



## Doing Quantitative Grounded Theory

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Whenever I review materials I do so with three eyes. One is as an educator of Ph.D. students who are just beginning their knowledge research methodologies. Another eye is towards the needs of the Ph.D. student in the midst of crafting and defending their dissertation proposal and finished product. Finally I view the book from my own educational needs or does this book provide me as an experienced grounded theorist with needed or new knowledge of my craft? From two of these three perspectives I view Dr. Barney Glaser's new book *Doing Quantitative Grounded Theory* as potentially useful and from the third (my own learning) give the book a must own rating.

It is well documented that grounded theory attracts Ph.D. students as a methodology to be applied to their dissertation. These students, however, rarely have either solid experience using grounded theory and have little to no training in the method. Most will receive what training they do have from brief exposure during general qualitative research courses. This quantitative grounded theory book might be well applied to growing number of situations where students are introduced to grounded theory methodology as a complete course. In universities, where the focus is on quantitative methods, I can see this book being an asset as an initial introduction to the method. The only caution is that instructors of the course may need to assist students in delving through the occasionally dense vocabulary and writing.

An additional need that Ph.D. students encounter occurs as they write and defend their dissertation proposal and finished product to committees who very often have little knowledge of the method themselves. This book's rich inclusion of historical documentation can, in part, provide resources for the student being pushed for background knowledge and methodological defense. Dr. Glaser provides a rich discussion of his early graduate work with Lazarsfeld as well as his first stab at grounded theory (quantitative theory) while completing his dissertation. Although I have read some of the included historical information in other resources (Glaser, 1998; Glaser & Strauss, 1999; Thulesius, 2003); This background information is more expansive as it is the focus of the first chapter and woven throughout the discussion about and examples from his initial study provided in the latter chapters (Glaser, 1964).

The main purpose of this book and the perspective that is of most interest to the experienced grounded theory user is providing assistance in conducting quantitative grounded theory analysis. This instruction is not always an easy read especially for the researcher who is not well versed in quantitative methods. The book is vocabulary rich but also rich in content that if carefully examined coupled with (at least in this author's case) some remediation of general

multivariate statistics can provide clear guidelines to follow in developing a grounded theory using quantitative data.

Three broad topics stood out as vitally important both in the clarification of grounded theories in general and specific ideals associated with branching out into the use of quantitative, especially secondary quantitative data. These include the idea of data fishing to establish theoretical hypothesis. That it is important to select data that has been collected using instruments created by some sort of grounding process. Finally that it is important to select data that can be tracked over time and/or across specific grouping subcategories (Glaser, 2008).

Both qualitative and quantitative grounded theory employs the use of 'data fishing' (Johnston 2006). This process, held in taboo by quantitative researchers, is very desirable to the grounded theorist as fishing is exactly how data is compared and broad categories discovered (Glaser, 1998; Livingston, 1994; Trochim, 2005). This process is done by hand when using qualitative data sources. When quantitative data are available this process is completed using data tables and statistical analysis.

Glaser is careful to point out that great care must be taken in select quantitative data that is appropriate for the purpose. The Quantitative grounded theorist must keep in mind the purpose or overall goal of grounded theory: Developing a theory that explains how an identified population continually works to resolve a main concern. The data selected for this purpose must have some origins from subjects' perspectives (as opposed to data drawn solely from one researcher's theoretical musings). In addition the data must also be rich enough to provide the researcher with enough information for comparison.

Finally the data selected must be set up so that theoretical sampling can take place-that is, was the data collected over time, across ethnic groups etc. A grounded theory is devoid of person place or time but these ideas must be attended to at some point in the theoretical sampling process to insure the broad applicability of the developed theory. The ability to separate and compare quantitative data across various categories is one aspect of theoretical sampling and makes the use of acquired quantitative data possible.

Overall *Doing Quantitative Grounded Theory* provides assistance for the new user of grounded theory but excitingly provides a new avenue for grounded theorists everywhere. We all know and have internalized the idea that 'all is data' however few of us have seriously entertained the idea that a grounded theory can be developed solely from quantitative, especially secondary quantitative data. This book lays the foundation with explicit example. It is up to us, now, to use these ideas and examples to develop our own theories.

## References

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