is a misnomer. Grounded theory (GT) can use any data; it remains to be figured out what it is. In my book "The Grounded Theory Perspective" (Glaser, 2001) I wrote a chapter that dealt with "all is data." I said: "All is data' is a well known Glaser dictum. What does it mean? It means exactly what is going on in the research scene is the data, whatever the source, whether interview, observations, documents, in whatever combination. It is not only what is being told, how it is being told and the conditions of its being told, but also all the data surrounding what is being told. It means what is going on must be figured out exactly what it is to be used for, that is conceptualization, not for accurate description. Data is always as good as far as it goes, and there is always more data to keep correcting the categories with more relevant properties" (p.145).

"All is Data" is a GT statement, NOT applicable to Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) and its worrisome accuracy abiding concern. Data is discovered for conceptualization to be what it is— theory. The data is what it is and the researcher collects, codes and analyzes exactly what he has whether baseline data, properline data or objective data or misinterpreted data. It is what the researcher is receiving, as a pattern, and as a human being (which is inescapable). It just depends on the research.

Remember again, the product will be transcending abstraction, NOT accurate description. The product, a GT, will be an abstraction from time, place and people that frees the researcher from the tyranny of normal distortion by humans trying to get an accurate description to solve the worrisome accuracy problem. Abstraction frees the researcher from data worry and data doubts, and puts the focus on concepts that fit and are relevant.

One major worry in QDA research, which does—but should not—effect GT, is a different take on the personal predilections of interviewer and interviewee. According to QDA interview data yields the construction of data that represents the mutual interpretation of the interviewer and of the interviewee as the interview proceeds. This constructivist orientation is that data is constructed with interacting interpretations.

This orientation, as written, never seems to see it as a characteristic of the type of interviewing. It probably applies to lengthy, in-depth interviews where mutuality can grow based on forcing type interview guides (see Charmaz, 2000). But this type of interviewing is

a small piece of GT interviewing, although it happens and one can do GT from it. Much GT interviewing is a very passive listening and then later during theoretical sampling focused questions to other participants during site spreading and based on emergent categories. It is hard for mutual constructed interpretations to characterize this data even though the data may be interpretive: for example psychotherapists telling the interviewer how to see a psychiatric facility or a supervisor telling how to understand his foremen.

GT is a perspective based methodology and people's perspectives vary. And as we showed in "Awareness of Dying" (Glaser & Strauss, 1965), participants have multiple perspectives that are varyingly fateful to their action. Multiple perspectives among participants is often the case and then the GT researcher comes along and raises these perspectives to the abstract level of conceptualization hoping to see the underlying or latent pattern, another perspective. This becomes complex, which core variable analysis organizes to reduce the confusion to an integrated complexity. Further complexifying the data is the type of data the GT researcher is obtaining—baseline, properline (confirm usage), interpretive, vague—and its varying sources. Thus it is just too, too simple a statement when Kathy Charmaz (2000, p. 510) says:

I add ... another vision for future qualitative research: constructivist grounded theory. Constructivist grounded theory celebrates first hand knowledge of empirical worlds, takes a middle ground between postmodernism and positivism, and offers accessible methods for taking qualitative research into the 21st century. Constructivism assumes the relativism of multiple social realities, recognizes the mutual creation of knowledge by the viewer and the viewed, and aims toward interpretive understanding of subjects' meanings.

If this is the way the data come down, then fine, BUT it is a bare small piece of the GT research action and it does not help "doing" for those doing the research. It just remains to be clear about the data that obtains and that is whatever it is. She is trying to solve the worrisome accuracy problem of QDA by trying to ascertain the data emerging in the deep, long (hour or so) interview situation. This kind of interviewing is characteristic of her "pet" substantive areas requiring depth, again a small piece of the GT action. Her quest is not to take the data as it comes, but to be sure it is accurate, so she gets to mutual interpretation as the answer. When I say that some data is interpreted, I mean the participant not only tells what is going on, but tells the researcher how to view it correctly—his/her way. I do not mean that they are mutually built up interpretations. Adding his of her interpretations would be an unwarranted intrusion of the researcher.

The constant comparative method discovers the latent pattern in the multiple participants' words, such as, for example, pain leveling provided by dental clinics undermines repair work. Her miss in that the GT focus is on conceptualization of latent patterns, and GT is about a concept, e.g. cautionary control, and not about the accuracy of story talk. In fact, in a recent study of "talk story," by Bay Jones (2002), how the stories were built was irrelevant. They were efforts at sharing, mutual affirmations and support and camaraderie to reduce the bewilderment of the lonely ongoing world and to exert shared control by perspective over it. The competitive parlance was a one-upmanship control to preempt the descriptive scene that all could share. Thus, Charmaz talks the talk of conceptualization, but actually walks the talk of descriptive capture. Accordingly GT is remodeled to a QDA method from its origination of conceptual core variable analysis of "whatever" data is involved—baseline, properline (confirm usage), interpreted or vague. Her understanding of abstractions involved in theoretical coding, substantive coding, delimiting, theoretical sampling etc, etc, are missed, neglected or quashed in favor of QDA methods and descriptive capture. "Site spreading" is discussed at length in Glaser, 2001, Chapter 12.

So we can see that constructivism—joint build of an interactive, interpreted, produced data—is an epistemological bias to achieve a credible, accurate description of data collection—sometimes. But it depends on the data. If the data is garnered through an interview guide that forces and feeds interviewee responses then it is constructed to a degree by interviewer imposed interactive bias. But, as I said above, with the passive, non structured interviewing or listening of the GT interview-observation method, constructivism is held to a minimum.

It appears that constructivism is an effort to dignify the data and to avoid the work of confronting researcher bias. Remember bias is just another variable and a social product. If the researcher is exerting bias, then this is a part of the research, in which bias is a vital variable to weave into the constant comparative analysis. It happens easily in "hot" or "passionate position" issue oriented research, such as political, feminism, or abuse type research or in research on inviolate control structures, which cannot tolerate implicit subversion. This aspect of default remodeling, that is covering bias up for what it is—another variable—is a vital loss to GT.

Charmaz (2000, p. 522) comes close to what I am saying but descriptive capture of QDA subverts it. She says: "Like wondrous gifts waiting to be opened, early grounded theory tests imply that categories and concepts inhere within the data, awaiting the researcher's discovery... Not so." This statement is unbelievably wrong. Categories, which are concepts, are not wondrous gifts, they come from the tedium of the constant comparative method linked with sensitive theoretical sampling and are constantly fitted to the data. Compounding this wrong thinking, Charmaz continues:

Glaser (1978, 1992) assumes that we can gather our data unfettered by bias or biography. Instead, a constructivist approach recognizes that the categories, concepts and theoretical level of an analysis emerge from the researcher's interactions within the field and questions about the data.

As I have said, to the degree a researcher's personal predilection biases the data, it is a variable to consider, for example "she thinks that way because she is a feminist." But as I have also said, the constant comparative process reveals these biases. AND I am also quite gratified to see that most researchers I have worked with, take great pains to not intrude their own views in the data. In addition, the abstractions that emerge become independent of the researcher bias that Charmaz worries about. For example credentializing, cultivating, spiritual power abusing or pseudo-friending just go on, no matter the bias take on them that may emerge. For example when a researcher hears "I do not need a degree or certificate, I know it all anyway," this structurally impossible bias does not do away with the general process of training. And furthermore, GT is about concepts not accurate descriptions as Charmaz worries about. Descriptive capture remodels GT.

Continuing her descriptive capture, Charmaz (2000) says, yet again: "The grounded theorist's analysis tells a story about people, social processes, and situations. The researcher composes the story; it does not simply unfold before the eyes of an objective viewer. The story reflects the viewer as well as the viewed."

Again, absolutely NO, the GT researcher does not "compose" the "story." GT is not description, and the unfolding is emergent from the careful tedium of the constant comparative method and theoretical sampling—fundamental GT procedures. These are not story making, they are generating a theory by careful application of all the GT procedures. The human biasing whatever is minimized to the point of irrelevancy in what I have seen in hundreds of studies. The GT reflections of the researcher are his/her skill at doing GT. This

remodeling by Charmaz of GT is clearly just not correct and is implicitly supporting the QDA requirements for accuracy. Charmaz has not considered the properties of conceptualization in her offer of a constructivist GT.

Charmaz asserts that the abstract terms and dense writing Glaser (1978) employed in "Theoretical Sensitivity" rendered the book inaccessible to many readers. This statement is just not true. "Theoretical Sensitivity" has sold over 3,000 copies. It is used in many many dissertations and letters to me lauding it are legion. Charmaz's assertion legitimizes the default remodeling of GT down to some conceptual description. It appears that most of her undergraduate students cannot or hardly can conceptualize, so most do QDA. This is very real, but no reason to remodel GT.

Charmaz constantly pursues, over and over in her article, this constructionist tack on QDA while using it to remodel GT. She compounds her error by saying, irrespective of their differences: "Both Glaser and Strauss ... assume an external reality that researchers can discover and record ... Glaser and Strauss (1967) imply that reality is independent of the observer and the methods used to produce it. Because both Glaser and Strauss ... follow the canons of objective reportage, both ... write about their data as distanced experts ..., thereby contributing to an objective stance." (Charmaz, 2000, p. 513).

I said compounding her error because she neglects the carefulness of the GT method which makes the generated theory as objective as humanly possible. BUT also she neglects that the product is conceptual which provides an abstract distance from the data. Thus the conceptualizations are distant, objectifications if she wishes to use these terms. But more to the point, she is caught by descriptive capture and is remodeling GT to QDA story talk, while neglecting the fundamental properties of abstraction analysis.

Using constructivism as a justification in reverse, Charmaz engages in a recidivism which makes the researcher's interactive impact on the data more important than the participants. Constructionism is used to legitimate forcing. It is like saying that if the researcher is going to be part of constructing the data, then he/she may as well construct it his way. Again the properties of abstraction are ignored and GT is remodeled. Listen to what Charmaz says:

Glaser assumes that data become transparent, that we researchers will see the basic social process in the field through respondents' telling us what is significant. However, what researchers see may be neither basic nor certain (Mitchell and Charmaz, 1996). What respondents assume or do not apprehend may be much more important than what they talk about. An acontextual reliance on respondents' overt concerns can lead to narrow research problems, limited data and trivial analyses" (Charmaz, 2000, p. 514).

This statement is so untrue and so descriptive captured. She uses constructivism to discount the participant's main concern, which is always relevant to ongoing resolving behavior, in favor of the researcher's professional concern, which is most often irrelevant to behavior in the substantive area (see Glaser, 1998a, Chapter 8, pp.115-132). I have seen this over and over in research. Then her descriptive capture leads her to totally ignore that the researcher by constant comparisons conceptualizes the latent pattern—core category the participants may not be aware of since it conceptualizes their incidents. So an incident which may have appeared trivial can actually be a vital indicator of the core category that resolves the main concern.

Charmaz is also unaware that the conceptualization of the core category based on

incidents has a generality that may easily inform and be related to the professional problem. Thus Amy Calvin, in her dissertation (2000), got nowhere trying to study end of life directives, particularly organ donations. When she listened to the participants she discovered a theory of personal preservation under a condition of a deteriorating physical life—an irreversible illness. This bore heavily on the professional problem and explained why organ donations were not forthcoming and suggested avenues of potential resolutions to this problem. As I have said in "Doing Grounded Theory" (Glaser, 1998a), only people who can conceptualize should do GT. Charmaz continues:

Most grounded theorists write as if their data have an objective status ... 'The data do not lie.' ... [But d]ata are narrative constructions. ... They are reconstructions of experience; they are not the original experience itself. ... Whether our respondents ply us with data in interview accounts they recast for our consumption or we record ethnographic stories to reflect experience as best we can recall and narrate, data remain reconstructions." (2000, p. 514, my emphasis, B.G.)

Let us be clear, researchers are human beings and therefore must to some degree reify data in trying to symbolize it in collecting, reporting and coding the data. In doing so they may impart their personal bias and/or interpretations—ergo this is called constructivist data. But this data is rendered objective to a high degree by most research methods and GT in particular by looking at many cases of the same phenomenon, when jointly collecting and coding data, to correct for bias and to make the data objective. This constant correction succeeds in both QDA methods and in GT's methodology especially so because the corrections are conceptualized into categories and their properties, hence become abstract of researcher interpretations. The latent patterns—categories—hold as objective if the GT researcher carefully compares much data from many different participants. Personal input by a researcher soon drops out as eccentric and the data become objectivist not constructionist.

Thus, for example, no matter what are nurses responses to being required to go back to school to get a more advance degree, the latent pattern emerges is that they are being credentialized. And this substantive theory has much generality in explaining responses in any field, when its members are being forced, to go back to a school to get a license, certificate or credential. Credentializing theory emerges as real, it is not constructed (see Glaser, 1998b, for many examples). Clearly Charmaz's formulations are for QDA worrisome accuracy problems, NOT for GT abstractions, unless, of course, she remodels GT to a QDA method.

Charmaz cites several "critical challenges to grounded theory." All the critiques she cites reflect descriptive capture and a QDA approach, thus are misapplied critiques regarding GT. GT is a conceptual method, not a descriptive method, as we know. Thus descriptive critiques which are all about worrisome accuracy do not apply to GT. She cites several authors who state that GT methods were insufficient to respect their interviewees and portray their stories. She says: Grounded theory "authors choose evidence selectively, clean up subjects' statements, unconsciously adopt value-laden metaphors, assume omniscience and bore readers" (2000, p. 521). GT authors are challenged with respect to "their authority to interpret subjects' lives." These criticisms imply that GT methods gloss over meanings with respondents stories. She continues:

Grounded theory research might limit understanding because grounded theorists aim for analysis rather than the portrayal of subjects experience in its fullness ... fracturing the data imply that grounded theory methods lead to separating the experience from the experiencing subject, the meaning from the story, and the viewer from the viewed. Grounded theory limits entry into the subjects worlds and thus reduces

understanding of their experience.

These criticisms do not apply as they all remodel GT into a QDA method devoted to careful, full, voice and meaning description of the participant's story, in short a QDA DESCRIPTION. This is exactly what GT is not—a QDA meaning, story description. GT is a theory about a conceptualized latent pattern—e.g. cultivating, credentializing, covering, client control, ritual loss ceremonies ... etc, etc. Criticizing it for not doing what it does not purport to do, is an authors' error on Charmaz's part. It is in essence a default remodeling of GT to a poor QDA method, and thus a block on good GT research to achieve a conceptual theory: such as a theory on desisting residual selves. Charmaz's error is compounded by her concluding from her misapplication:

A constructivist grounded theory assumes that people create and maintain meaningful worlds through dialectic processes of conferring meaning on their realities and acting within them ... By adopting a constructivist grounded theory approach, the researcher can move grounded theory methods further into the realm of interpretation social science ... [with] emphasis on meaning, without assuming the existence of a unidimensional external reality. A constructivist grounded theory recognizes the interactive nature of both data collection and analysis, resolves recent criticisms of the method, and reconciles positivist assumptions and postmodernist critiques. Moreover, a constructivist grounded theory fosters the development of qualitative traditions through study of experience from the standpoint of those who live it" (pp. 521-522).

This is a mighty order for constructivist GT however highly relevant to QDA. BUT it is totally irrelevant to GT as actually originated for generating a conceptual theory about say, a basic social process or a fundamental cutting point (e.g. marriage ceremony), that is about a concept. Charmaz remodels GT when she is actually proffering a constructivist approach to QDA methods. The strength of QDA research has clouded and swayed her view of GT, and thus she denies and blocks its true conceptual nature.

Her paper is filled with statements like the following: "Thus the grounded theorist constructs an image of a reality, not the reality—that is, objective, true, and external." (p. 523) This is clearly a descriptive goal—a try to get accuracy directly through interactive construction. It is not the conceptual goal of GT, nor does it deal with researcher impact as another variable. Her formulation actually takes away the participants reality by saying it is recast in some way by the researcher. So the participant's voice is not heard, but distorted or lost. Enough, I will let the QDA methodologists defend themselves against her view of real accuracy. GT should not be swallowed up, hence remodeled, by these notions of accuracy, which are not relevant to its conceptual abstracting goal.

These QDA methodologists are sincere and ever reaching for their elusive goal of worrisome accuracy—however they may currently term it. But in the bargain they have virtually destroyed all notions of accuracy, or posit a reality as truly nonexistent, but just a figment of the mind. Charmaz continues on this position about reality:

we [the grounded theorists] must try to find what research participants define as real and where their definitions of reality take them. The constructivist approach also fosters our self consciousness about what we attribute to our subjects and how, when, and why researcher portray these definitions as real. Thus the research products do not constitute the reality of the respondents' reality. Rather, each is a rendering, one interpretation among multiple interpretations, of a shared or individual reality ... we change our conception of it [social life] from a real world to be

discovered, tracked, and categorized to a world made real in the minds and through the words and actions of its members" (p. 523).

I have critiqued this QDA accuracy approach already. It neglects the constant comparative method applied to large numbers of participants to discover what categories latently pattern out. It neglects GT's careful procedures. Conceptual reality DOES EXIST. For example, client control is real; cautionary control is real; social structural covering is real. These processes and a myriad of others discovered in GT research, impinge on us every day. Just go to the doctor, drive a car or go into surgery and/or take on the Catholic Church and the reader will see the reality of these researches and apply the conceptually generated theory. Charmaz' position on constructivism is itself a reality for QDA methodologists to deal with, if after discounting it that they actually care.

Her constructivist position is totally irrelevant to GT methodology, EXCEPT as it is allowed to remodel GT methodology by default. Do not let it. She does remodel GT by repeating over and over in many paraphrasing ways her new found truth: she says adamantly:

A constructivist grounded theory recognizes that the viewer creates the data and ensuing analysis through interaction with the viewed. Data do not provide a window on reality. Rather, the 'discovered' reality arises from the interactive process and its temporal, cultural, and structural contexts. Researcher and subjects frame that interaction and confer meaning upon it. The viewer then is part of what is viewed rather than separate from it (pp. 523-524).

She justifies this position by a rhetorical correction which asserts several ways, over and over, that constructivist corrects the objectivist, positivist leaning of most GT studies. Actually it only remodels the GT position; it corrects nothing that needs correcting.

Charmaz sees emergence as interactive not objective. But for GT what is emerging just depends on the type of data, how much of it, how many participants, etc, etc to see if researcher impact is generating a bias in its conceptualization. For example, to use her example, medical dominance is a real category no matter what the variations in experience of either participant or researchers and how it is shared interactively. Indeed, in GT the researcher's experience itself may just be more data for doing a GT of medical dominance. I often counsel researchers with similar experience as their respondents to do field notes on themselves as just more data to constantly compare.

This prevents their forcing the read on the data as if it comes from the respondent. The researcher just provides more incidents in this case as another participant. When researchers study their life cycle interest (see Glaser, 1978), this can happen frequently. For example, when nurses study a problem on a type ward they have worked on for years, they will compare notes of themselves, not impose their experience on the interview or data.

Charmaz's constructivist position has a structurally specific source: in-depth interviews with patients having chronic illness, which interviews are based on a developed, over time relationship in which "private thoughts and feelings" can be expressed and their meanings probed. There is a "subjective, immersion" of the researcher in their illness, hence tending to produce description for intense interaction, in contrast to producing an abstraction or conceptualization of it, which feels distanced or in her words "external." Her kind of data, which is an almost therapeutic stance, is very infrequent in GT research. Hence her constructivist data, if it exists at all, is a very, very small source of GT research.

Charmaz tries to bolster her GT remodeling position by invective against GT as

originated. She says: "[O]bjectivist grounded theory methods foster externality by invoking procedures that increase complexity at the expense of experience ... Objectivist grounded theory especially risks cloaking analytic power in jargon." (p.525) She further continues that she is into depth feelings of subjective experience. I would hope that GT in conceptualizing a theory of how participants resolve their main concern (e.g. handling cautionary control requirements) does not generate a mere jargon. Though as I said in "Grounded Theory Perspective" (Glaser, 2001) GT concepts have such grab that they can become jargonized in the hands of someone who uses them in theory bits.

Charmaz does not have these variables in her armamentarium of arguments. Also research on social life and social psychology is not an effort to do in-depth psychology. We have a level phenomenon here in comparing fields of inquiry, which she does not differentiate and may confuse. She says: "a constructivist grounded theory may remain at a more intuitive, impressionistic level than an objectivist approach." (p.526) It sounds also like it remodels GT procedures, since patterns in pure GT are carefully grounded by constant comparison. They are not intuitive impressionistic generations as I said in "Doing Grounded Theory" (Glaser, 1998a). However intuitive, the pattern must pattern out by the tedium of constant comparison.

In combating objectivist vs. constructionist Charmaz has clearly remodeled GT from a conceptual theory to a QDA conceptual description method with worrisome accuracy at issue. Her descriptive capture focuses getting the participant's story descriptively straight so it can be told accurately, with minimal researcher distortion. She says:

In short, constructing constructivism means seeking meanings—both respondent's meanings and researcher's meanings. To seek respondent's meanings, we must go further than surface meanings or presumed meanings ... A constructivist approach necessitates a relationship with respondents in which they can cast their stories in their terms. (p.525)...I sacrificed immediacy for accuracy by writing about respondents in the past because the events described took place in the past. ... [In] Good Days, Bad Days (Charmaz, 1991) ... I took the reader through messy houses, jumbled schedules, pressures to simplify life, fragile pacing, and enormous effort to function to the relief when relief occurs. This detail gave readers imagery on which to build ... Written images portray the tone the writer takes toward the topic and reflects the writer's relationships with his or her respondents ... I try to portray respondents' worlds and views ... I remain in the background as a story-teller whose tales have believable characters (pp. 527-528).

It is clear in these quotes that talk story is Charmaz's goal and getting the story accurate takes an indepth longitudinal relationship. This is a clear remodel of GT as originated to a descriptive QDA method, at best conceptual description, under the guise of calling it constructivist GT. Her discussion has none of the properties of conceptual theory generation of pure GT. It is all accurate description (imagery), not abstraction. For example, would it not be delightful to read a good GT on simplifying lifestyles under a condition of impairing chronic illness. Instead we read endless descriptions on simplifying life with no latent pattern conceptualization to explain how simplifying continually resolves the pressure to redesign life—as we said in our book "Chronic Illness and the Quality of Life" (Strauss & Glaser, 1975). In her zeal to be a "story teller" Charmaz gives but a nod to pure GT by some conceptual description and then claims a move toward the constructivist approach is "consistent with grounded theory." This move is not consistent with GT, it is just a remodel erosion of pure GT. The reader, of course, can follow her vision.

My sole purpose here is to show the default remodeling that GT is subjected to, so

the reader will have no illusion about what Charmaz is doing and what GT really is. The difference is choice of method: it is different than, not better than. Charmaz (p.528) acknowledges this when she says: "the future of grounded theory lies with both objectivist and constructivist visions." But she is misled in thinking that the constructivist vision is in fact GT. It is just another QDA method in pursuit of accuracy. This text, yet again, illustrates how descriptive capture overwhelms GT in many researchers professing themselves as a grounded theorist. Descriptive procedures divorce data analysis from GT conceptualizing procedures, as if the descriptive procedures are GT and they are not. Describing what is going on, does not explain conceptually what is going on as a fundamental pattern of process, typology, cutting point, binary etc.

Yet as I said in "GT Perspective" description runs the world and looking beyond this to conceptualizing latent patterns as categories and their properties is hard. It is easier to worry about accuracy of description—a traditional science concern—by concluding a constructivist orientation, using constructivism rather than using an orientation of conceptual modifications of a GT based on biased variables emerging from abstracting "all is data" whether the data is vague, baseline, properline, and/or interpreted. Yet GT conceptualizations is much more powerful in application and in just knowing how to explain.

Constructivism is a backdoor approach to studying the professional problem in lieu of studying the main concern of the participants. Why? Because the participants echoing each other on their main concern is a product of researcher interpretation and thus diluted, so we lose this relevance to the research. This a clear remodeling of a vital property of GT which provides the core category. Thus we have Charmaz (pp. 528-529) saying:

Although I pondered over organizing the book [Good Days, Bad Days, Charmaz, 1991] around on process, I could not identify an overarching theme." This is the consequence of the constructivist forcing interpretations of the researcher thereby losing the core variable relevance which continually resolves the main concern. QDA descriptions have no core relevance because of full coverage. Whereas GT researchers listen to participants and hear their main concern resolving organizes their continuous behavior in the substantive scene.

My repetitive arguments in this contribution preclude a summary which would actually be redundant. The constructivist block on pure GT is clear. A very small aspect of GT data collection is NOT the whole GT enterprise.

Epilogue

Constructivism orientation has taken quite a hold in the QDA method world. My only argument is not to let it remodel GT in manifest and subtle ways. The grab of this orientation is indicated by the following e-mail request for an article by Katja Mruck, editor, FQS, which I received on Oct 23, 2001. Notice the non questioning, "as if" assumption of the constructivist authenticity and accuracy:

Dear Barney, I would like to invite you to consider writing an article for the forthcoming FQS issue 'Subjectivity and Reflexivity in Qualitative Research.' The issue will be published in Sept 2002, and will deal—among others with the following topics: the constructive character of research in the (social) sciences and subjectivity as a determinant of the qualitative research process, and epistemological subjectivity, using self reflexivity as an important tool to access and to develop scientific knowledge.

Research—the process and its products—depends on the characteristic of the persons involved, on their biological, mental social, cultural and historical etc. make up and/or condition. In this issue, we would like authors to describe/analyze/discuss this fundamental subjectivity of any—and also of scientific—knowledge (a) from different scientific and disciplinary contexts; (b) during different stages of the research process; (c) according to different types of knowledge as outcomes of the researcher's efforts, etc.

We presuppose that research is inherently structured by the subjectivity of the researcher (my emphasis, B.G.). We therefore do not want authors to limit themselves by characterizing subjectivity in defensive ways as an epistemological 'deficiency,' accompanied by methodological efforts, to minimize/to eliminate possible 'biases.' Instead, we are asking for possible ways to face the epistemological and methodological challenges in a proactive way that takes in account this core characteristic of any form of knowledge. What are the methodological, pragmatic and research/writing strategies that result from such a presupposition of subjectivity as an unavoidable core characteristic of research? ... Katja"

Katja has obviously taken the larger QDA view of constructionism. But she does not realize from a GT point of view that researcher impact on data is just one more variable to consider whenever it emerges as relevant. It is like all GT categories and properties; it must earn its relevance. Thus it depends. And so much data are used in GT research to generate categories (latent patterns), that categories are generated by constant comparison of many, many interviews that both moot researcher impact or interpretation and constantly correct it if necessary.

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