Editorial

Astrid Gynnild

I am delighted to introduce the first issue of the Grounded Theory Review as an open access journal. This means that from now on, all academic articles provided by the journal are freely accessible online, including the archives. As an interdisciplinary, peer reviewed methodological journal, the Grounded Theory Review serves a broad academic community across continents. We are committed to the worldwide dissemination and advancement of classic grounded theory methodology, and similar to an increasing number of academic journals, we support a free exchange of scholarly knowledge, independent of access to scholarly funding or library facilities.

We are convinced that the switch to open access will benefit not only readers but also the authors, who will see their articles more widely read and cited. That being said, it is important to emphasize that open access only concerns *audience' access* to scholarly knowledge. As a peer reviewed journal we adhere to the highest standards of scholarly publishing and will constantly work on quality improvement. As such we will strive for a prompt turnaround on reviews; returning reviews to authors as quickly as is consistent with a thorough evaluation of their work.

As the new editor of the Review, I am grateful to the former editor-in-chief, Judith Holton and the dedication she has shown over the last eight years. Judith has developed the journal to a high scholarly level, not the least through systematic quality improvement of the peer review process.

I also wish to thank Cheri Fernandez, who has served as an assistant editor of the journal since 2010 and who is the guest editor of the themed section of this issue. On assuming my role as editor, I was delighted to learn of her well developed plans for an issue on constructivist grounded theory. I am also grateful to Carol Roderick for her continued and valued contributions as copy editor. Thanks to Scot Hacker, Helen Scott, and Shimrit Berman, who all did great work with the new journal web site.

This issue starts with a general section, which deals with two topics that are of concern to all researchers who plan to use grounded theory. I am happy to publish the first chapter in Barney G. Glaser's coming book *Stop, Write! Writing Grounded Theory*, in which dr. Glaser discusses writing blocks and how we can develop our sensitivity for the readiness moment for writing. The second article, written by Lorraine Andrews et al., discusses how grounded theory can be used to analyze secondary data. In the themed section, guest editor Cheri Fernandez has collected four articles that deal with the differences between classic grounded theory and constructivist grounded theory. The collection includes an introduction to constructivism written by Tom Andrews, an exemplar of constructivist grounded theory written by Dori Barnett; a commentary to Barnett's article by Tom Andrews and Cheri Fernandez; and a reprint of Barney G. Glaser's article from 2002, Constructivist Grounded Theory? Jenna P. Breckenridge et al. close this section with "Choosing a Methodological Path: Reflections on the Constructivist Turn."

For the coming issues of the Grounded Theory Review, we are interested in grounded theories and methodological papers as well as papers on teaching and learning grounded theory, and shorter conceptual discussions (see submissions).

Stop. Write!
Writing Grounded Theory

Barney G. Glaser

The message in this book, the dictum in this book, is to stop and write when the Grounded Theory (GT) methodology puts you in that ready position. Stop unending conceptualization, unending data coverage, and unending listening to others who would egg you on with additional data, ideas and/or requirements or simply wait too long. I will discuss these ideas in detail. My experience with PhD candidates is that for the few who write when ready, many do not and SHOULD. Simply put, many write-up, but many more should.

And yet writing is taken for granted, since without writing a substantive grounded theory is private "fantasy". But taken for granted is often a postponement into the extended future, when the SGT is actually ready to write-up and should be made accessibly public. And writing up the theory is built into the GT method, which generates a readiness momentum to write it up. This is a readiness that is produced by sorted memos, which sorts emerged with autonomy and creativity. The researcher need only follow the procedures of the GT method to generate the motivation and readiness to write. To stop and write is built into the method. It is not done by pure choice, it is done by doing the next GT method step after sorting memos. The method produces this next step of readiness: to write-up memo sorts.

This book is important, as there is very little in published work about how to write a grounded theory paper according to and integrated with the GT methodology. For most researchers writing is just assumed with no integration of writing with the method. For the few chapters in other books that deal with writing, they also lack this important integration with the GT method. Writing GT is a part of the method, not an after chore. Thus this book will deal with the important product yield a write-up that gives GT much public "grab" worldwide.

Readiness

Put simply, built into the GT methodology is the readiness and moment to write a substantive theory. This must be taken as it emerges, it is part of the method. It is not something to do after the research is done. It is part of the research GT methodology. In doing a GT research, first one goes into the field and starts open coding leading to conceptualizing his /her data using the constant comparative method. Then a core category is discovered, and selective coding starts and theoretical sampling for more data to see if the core category works. And if it does, one starts writing memos on the workings and relevance of the emerging concepts. Soon theoretical saturation of categories and their properties emerge and are memoed. Theoretical completeness emerges in the number of concepts about the core category, usually 4 to 6 sub concepts are sufficient. And in the emerging analysis of the concept memos, capturing the analysis, get more mature and formulated on their concept integration. Theoretical completeness occurs sufficiently to write a theory. The research then sorts his memos and writes more stimulated by the sorting. And then he/she is ready to write the theory in a first data draft, BY WRITING UP THE MEMOS. He/she does not write out of one's head. The theory comes from a write-up of concepts and data in the mature memos. The method has produced its last stage of research. That is the write-up - a vital stage of the method carefully arrived at. Enough is enough. The researcher, if using the classical GT method, is set up to write - and must - to conclude a substantive GT. He/she should stop, write.

This production of a readiness writing moment by the GT methodology seems simple enough, but alas it is derailed quite often by inexperience, supervisors and colleagues, which prevents the proper GT write-up. By detailing many of these blocks to readiness to write-up I hope to help the reader handle them and to seize the readiness moment that he/she has worked so hard to reach.

The obvious derailment of the readiness to write is not following the GT methodology procedures and thus not arriving at the readiness moment. The impact of several of the QDA research demands on the GT research easily derails readiness. Too much data for coverage, not enough conceptualization or over conceptual description, worrisome accuracy, preconceived research problems, no core variable, preformed questionnaires and other QDA method claims all readily lose the readiness write-up moment of the classic GT method.

Coverage descriptively, which is a strong requirement of QDA, is not a problem for GT. With GT, readiness is conceptual completeness about a core category, not descriptive about the core however much the coverage. In fact, excessive description coverage is just interchangeable indicators for concepts that had been saturated. So more indicators are not necessary and they are redundant. And also explaining how a core category resolves a main concern most often does not take more than 4 to 6 sub concepts, so extensive further conceptualization easily bypasses the readiness moment produced by the method. The 5 or 6 concepts deal well with the conceptual need of a substantive grounded theory (SGT), even if it is just one general main concern of the participants. Remember, the substantive theory, en fin, is abstract of time place and people.

A core category with grab and 4 to 6 sub concepts may have generated general implications with such grab that the researcher feels unfinished and pursues yet more data for the implications. Thus again the readiness moment is bypassed when it should be written up and with a further research appeals at the end. The researcher cannot do it all, no matter how egged on by self, others or supervisors. GT can be so rich that not pursuing general implications can appear like the research is undone, or unfinished, and the researcher has not done enough. Not so. A substantive GT is only a slice of what is going on and will go on, however strange it is in explaining the continuing resolving of a main concern. Its discovery is an unending conceptualization, and the researcher should not attempt the unending generating of the theory. He/she can never reach it and if not writing when the readiness moment arises, the power and grab of the substantive GT could be lost. In short, yield to the readiness moment with all its pent up motivation that the GT method produces.

Do not talk

Do not talk the theory before it is written. There are many reasons. Talk vents to no avail the pent up motivation to write. Talk can easily derail the readiness moment that only the researcher feels and sees. Besides reducing the readiness motivation moment, others can start the reversibility of the interchangeability of indicators for concepts. By this is meant the coming theory, yet unwritten, has so much grab that others see indicators of it, which could yield more categories or subcategories. AND they are not gathered by research. They are gathered by triggering memories or by conjectures, thus they undermine the systematic collection of indicators done in the research. They indicate the grab of the coming theory, which is what we want, but they do not indicate systematically collected data by theoretical sampling. They can indicate general implication of the theory for future research.

These gratuitous indicators ignore the saturation of categories within the data set. And the GT method is based on saturating categories within the current data. They are part of the generated theory. Saturation ends the analysis and more indicators from "wherever" in the talk of others undermines before write-up the discovery of the core category and its conceptual resolution. More indicators could discourage the research with the readiness moment, thinking as if he missed something. The readiness moment must be seized, and the "more" data used subsequently by whoever. So stop, write after sorting memos.

Furthermore, more indicators from others, if used, can make the substantive theory too descriptive if they are not analyzed by constant comparative conceptualizing, which they seldom are. Thus the conceptual inductive power of the substantive theory by strict use of GT method can be weakened or even lost. Remember that conceptual coverage is unending for substantive GT. It is only with a formal GT of the core category that unending may give some closure, if at all. For example, one can take the core category of "supernormalizing" just about everywhere, on and on, always more indicators and implications.

This does not mean that the offered reversible, interchangeable indicators may not be interesting, or important. They are just not part of the systematic constant comparative conceptualization which generates the substantive theory. Again, they can be included in the appeal for future research. They should not be allowed to derail the substantive theory with accusations of a significant "miss". They should not dismay the researcher for not having it a viable concept for the indicator. The researcher must accept the grab of his generated, discovered theory, which will stimulate others to example it as a way of understanding it and even applying it. It is the joyous effect of the grab of GT to stimulate people, but just do not let it derail the readiness moment.

The readiness moment can easily be missed, derailed or blocked by the qualitative data analysis' (QDA) routine requirement to get full descriptive coverage. GT discovers and generates conceptual patterns among interchangeable indicators. Full coverage just repeats the saturation of conceptual patterns. It denies theoretical saturation. The pattern is the pattern like "routing," and more data on it does not help conceptual and is a bore descriptively. Unending data collection coverage per QDA has no place in GT, and undermines getting to the readiness moment to sort memos and stop and write the theory. Again I emphasize that the quest for full unending QDA data coverage undermines and denies GT conceptualization.

Furthermore, unending data collection takes time and resources that deplete the energy for generating a GT. This form of data coverage becomes a distortion on the theoretical completeness achieved by sticking to the method within the chosen population. To repeat for emphasis, a core category and 4 or 5 sub categories is enough to generate a process or typology, or five Cs. Of course the theory can be extended infinitely and unendingly and even a formal theory be generated with its general implications. But this is unnecessary. All that is required is to just do the beginning theory, sort the memos and seize the readiness moment provided by the method. This is complete enough and a good start for others to use it and extend it to a formal theory.

Unending theoretical coverage, like unending data coverage, can go on interminably, which is not the job of the original generator of the core category and beginning theory. New categories generated by a quest of theory coverage do not change the meanings of original generated central theory. They just extend and modify it for broader use, which is the job of a formal grounded theorist. So stop the quest for data coverage and conceptual coverage and write-up of memo sorts for the original, generated theory. Stay within the boundaries of the original, available data, resources and allotted

time, and its emergent categories of the generated theory. And yield to its original theoretical completeness and saturation. It is the first ending of generating a substantive grounded theory.

It is not for the original researcher to discover provisionally an apparently infinite core category theory. It is the SGT as discovered within the boundaries of the planned original research. That he/she must extend it unendingly, defeats the GT method by denying original closure. To continue excessive data collection and conceptualization is a fantasy of coverage. The researcher could never cover "it all" no matter how much extension. Keep in mind that the SGT is abstract of time, place and people, thus abstract of the description of the population used and which data/population is soon forgotten for using the theory. So the only real continued theoretical coverage is to plan to generate a formal theory (see my book Generating Formal theory), which is not the goal of a SGT. So again, stick with the GT method and get to the ready to write moment. Do not yield to the infinite extending, unending nature of a SGT, as a condition and often a way of avoiding write-up by needing to do yet more coverage in data and concepts.

SGT occurs within the boundaries of a set of data. Concepts are generated by saturation of the indicators within the data set, so more data collection is a redundant waste of time. Theoretical sampling and theoretical completeness are finalized within a population, and data collection within these boundaries and within the yield of the GT method is a waste of time. The patterns are the patterns. Sort memos and write them up.

Going to new data beyond the SGT is the beginning of a formal theory, which is not the task of the SGT researcher. The task of the GT researcher is to generate a theory within the chosen data boundaries. To start going elsewhere for more data under the guise of making the SGT "more comprehensive", changes the goal of just generating a SGT for and from an available population, which is soon to be forgotten anyway in generating the conceptual theory abstract of time, place, and people. More comprehensive is just a QDA excuse to keep collecting and even conceptualizing to pursue descriptive coverage. The general implications of the SGT may stimulate taking it to a formal theory level, if someone cares to generate a formal theory on new data outside the original boundaries of the SGT. But the modification will only increase the theory somewhat.

Remember, going comprehensive is a misnomer for GT. The original SGT is comprehensive enough. There is always more concepts that can be generated from more data outside the original boundaries of data, but a modest amount of theory from the original data source goes a long way in opening up a core variable theory, an SGT, with general implications that apply many places, anywhere and everywhere it seems as it is abstract of time place and people.

The path to follow is the core category theory from a chosen, accessible population within the resources and time of the researcher. He pursues the GT method from data collection, to conceptualization of a core category and its sub categories through theoretical sampling and saturation to sorting memos for writing-up readiness at the end of the GT research path. From the data boundaries emerge the conceptual boundaries, which lead to the readiness write up moment. Data choice is determined not by volume, but by accessibility. The GT researcher simply goes where the data exists within his resources and time. Conceptual boundaries do not require more data, and formal theory can take the SGT on and on when suitable by a researcher. Until then, the SGT is enough and needs to be written up to show others. The readiness moment, built into the GT method, should not be bypassed and its momentum ignored or discounted. The write-up is a vital part of the

method that must finalize the SGT. Its timing is sequential, its doing not optional. Unending data and conceptual coverage just changes the method to a routine QDA with descriptive generalizations which become stale dated very soon. Conceptual generalizations last forever, e.g. there will always be supernormalizing or credentializing or likening (See GT Seminar Reader).

The GT method puts the researcher and his readers on the conceptual abstract level. Data overload lowers this abstract level to description. If the researcher finds it hard to stop data overload collecting, he/she is not using the constant comparative method to generate pattern/ concepts which would curb and alter the constant quest for data, that is just more indicators of what has already been conceptualized. And the readiness to write-up moment is derailed by this useless overload and lack of memo sorting.

Another form of overload was brought to attention by Hans Thulesius. He says "Another one of my PHD students is doing the opposite. She is overloading the writing by intermingling GT concepts with professional jargon concepts, so you cannot get heads or tails of what is grounded theory and what is conjecture from her position as a walking survey." In short, the researcher should write up ONLY the GT emergent concepts and leave the intermingling of these SGT concepts with those from his/her profession to the literature integration when reworking the paper. This type of overload can seriously derail or even hide the GT in a world of professional jargon.

Anticipation

In contrast to missing the readiness moment by overload, a student wrote me: "It is such an exciting prospect to think that I will hopefully find something new at the end of the research and write it up." Further she says, "I am writing numerous notes and memos and trigger words and sentences and they are helping me overcome my writer's block by stimulating thoughts and ideas, I am guessing then that writing will become easier." Thus, while doing her research according to the GT method, she is feeling the readiness to write momentum build as she writes memos. Also keep in mind that a memo can be any form of conceptual; writing varying from a trigger word, a jot to a several page conceptual conclusion or sub theory. It all gets sorted. In summary, students find it exciting that the GT method itself will produce a write-up of their theory. They are ready to become ready to write-up when appropriate. It does away with a major concern of many students. That is the question "when do I write and how do I write?"

To not sort memos into a theory to write-up leaves the researcher who wants to write NOT ready, and not knowing how, to write-up the theory. If one tries, he/she has jumped a vital stage of the GT methodology and is left wondering how to present the SGT as he is not yet ready, however eager to write. One student wrote me about her quandary of not knowing what or how to write before sorting memos. She said "Currently having difficulty in writing up the theory chapter. Just wondering what actually should be put in the theory chapter and how should it be framed, should it have a sequence process and how are the theoretical codes interweaved? While you say that memos are the write-up, how do you know as a novice classic GT researcher that you have comprehensively covered the concepts in the theory?" The answer to her quandary is simple: The memos are sorted into a theory, using theoretical codes usually, but not totally necessary and the write-up is of the various piles of sorts which show the concepts and how they are integrated to write-up. In short, this researcher was not ready to write and her need to write was premature. So as often as I say stop write, I can also say do not write until ready and readied by a pile or piles of sorted memos emerged into a theory that tells the researcher what to write-up.

Using the GT method can easily in some cases generate an eagerness and anticipation to write before ready by sticking with the method. The researcher must be patient about writing until the readiness moment. One student wrote me "Now I am excited to write. But first I gotta figure out how to code and memo. Got lots of resource material and I am going to trust the GT method." Yes, sit on the eagerness to write until the readiness moment comes after sorting memos. Your trust in the method will be proven wise and warranted...and productive. Another student wrote "eagerness to write is getting the better of me." She curbed her premature writing of her SGT until ready. It will satisfy those researchers who feel "creative and ready to go," as one PhD student wrote me.

Writing up ones sorted memos is academic writing. It is NOT the narrative prose of a GT research process when the researcher wishes to bring the reader to a cutting point in his generating a substantive theory, even though the researcher may be beyond this cutting point in his thinking of researcher possibilities. But the researcher has enough in his memos to write an SGT In a working paper. Enough as I have said is a core category and 4 to 6 subcategories. To keep going on with more conceptualization is needless overload and his time and resources are not as yet available to keep going on. Future going on with the research can lead to chapters for a book, and each chapter being a sub theory of the core SGT.

Furthermore, to not write up sorted memos into a paper when the readiness moment arrives, is to risk depleting the energy from the motivational drive built into the GT method at every step. As I have said, a major block to readiness is too much talk with others even if they know GT methodology and worse if they do not. The researcher easily gets over loaded with more indicators of a pattern he already know. Shy waiting too long also withers the energy to seize the readiness moment. Choosing the readiness moment too soon is better than seizing it too late. Too soon still retains energy to keep generating. Too late leads to loss of energy for the write-up task. The cumulative buildup of motivation to write-up is a simple product of using the GT method. The write-up will become very exciting as the researcher sees his months of research according to the GT method emergently producing a theory with grab.

It is easy enough for me to say stop, write when the readiness moment arrives by using the GT methodology, but in actuality, detecting the moment may not be so easy. The researcher could be on a conceptual binge following general implications and miss saturation. An important tactic to stop coding overload is write memos on saturation of the core category and its sub categories, This fixes the relevant patterns In mind and their indicators, so the researcher can realize the saturation of the categories that make up the central SGT and stop coding and even collecting more data. These saturation memos will alert him to theoretical completeness of his SGT and to start sorting his memos for writing up. They will forestall taking the SGT in new directions away from the core emergent theory. Which suffices. They will stop the going on forever phenomenon of seeing the core category application everywhere. The saturation memos can also be used to stop the competitive parlance with others giving more indicators of the same patterns, if the researcher does talk about his theory before written.

Theoretical saturation memos help put the emerging GT, yet to be written, on the conceptual level abstract of time, place and people, which will help sorting memos and writing them up. Saturation memos firm up the concept in the bargain abstract of time place and people. Theoretical saturation memos also helps the eventual integration of concepts too soon be written into a theory, a theory that leaves behind the data it emerged from. This also forestalls dropping into QDA conceptual description. Memos of theoretical

saturation will prevent the researcher from conceptualizing way beyond his core theory, which is all that is necessary. The patterns and their properties are the pattern, period. Saturation memos are a way of telling others that this saturation is enough for a theory that brings people to the researcher level. Over kill coverage is just that, by diluting the core category SGT. The impact of the theory can be killed.

An SGT with grab is an unending theory to generate. For some researchers, the rich conceptualization about the core category is hard to stop, especially for very smart, jargonizing researchers. They can go on and on conceptualizing with conjecture and more data as is their nature pressure and lack of self control. And if the researcher is a walking survey by doing a researcher in his own field, such as a nurse doing a study of some facet of nursing, stopping to write is even harder. This easily then becomes a scattered, not integrated, professional overdue and partly professionally jargonized with the generated concepts. Theoretical sampling does not yield to saturation in this condition. Pride and zest increase the never enough unending generating of theory and easily to the formal theory level. The cutting point of the readiness moment for a write-up of the theory is felt as not enough, and it actually is. The readiness completion moment is passed over for the ever growing of the theory in whatever direction. The researcher is actually generating several papers as if there is only one great paper, which there is not. One can find many papers in the over extending conceptualizing analysis. There is always more, and several papers are easier to reach the public with than one extended one with too much coverage. Stop, write, as the original core category of your SGT must be written by starting with the first working paper. Extending to make it comprehensive is a fantasy not worth chasing.

Core categories have grab and easily lead to general implications hard to resist. But resist he must to avoid extending the theoretical sampling on beyond the readiness to write-up momentum of sorted memos. For example David Healee emailed me, ”My inquiry is as follows. At the seminar I was encouraged to stay within the substantive area that of fractured participants only. However, is it appropriate to move outside this specific boundary for theoretical sampling? I would like to interview older adults with other acute illness/injury to clarify if renormalizing is present which includes living with existing conditions. Therefore I am interviewing for conceptual clarity and that re-normalizing is a natural pattern of behavior. Barney, your thoughts would be appreciated.”

My response was NO, stop, write your substantive on renormalizing regarding physical, cognitive and psychological sub categories. Then suggest your general implications for further research for living with all impairments. Do not let the general implications sabotage the clarity of your substantive theory boundaries. Do not go on and on. Write your SGT. Yield to the readiness to write momentum by sorting your memos into a theory if you have not already sorted. Do not show the original, rough draft of your write-up as quality is not the issue, and colleagues and supervisors will start quality remarks of over care, which can be very discouraging. There will be plenty of time to show the paper after reworking the rough draft, but at this step the theory is on paper. Now it’s a GT product, the result of the GT methodology. Reworking the rough draft can be taken into many styles of paper suitable to a diverse public, and the SGT researcher’s recognition, hence stature, starts to grow and the general implications can be pursued on other populations based on a written foundation that can be continued to grow the comprehensiveness of the original SGT. So stop, write, to start occurring these important consequences of more conceptualization. Even to start a formal GT if warranted. The strength of the GT method leads systematically to these important career, creativity, and contribution consequences.

Writing-up memo sorts yield just a working paper that will eventually be reworked, so do not worry about styles or writing techniques in the working paper. Style and techniques will come into play when reworking the paper according to its eventual public use. One can dream of writing a book, but that comes later. Rough working papers can abuse grammar, which will be cleaned up in reworking the rough draft. The important thing is to write up the ideas in the memos sorted piles. Get them on paper as the theory of how the core category continually resolves a main concern. It only takes one core category and 4 to 6 conceptual sub categories or properties. This is very different from regular writing taught in school.

Setting a timetable

Another help to write-up is setting a timetable and interim deadlines. And also set writing planned times in your day. Even if you vary from the times scheduled, you will have a temporal budget framework to judge your completion by and you have a reason to not lag behind in the write-up. If forced, you can tell significant others your temporal budget and why you might put yourself out of contact for a while as you are writing. One student wrote me that she will take about a year to write the full dissertation, and she is about a year late and will not meet the PhD program deadline. She is taking too long, and mixing write-up with reworking for use and showing to others or for publication use. As you will see below, reworking is not typical writing also and very different from the initial rough draft. She says: "even though I feel extremely motivated I worry about this time frame." Thus, readiness momentum was not enough. She needed a temporal framework suitable to her time and ability and she did not realize the write-up stage as rough.

Researchers tend to outgrow their SGT when it is rich with grab and general implications. It is important in the write to stay within the boundaries of the substantive population from which the theory emerged. This is why talk derails boundaries as others take off with interchangeable indicators outside your population. There is plenty of time for this. Now stay within the boundaries of your concepts and your data. As said above, unending conceptual analysis tends to breaking through substantive boundaries. Stay within the theoretical completeness and saturation of the substantive data however provisional it may seem for further general implications and however strong your outgrowing your SGT may seem. Remember you are just bringing people to your original SGT level. You will always know more of the theory as it continually emerges in your realizations of more constant comparisons yielding more patterns. The SGT in the sorted memos is enough and not to be undermined by unending conceptual analysis.

Also the write-up readiness momentum keeps in bounds the researcher's original resources of time, money and work planning. To keep extending conceptual analysis and data collection can easily use up these resources and can leave the researcher lacking a product and "poor" in resources to work one up out of data and analysis overload. They can easily get out of control, and life and other issues and work take over and reduce the priorities of the GT research for career and life. One advantage of having a collaborator is that the researcher's one or two collaborators can force each other to keep the project within resource boundaries to get the write-up done when the method makes it ready. The write-up is important for all.

A colleague with GT experience can also keep up the researcher's pace, by using experiential stories and generalizations, if the colleague is respected and allowed entry to the researcher's path. He/she can remind the researcher that data is judged by quality of conceptual yield using the constant comparative method, not by volume. And the yield demands write-up by following the GT method and it is important to follow the readiness

momentum to write what come with sorting memos. This will stop the danger of superthink by continued conceptualization by conjecture and deductive speculation. It's a natural tendency coming from the grab of a SGT.

Furthermore, extending the SGT will not change it. It just modifies its conditions by adding sub properties. The researcher will not lose his generated write-up discovery. Modification can give it more use, hence recognition to the original, autonomous researcher GT theorist. Modification may lead to a formal theory. But all modifications and subsequent use of the SGT are done and based on using the original write-up of the researcher who did it. I can only emphasize yet again that the original data is good as far as it goes, and is enough for the theory comprising 4 to 6 sub categories and a core category. There will always be more possible data, but these data when conceptualized just modify the SGT, by taking it anywhere and everywhere, They do not verify it, nor make the original SGT lacking or corrected. The original SGT is enough for theoretical completeness. Its richness and grab should motivate the write-up. Seeing the core category operating everywhere is part of the fit, work, and relevance of the original SGT is general enough. It starts with the write-up. Subsequent modification just helps see the theory's generality. New related theories do not change the original SGT, they just extend and modify it. And increase its abstraction from time, place, and people, that is its generality.

In this final stage of the GT methodology, the write-up of piles of memo sorts, writing techniques and styles are not important. There is plenty of time for reworking the writing according to desired styles. The purpose of the write-up is to capture the integration of the SGT into a conceptual explanation of how a core category is continually resolved. This is in stark contrast to QDA writing, which is typically lengthy description with some implicit theory and a concept.

Grammar, punctuation, paragraphs are left crude and will be fixed in reworking for style and presentation later. Now the goal is to capture in writing the theory in the sorted memos. The researcher does not say I am writing at this stage. He says, "I am writing up." And actually his writing up started with the emergence of parts of his substantive theory within the first conceptual memos.

The researcher does not report to others that he is writing. He reports, if necessary, that he is writing up his theoretical memos into a theory. He is not a writer per se, so no need to fear or be shy writing-up. He is just making sure his theory is not a lost product that he worked so hard to generate, as it will be without a write-up. The write-up is not hard. It is in the sorted memos. No memory is required.

Although he/she is writing up memos, and not writing from memory, he is likely to realize even more conceptual memos when writing up. He should write them up and sort them in as long as they are grounded. At this stage the theory should be robust enough, but if too thin, the researcher may have to go back to the field. After all this grounding he /she should not conjecture like it was grounded or he make a lead part of his appeal for future research. The rigorous process that got him to write-up of sorted memos should not be undermined by conjecture of ungrounded "wisdoms", especially not by the competitive parlance of close colleagues if the researcher does talk while writing up. Colleagues and supervisors will always have theoretical sampling ideas and conjecture coming from the grab of the core variable general implications.

This chapter is serious, so I will be a bit repetitive in closing it.

The final empowerment of the GT research process is reached in the final stage of the GT method, that is, writing up conceptually an integrated set of conceptual hypotheses

generated in sorting the theoretical memos into categories and their relationships. There is no preconceived outline. An outline emerges in sorting memos into the relationship structure of the theory using theoretical codes. Theoretical completeness is generated and emerged within the boundaries of the research population and emerged core category. The theory explains how a core category and its subcategories continually resolved a main concern. This is very exciting to the GT researcher. He/she becomes very excited about the wonderful SGT discovered and generated, which excitement spills into the readiness momentum to write up conceptually. Writing conceptually is a major experientially learned empowerment of the grounded theory researcher. As one student wrote me: "I am a creative individual at heart and here would be the way for me to express it. When I was told about GT. I got it and understood what to do." The autonomously gained excitement comes naturally to many researchers when doing GT and finally writing up.

Writing up freezes for the moment the generated product yielded from the intense activity of the GT research from the start. It starts the future reworking of the SGT write up for many purposes. To repeat, the GT method has provided many stages of emergent generating of concepts to theoretical saturation and completeness and the last stage of a write-up. Concepts have been generated and saturated. Memos written about them with subsequent growing maturity. Then the memos are sorted for a write-up. So stop, write, and actualize the previous months of research work. And write-up before saturation leads eventually beyond excitement to loss of readiness motivation to write and distractions from elsewhere which can undermine finishing the research with a written product. Of course, do not write up too soon, especially before sorted memos.

But also do not let the readiness momentum diminish. Stop writing up only when all the memo sorts are written up. Keep up the writing until totally complete. Then the SGT will be as good as it can go within the boundaries of the present GT research. Do not worry about the crudity of the writing – grammar, paragraphs, spelling, best outline, etc. English editing will take care of that later, it is the conceptual ideas that count. Upon stopping when complete, congratulations, you have discovered, generated and emerged a substantive grounded theory according to the classic GT method.

The above article Stop.Write! is identical to the first chapter of Barney G. Glaser's latest book, "Stop.Write! Writing Grounded Theory!". To be published later in 2012.

Classic Grounded Theory to Analyse Secondary Data: Reality and Reflections

Lorraine Andrews, Agnes Higgins, Michael Waring Andrews, and Joan G. Lalor

Abstract

This paper draws on the experiences of two researchers and discusses how they conducted a secondary data analysis using classic grounded theory. The aim of the primary study was to explore first-time parents' postnatal educational needs. A subset of the data from the primary study (eight transcripts from interviews with fathers) was used for the secondary data analysis. The objectives of the secondary data analysis were to identify the challenges of using classic grounded theory with secondary data and to explore whether the re-analysis of primary data using a different methodology would yield a different outcome. Through the process of re-analysis a tentative theory emerged on 'developing competency as a father'. Challenges encountered during this re-analysis included the small dataset, the pre-framed data, and limited ability for theoretical sampling. This re-analysis proved to be a very useful learning tool for author 1(LA), who was a novice with classic grounded theory.

Introduction

The concept of secondary data analysis appears to have first entered the literature nearly 50 years ago, when Glaser discussed the potential of re-analysing data 'which were originally collected for other purposes' (1963, p. 11). Despite the 50-year gap, there still remains a paucity of literature which specifically addresses the processes and challenges of applying secondary data analysis to primary qualitative data and exploring the implications and outcomes of using a different methodology. This paper draws on the experiences of two people who attempted to use a classic grounded theory approach to analyse previously collected primary qualitative data.

Prior to discussing the approach to secondary data analysis used for this study, the differences between primary data, secondary data and primary and secondary data analysis and metasynthesis are briefly outlined. Primary data originates from a study in which a researcher collects information him/herself to answer a particular research question. Secondary data, on the other hand, is data that already exists (Glaser, 1963). Consequently, the secondary data analyst is not involved in the recruitment of participants or in the collection of the data. Heaton (2004) defines secondary data analysis as 'a research strategy which makes use of pre-existing quantitative data or pre-existing qualitative data for the purposes of investigating new questions or verifying previous studies' (p. 16). In other words, secondary data analysis is the use of previously collected data, for some other purpose. It is not a method of data analysis, therefore methods such as grounded theory or statistical analysis, for example, can be applied to the process of secondary data analysis. Metasynthesis, on the other hand, differs from secondary data analysis in that it analyses qualitative findings from a group of studies, and does not re-use the primary data set, e.g. interviews, diaries, photographs, stories and field notes. Rather, it is 'the aggregating of a group of studies for the purpose of discovering the essential

elements and translating the results into the end product that transforms the original results into a new conceptualisation' (Schreiber, Crooks & Stern, 1997, p. 314).

A review of the literature highlights a number of reasons for conducting a secondary data analysis including: applying a new research question (Heaton, 2004); using old data to generate new ideas (Fielding, 2004); 'verification, refutation and refinement of existing research' (Heaton, 2004, p. 9), and exploring data from a different perspective (Hinds, Vogel & Clarke-Steffen, 1997). Despite the fact that secondary data analysis has been in use as a research tool for quite some time it has, in the main, been applied to primary quantitative data (Brewer, 2006), and its use with qualitative data is relatively new (Heaton, 1998). Qualitative secondary data analysis has its supporters and its sceptics, and one reason why so few researchers use this approach is because they feel there may be something ethically, practically or epistemologically problematic about re-using qualitative data (Mason, 2007). The most common reason why researchers conduct a secondary data analysis, according to Fielding (2004), is in order to re-analyse the data from a new perspective with a view to gaining new insights. Most instances of qualitative secondary data analysis tend to be those where the primary researcher re-analyses his/her original work (Parry & Mauthner, 2005; Gladstone, Volpe & Boydell, 2007).

Secondary data analysis: benefits

The last number of years has witnessed an increase in the number of databases where original qualitative data can be deposited and accessed for secondary analysis. Examples include the Irish Qualitative Data Archive (IQDA) which was established in 2011, (http://www.iqda.ie/content/welcome-iqda), and in the UK, the Qualitative Data Archival Resource Centre (ESDS Qualidata), (http://www.esds.ac.uk/qualidata/about/introduction.asp). It is also becoming increasingly common for funders to request researchers, as a condition of funding, to deposit their data in a relevant database (Bishop, 2007). The development of these databases will no doubt lead to an increase in the number of qualitative secondary data analysis studies in the future.

A review of the literature suggests that there are a number of advantages to secondary data analysis. Heaton (2004) points out that secondary data analysis is an effective means of analysing data when there is difficulty accessing a hard-to-reach sample, and when dealing with particularly sensitive issues, small populations and rare phenomena. Another benefit includes enhancing quality control by verifying original research, thus adding to the transparency, trustworthiness and credibility of the original findings. Others take a more pragmatic view and consider the re-use of existing data an efficient way of conducting research as it eliminates the need to spend time recruiting and gaining access to participants (Corti, 2008; Trochim, 2006); it is also considered in order to minimise the time and financial expense associated with data collection (Corti, 2008), e.g. recording device, transport and transcription costs. A final and important benefit of secondary data analysis is that it is recognised as a valuable teaching and learning tool for novice researchers (Glaser, 1963). Re-analysing existing data enables students to engage in experiential learning about a substantive issue and/or a particular methodology and, in so doing, protects potential research participants while students are learning how to carry out research in a safe way (Brewer, 2006). Despite all the positives, secondary data analysis has its critics. A number of writers highlight the drawbacks of re-analysing interview data including a loss of control over data collection (Brewer, 2006, Szabo & Strang 1997), lack of knowledge and information around the interview experience, and the inability to raise questions and probe about emerging themes in subsequent interviews (Bishop, 2007; Szabo & Strang 1997).

Objectives of secondary data analysis in this study

The objectives of the secondary data analysis in this study were threefold. Firstly, to identify the challenges of using classic grounded theory with secondary data, as not all primary data may be amenable to secondary data analysis (Heaton, 1998); secondly, to explore the potential of secondary data analysis as a teaching and learning tool for the principles and procedures of classic grounded theory; and thirdly to explore whether the re-analysis of primary data using a different methodology would yield a different result.

Methodology for this study

The methodology that informed this secondary data analysis study drew on Glaser's writing in the area of classic grounded theory (Glaser, 1978, 1998, 2001, 2003, 2005). The grounded theory method offers a rigorous, orderly guide for theory development. Although structured and systematic, it is designed to allow the researcher to be free of the structure of more forced methodologies. Its real strength lies in its open-ended approach to discovery. The four techniques that lie at the heart of the classic grounded theory method are: coding (open and theoretical), constant comparative analysis, theoretical sampling and theoretical saturation. These techniques are used to guide the analytical process towards the development and refinement of a theory that is grounded in data.

However, unlike qualitative research which focuses on producing 'thick descriptions' of data, the grounded theorist focuses on organising ideas that emerge from data, and conceptually transcends the data and develops ideas on a level of generality higher in conceptual abstraction than the material being analysed (Glaser, 2001). Classic grounded theory was chosen to conduct this secondary data analysis in order to facilitate the first author's (LA) need to learn the principles and procedures of classic grounded theory while actually conducting the secondary data analysis, as she was about to commence a larger, classic grounded theory study.

Brief description of primary dataset

The aim of the primary study was to explore first-time parents' perceptions of their educational needs in the postnatal period (Andrews, 2000). Ten women and eight men were recruited during the women's postnatal stay in hospital. All participants were interviewed separately three weeks after the birth of their baby. Data was collected using a semi-structured interview schedule based on a review of the literature. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis. The study was informed by the writings of Strauss and Corbin (1998) and their approach to grounded theory. Data was analysed using the constant comparative method, where eight categories were developed: four for the mothers' data and four for the fathers' data. For the secondary data analysis which is the focus of this paper, a subset of the data from the primary study, which included eight detailed interviews with fathers, was analysed.

Status of the authors in relation to the primary dataset

The first author (LA) collected and analysed the original data as part requirement for an academic award. The second author (AH) is an experienced researcher who has used and taught classic grounded theory methods.

Ethical issues

Similar to all research studies, secondary data analysis requires attention to ethical concerns. Writers in the area of secondary data analysis highlight issues such as copyright, informed consent, confidentiality and ownership of data (Parry & Mauthner, 2005; Heaton, 2004; Cobban, Edgington, & Pimlott, 2008). Parry and Mauthner (2005) view qualitative data as a joint venture between participants and researcher and, as a consequence, both parties should retain ownership rights over the data. In the context of this study, it was not possible to return to the participants of the primary study for further consent as the data had been collected 10 years earlier, and in keeping with the Data Protection Act (1988; Data Protection (Amendment) Act 2003) of that time and the original informed consent, the participants' contact details and tape recordings had been destroyed. In keeping with the conditions of the Data Protection Act all identifiable material was destroyed 5 years after the study commenced. Ethical approval for the secondary data analysis was received from the University Faculty of Health Sciences' ethics committee and it was given on the basis that the original transcripts were anonymised and there was no possibility of tracing the participants.

In order to ensure confidentiality, LA who completed the original study revisited each transcript to check that they were all anonymous. In addition, a new pseudonym was allocated to each participant before the other researcher was given access.

Giving permission to other researchers to view one's own data can be a daunting and challenging experience, as it has the potential to expose the original researcher to criticism or academic inquiry. As part of the ethical process, the second researcher (AH) agreed to work in a respectful and supportive manner with the primary data collector and to use the opportunity as a learning process for both.

Benefits of having original researcher on secondary data analysis team

It is widely acknowledged that the re-use of qualitative data is maximised when extensive context is provided about the primary study (Berg, 2006; Fielding, 2004; Heaton, 2004; Van den Berg, 2005). Fielding (2004) notes that context and its relationship to the data is a practical rather than an epistemological or a theoretical issue. Therefore, secondary data analysts need to be given as much information as possible about the primary study so that they are familiar with the research and social context of the original study (Fielding, 2004; Heaton, 2004). Silva (2007) also emphasises the importance of knowing the context of the fieldwork practices. Without this knowledge, there is the potential to de-contextualise the data (Moore, 2007; Van den Berg, 2005).

One of the advantages of having the primary researcher involved in the secondary data analysis was that, within this study, she was in a position to provide information on research context including: the aim of the primary study, the methodology used, how and where participants were recruited, data collection methods and how these were recorded, why certain decisions were made, why certain questioning pathways were followed or not followed, as the case may be, what method of data analysis was used, and problems

encountered. In addition, information on the social context of the study was provided, for example, where the study took place, when and where data was collected and the researcher's and the participants' backgrounds (Van den Berg, 2005). While this information was interesting, is was not essential in the context of a secondary analysis using classical grounded theory.

Objective 1: Identifying the challenges of using Classic Grounded Theory with secondary data

Using classic grounded theory on secondary data raised a number of issues for both researchers in relation to grounded theory, including issues around coding for the main concern, theoretical sampling, theoretical saturation and theoretical coding.

Coding for the main concern

The focus of classic grounded theory is on identifying the participants' main concern and how they resolve that concern. In this way, the research problem emerges from the participants, as opposed to it being predefined by the researcher (Glaser, 1992). In order to identify the participants' main concern and the process by which they resolve their concern, the researchers independently used the constant comparative method to code and analyse the transcripts and were guided by the following questions: What is this a study of? What categories does this incident indicate? What property of what category does this incident indicate? (Glaser, 1998, p. 123). This model of asking questions, comparing incident with incident, code with code and later category with category, resulted in the emergence of a main concern and the development of preliminary concepts and categories.

In contrast with the classic grounded theory approach to interviewing, which is characterised by 'instilling a spill' (Glaser, 1998, p. 111), the original primary data was collected using a semi-structured interview schedule. This posed a challenge in the re-analysis, as the participants' responses were pre-framed within the original research question which was: What are first-time parents' perceptions of their postnatal educational needs? In addition, the range and depth of participants' responses was also limited by the use of an interview schedule and the researchers did not have access to the original field notes and memos. Consequently, it took a lot of reading, coding and recoding before the participants' main concern became apparent. Indeed, the authors would strongly agree that, in the context of secondary data analysis and grounded theory methodology, 'a large collection of recorded and transcribed in-depth interviews with detailed field notes may [have] offer[ed] greater potential for re-analysis than a more focused self limited set of semi-structured interviews' (Corti, 2008, para. 3).

Theoretical sampling

Theoretical sampling is a form of non-probability sampling and is considered to be a defining property of grounded theory. Glaser (1998, p.157) suggested that theoretical sampling is both directed by the emerging theory and further directs its emergence, and 'is the conscious, grounded deductive aspect of the inductive coding, collecting and analysing'. The basic question in theoretical sampling is where to go next in data collection in order to develop the theory. Glaser (1998) believed that participants, events, sites or other sources of data (for example, documentation) are selected on the basis of theoretical purpose and

relevance as opposed to structural circumstances. Within the secondary data analysis experience, although it was possible to move back and forth between the transcripts and to theoretically sample for emerging ideas and concepts, it was not possible to sample new participants, events or other sources of data to inform the emerging categories and their properties. Therefore, in secondary data analysis, theory development is limited to the data at hand, as concepts and questions that arise cannot be pursued in subsequent interviews (Bishop, 2007). However, researchers do have the option to saturate their theory by collecting new primary data, if they so wish.

Theoretical saturation

Within classic grounded theory there is no set sample size, nor are limits set on the number of participants or data sources, just sampling for saturation and completeness, which results in an ideational sample as opposed to a representative sample (Glaser, 1998). The criterion used, therefore, to guide the researcher on when to stop sampling is theoretical saturation. In the context of this secondary data analysis study, the limitations around theoretical sampling also restricted the researchers' ability to achieve theoretical saturation. Although the main concern was conceptualised and some emerging categories and properties were identified, it was not possible to arrive at the stage where one could be confident that no additional data could be found to develop properties of a category (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). There is no doubt, however, that had the dataset been larger or had the researchers had the opportunity to return to the field, theoretical saturation would have been reached.

Theoretical coding

Theoretical codes are abstract models for the synthesis and integration of emerging categories (Glaser, 2005). Like everything else in grounded theory, a theoretical code must emerge from the data as opposed to being forced onto the data. Although some theoretical codes were beginning to emerge as possibilities for integrating the theory, theoretical codes which would create links between all the categories were not identified, due to the limitations of the size of the dataset and the inability to return to the field.

Objective 2: To explore the potential of secondary data analysis as an effective teaching and learning tool for classic grounded theory

As highlighted earlier, as far back as 1963 Glaser recognised secondary data analysis as a valuable teaching and learning tool (Glaser, 1963). Although it omits some important steps in the research process such as negotiating access, sampling and data collection (Szabo & Strang, 1997), the valuable aspect of secondary data analysis as an experiential learning exercise held true within this project. The application of a different methodology and the process of secondary data analysis also created a greater understanding of the differences and similarities between the Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) and the classic grounded theory (Glaser, 1978, 1992, 1998) approaches to grounded theory. This was important, as LA was about to embark on a study using classic grounded theory for the first time and wanted to avoid the potential pitfall of 'blurring the methods' (Cutcliffe & McKenna, 1999).

While conducting the secondary data analysis, LA learned a great deal about the procedures and principles of classic grounded theory and how this approach differed from the Strauss and Corbin approach to grounded theory which was used in the primary study.

It is not the purpose of this paper to expand on the debate regarding the differences between the classic grounded theory and the Strauss and Corbin approach, what Glaser (1998, p. 35) calls 'rhetorical wrestle', as these have been well documented elsewhere (Cooney, 2010; Kelle, 2007; Walker & Myrick, 2006; McCallin, 2003; Annells, 1997a; Annells, 1997b; Glaser, 1992) but rather to discuss what has been learned from the experience of applying a different methodology to a primary dataset. Heath and Cowley (2004) state that 'it is methodological rather than ontological and epistemological aspects that have been cited as the main source of divergence' (p. 142).

As Walker and Myrick (2006) note, the crux of the differences lies in the 'interventions and activities in which the researcher engages with the data' (p. 549). It was interventions and activities such as the semi-structured nature of data collection, coding in a conditional matrix, and forcing versus emergence of theory which were the main differences found between the two approaches during this secondary data analysis. The primary study applied Strauss and Corbin (1998) approach and it was found to be a suitable method for the novice researcher at that time, as it provided structure. However, in contrast with this, the classic grounded theory method is less structured and requires more patience (Walker & Myrick, 2006), and this held true when coding for the main concern and theoretically sampling for concepts in the secondary data analysis.

Although the secondary data analysis did yield a tentative, albeit unsaturated theory, most of the problems arose when the classic grounded theory approach was applied to a subset of the primary dataset, as it was evident that the procedures of data collection and analysis differed greatly from the Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) approach that had been applied initially. One reason for the difficulty in searching for a new perspective was that the primary research began with a specific question, namely, 'What are first-time parents' postnatal educational needs?' In contrast, classic grounded theory does not begin with a hypothesis or a preconceived theoretical framework, it begins with an area of interest and data collection proceeds from this (Glaser, 1998).

In the secondary data analysis the general area of interest was: What is the main concern of men when they become a father and how do they resolve that concern. Glaser (1992) states that the logic of grounded theory is to ask two questions when examining the data, and this was adhered to throughout the secondary data analysis. The questions are: 1) 'What is the chief concern or problem of the people in the substantive area, and what accounts for most of the variation in processing the problem?' 2) 'What category or what property of what category does this incident indicate?' (p. 4).

This pattern of questioning is not used in the Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) approach, and as the primary data analysis used a preconceived theoretical framework to guide data collection and data analysis, it was incongruent with the classic grounded theory approach to grounded theory. Glaser (1992, p. 4) remarks that, in grounded theory, true emergence is interrupted by the asking of several pre-conceived questions, which takes the analyst somewhere different from what might be really going on, and in doing so, leads to the outcome being a preconceived conceptual description. The primary study although valuable in itself, did result in a conceptual description of mothers' and fathers' postnatal educational needs. The secondary data analysis led, to a small extent, to the discovery of an underdeveloped theory but as Glaser (1992) points out, the use of a preconceived set of questions was not flexible enough to facilitate true emergence, and although 'this can be significant in its own right, it is not emergent grounded theory' (Glaser, 1992, p. 4).

The application of a more open perspective using the classic grounded theory approach was restricted by the semi-structured interviewing technique used for initial data

collection, which focused on a pre-framed set of questions based on a review of the literature. Problems arose during the secondary data analysis when certain concepts were being theoretically sampled for to fill in the emerging theory.

Although rich descriptions were evident in the data, and the questions asked were answered by the participants, there were some theoretical concepts emerging which were unrelated to the questioning framework and these were left relatively unexplored. That is to say that there were some areas which could have been explored in greater depth, for example, men's experiences of becoming a father. One explanation for this is that during the primary data analysis LA was not focused on this particular theme at the time and simply wanted answers to the questions about fathers' postnatal educational needs, which was the preconceived question from the outset. This may have restricted the flexibility and creativity which Glaser (1998) talks about, and inhibited true emergence of theory. What has now been realised through conducting this secondary data analysis is that a set of pre-framed questions is very restrictive and does force the outcome, as opposed to allowing the data to speak for itself which could have resulted in true emergence and, possibly, a different outcome.

In addition, by engaging in the process of secondary data analysis, LA was enabled to improve on interview technique, and to identify strategies for engaging in more open-style interviews**.** She also learned more about strategies to be employed when conducting classic grounded theory interviews. One of these was the tactic of starting the interview with a very open question, for example, 'Tell me about your experiences of becoming a father'. Another was the 'instilling a spill' technique (Glaser, 1998, p. 111) which is useful if interviews become stagnant or wander off the beaten track, for example, 'It's not easy caring for a new baby'. Executing grounded theory is undoubtedly a skill that needs to be learned, and although certain elements of this were acquired during the primary study they required further development, in particular, the practice of remaining open and moving from the concrete to the abstract to allow for creativity (Glaser, 1998).

Conceptualisation of the data through coding is the foundation of grounded theory. Open coding was not problematic, as open coding had been applied in the primary study, however, this secondary data analysis led to a deeper understanding of the differences between using a predefined theoretical code and allowing the theoretical code to emerge. The Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) approach facilitated data analysis by fitting the emergent codes neatly into a coding matrix or paradigm and this facilitated a more structured approach to the primary data analysis. 'Axial coding is a set of procedures where data are put back together in new ways after open coding, which includes a coding paradigm that involves conditions, action/interactional strategies and consequences' (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 96). In contrast the classic grounded theory method allowed true emergence of the theory and the theoretical code. To achieve this LA was required to resist imposing order on the data and instead look for patterns of behaviour in the data and wait for the theoretical code to emerge.

Glaser (1992, p. 22) argues that Strauss's approach facilitates 'forcing data', and this held true in the primary study where data was neatly compartmentalized into categories which emerged from a preconceived framework. Glaser (1992) states that 'once this form of forced coding starts, the grounded theory is usually lost, because the analyst is led far away from relevance' (p. 47). Although the classic grounded theory approach is less structured, it is a more flexible and far less prescriptive approach and is very useful when there is little known on an area, and where the goal is to discover the theory implicit in the data.

Another learning outcome was the difference between theoretical conceptualisation and conceptual description. As Glaser (1998) points out, abstract conceptualisations are tied

to the substantive area of enquiry and not to people or time, whereas the Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) approach focuses on context, causal conditions, action/interactional strategies and consequences. Conducting a secondary data analysis also highlighted the value of memoing. Memos were employed in the primary data analysis; however, they were not availed of during the secondary data analysis, leading to some omissions as to the train of thought, and why some avenues were left relatively unexplored. This reinforced the importance of memoing when conducting a grounded theory study. However, new memos were written during the process of secondary data analysis and these proved essential in the development and write up of the tentative theory outlined below.

A great deal of knowledge has been gleaned from this experiential learning exercise, as LA was in the privileged position of being able to learn the principles and procedures of classic grounded theory while having access to advice and support from experienced grounded theorists. Conducting a secondary data analysis has been a very useful exercise in learning the method to take forward into a new, classic grounded theory study so that it is clear from the outset how this method should proceed without any confusion regarding the procedures and principles involved.

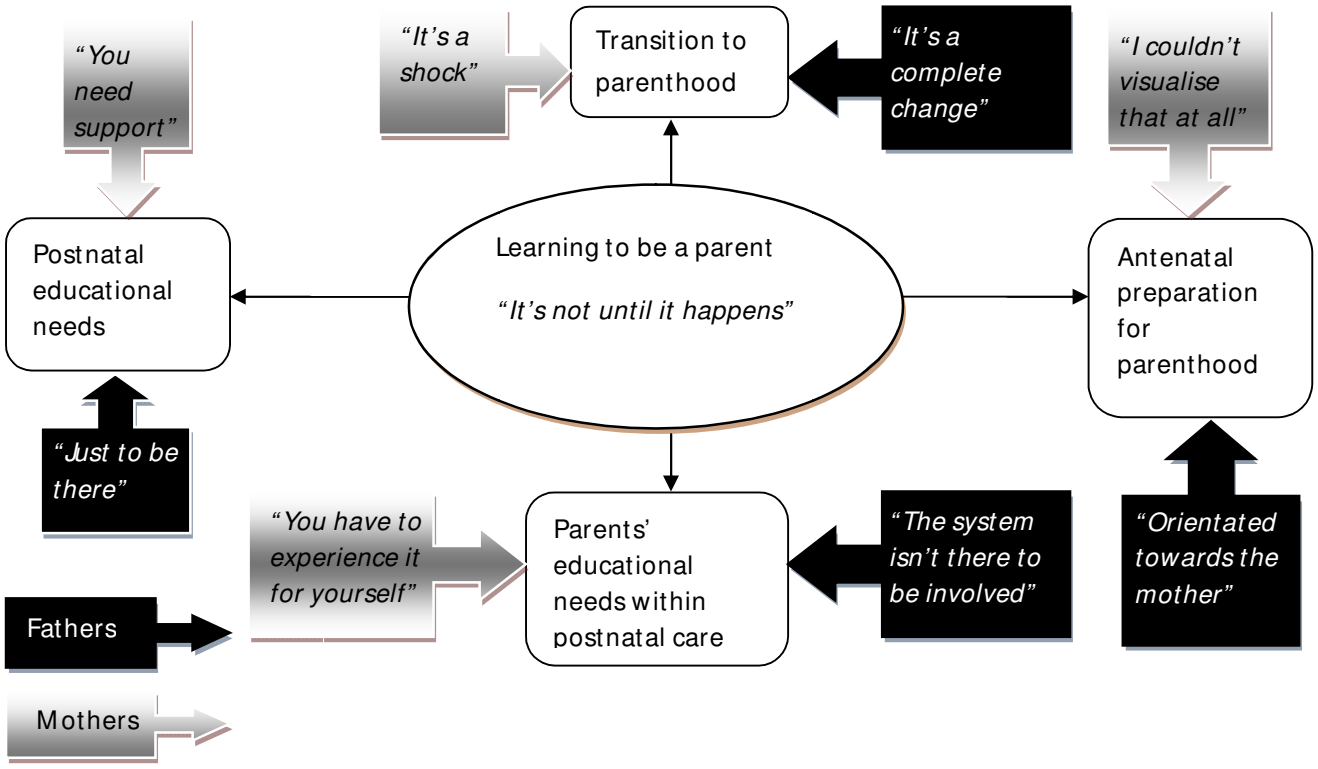
Objective 3: To explore whether the re-analysis of primary data using a different approach would yield a different result

The personal experience of revisiting a primary dataset that had been gathered years earlier, when LA was a complete research novice, was challenging on several fronts. Firstly, the idea of examining one's primary data with an open perspective to see if new ideas would emerge was exciting, however, when one went about scrutinising this data it soon became evident that the dataset had certain limitations. Challenges were encountered in several areas when the classic grounded theory method was applied, for example, coding for a main concern, theoretical sampling, theoretical coding and theoretical saturation, which have been explained previously. Despite these challenges and the limitations imposed by the primary dataset, this secondary data analysis went some way towards developing a tentative preliminary theory. This is in line with Heaton's (2004) comment that not all data are amenable to secondary data analysis.

Findings from primary data analysis

In order to facilitate a comparison between the primary and secondary data analysis outcomes, a brief overview of the primary study is provided. The aim of the primary study was to explore the postnatal educational needs of first-time parents. The primary study involved analysis of semi-structured interviews which were conducted with mothers (n=10) and fathers (n=8), three weeks after the birth of their baby. One overarching core category was generated which was conceptualised as 'learning to be a parent - it's not until it happens'. Data from mothers and fathers were analysed separately and eight sub-categories emerged. The four categories that emerged from the father's dataset include: it's a complete change (transition to fatherhood), orientated towards the mother (antenatal education classes), the system isn't there to be involved (lack of involvement in postnatal care) and just to be there (taking time off after the birth of their baby). The four categories that emerged from the mother's dataset were: it's a shock (transition to motherhood), I couldn't visualise that at all (learning about postnatal issues during pregnancy), you have to experience it for yourself (postnatal educational needs) and you need support (the early postnatal period) (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Primary data analysis: Tentative theory and categories developed on 'Learning to be a parent'.



Although becoming a father was a 'complete change', men described it as a smooth and gradual transition. However, men found that the content and focus of antenatal education classes was predominately 'orientated towards the mother'. During their partner's postnatal hospital, they were of the view that midwives did not involve them in the sharing of knowledge and skills in preparation for life with a new baby. Thus they considered that 'the system isn't there to be involved'. 'Just to be there' refers to the time that men took off work after their partner and baby came home from hospital to support their partner and to get to know their baby. Although it was not the focus at the time during primary data analysis, there were concepts emerging on men's experiences of becoming a father, however, due to the pre-framed interview schedule and academic timeframe constraints at that time, data saturation was not achieved in this category.

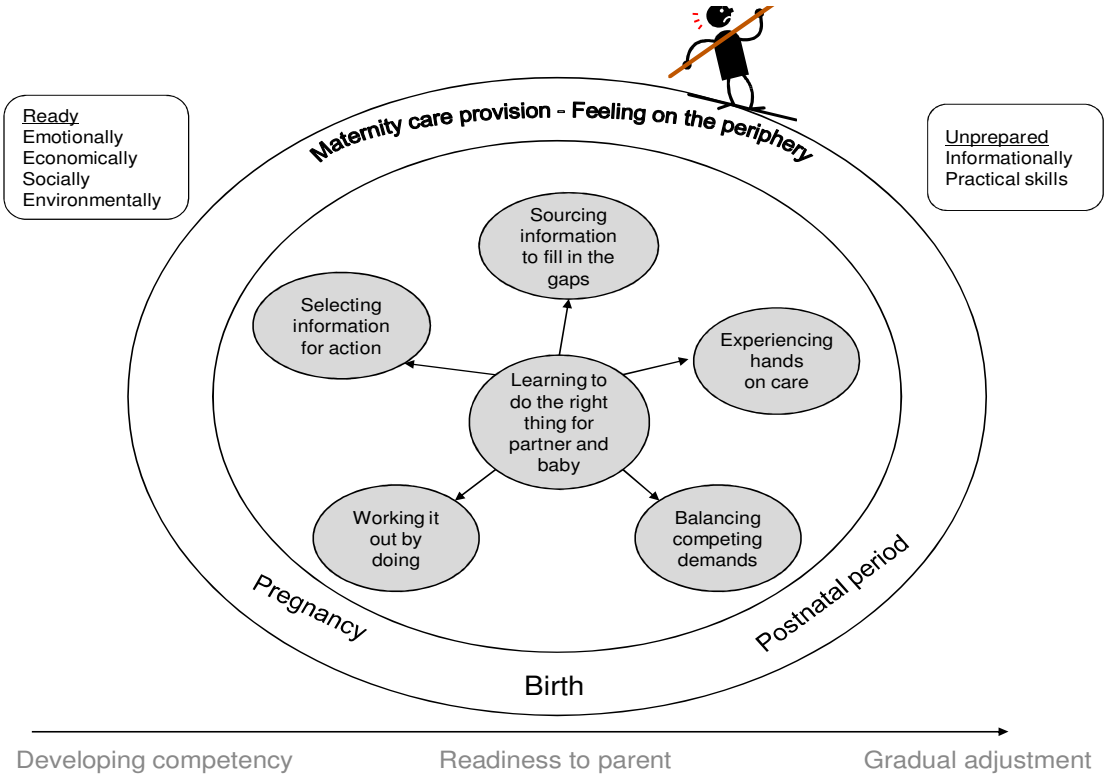
Findings from secondary data analysis

In contrast to Strauss and Corbin (1990,1998), when using classic grounded theory one does not start with a preconceived question or agenda, rather one has a substantive area of interest or a hunch in mind. The substantive area of interest used to re-analyse this data was men's experiences of becoming a father.

Using Glaser's principles, the fathers' main concern was conceptualised as 'developing competency as a father' (see figure 2). The processes that men engaged in to

develop competence or resolve their concern were coded as selecting information for action, sourcing information to fill in the gaps, experiencing hands-on care, balancing competing demands and working it out by doing. These processes resulted in an outcome of gradual adjustment to fatherhood and developing competency. This group of fathers displayed readiness in becoming a father in that they were ready emotionally, economically, socially and pragmatically for their new role as a father. However, they felt they lack the necessary knowledge and skills to care for a new baby. When it came to men's involvement in maternity care, this group of men felt they were on the periphery as their postnatal educational needs were not met by maternity care staff at that time.

Figure 2: Tentative theory from secondary data analysis: Developing competency as a father



Comparison of primary and secondary data analysis outcomes

When the primary and secondary data analysis findings are compared, there are some similarities and also some notable differences. The similarities include the fathers' sense of not being involved by midwives, their lack of access to knowledge and skills and their adaptation to fatherhood although a change, it was a gradual one. Some of the notable differences in the classical grounded theory approach include: the move away from mere description of the data, the clear identification of a main concern and the conceptualisation of five processes used by fathers to resolve their concern. One explanation for the differences in the findings is the two different ways in which this data was examined. In the primary study, a specific pre-framed research question was applied whereas, in the

secondary data analysis, a more open analytical approach was used allowing ideas to emerge from the data. In addition, the focus of the primary study was on postnatal educational needs, whereas the secondary data analysis had no preconceived framework. In the classical approach there was also a greater emphasis, during data analysis, on transcending and conceptualising as opposed to describing. There are two reasons for these differences, firstly, the application of the classic grounded theory approach which utilises a more open perspective and secondly, the passage of time facilitated a more objective approach to analysing the data.

Strauss (1987) recommends the use of integrative diagrams, as a way of integrating threads of the emergent theory and as a means of explaining ideas to others. However Glaser (1998) is of the view that diagrams oversimplify the theory, and may result in people not reading the intricacies of the theory developed. As a diagram had proved, in the first set of analysis, to be a useful tool in helping to visualise relationships between categories (see figure 1), it was decided to produce a diagram for the secondary analysis (figure 2). What is clear from both diagrams is that neither is sufficient to explain the outcome; however, interestingly the diagram produced from the secondary data analysis does give a greater feel for a core concern and how the various categories identified connected with that core concern.

Conclusion

Secondary data analysis is a research approach used to examine previously collected data. Several challenges were encountered when the classic grounded theory method was used for this secondary data analysis. One drawback to coding for the main concern, theoretical saturation and theoretical coding was the small number of datasets available for this re-analysis. During the secondary data analysis only the fathers data was re-analysed from the primary study.

In hindsight, using Glaser's (2001, p. 145) idea that 'all is data'; it may have been valuable to have re-analysed the primary data from mothers also, as this data may have added to and completed the emerging theory. The use of a pre-framed interview schedule which was used from the outset to guide data collection in the primary study also limited the secondary analysis. One principle of classic grounded theory is theoretical sampling for ideas and concepts, and one of the major drawbacks of secondary data analysis is that one cannot go back to the participants and probe for further responses to assist with filling in gaps in the emerging theory. However, researchers can recruit, if they wish, more participants and theoretical sample emerging concepts so that theoretical saturation could be achieved.

The second objective for conducting the secondary data analysis was for LA to learn more about the classic grounded theory method and to find out how it differed from the Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) approach, so that there would not be any blurring of methods when embarking on a new classic grounded theory study. This aim was achieved by working closely with AH and by practicing how to think and code conceptually, how to focus on the latent behaviours of the participants, and learning how to theoretically sample for ideas within transcripts. In addition, she learned how to improve on interview technique and identified strategies that may be applied to a more open style of interviewing.

The third objective of this study was to see whether the application of a different methodology would yield a different result. The secondary data analysis did result in a slightly different outcome. The two reasons for this are firstly, that classic grounded theory

facilitated a broader, more open perspective to be applied to this data and this facilitated true emergence of a tentative theory. Secondly, there was greater emphasis on identifying the participants' main concern and conceptualising the data as opposed to describing. The greatest benefit of this exercise was to learn by doing. As Glaser outlined almost 50 years ago, secondary data analysis is an effective teaching tool to learn the method and this was achieved by conducting this secondary data analysis.

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Guest Editorial, Themed Section

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As I have supervised or read numerous theses and dissertations and completed countless reviews of manuscripts that purport to do grounded theory, I have been struck by the confusion about what exactly grounded theory entails. In this themed section focusing on constructivist (constructionist) grounded theory, we strive to describe constructivist grounded theory, provide an exemplar of this research, and point out the differences between constructivist grounded theory and classic grounded theory.

When grounded theory first emerged as a research methodology (Glaser, 1965; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) it literally rocked the research world and was quickly adopted by disciplines other than sociology from which it derived. For the first decade or two grounded theory continued without much 'disturbance.' However, later graduate students took up the public 'challenge' to "take the method in any direction they wished" (Glaser, 1978, p.158). First on the scene was the qualitative method by Strauss and Corbin, first known as qualitative data analysis but now called Straussian grounded theory. Later, the methods of feminist grounded theory (Wuest) and constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz) arrived on the research horizon. The developers of these variants took the challenge to make changes "more liking to their research bent" but neglected one major principle of research and theoretical clarity – they thought they were re-engineering (and sometimes bettering) grounded theory when, in actual fact, they were merely developing different methods. One of the most used methods in qualitative research is phenomenology. There are at least 19 different variants of phenomenology, all of which co-exist seemingly without duress. It is time that the 'designers' of grounded theory did likewise: understand the significant differences in philosophy, methodology, and research product of classic grounded theory, Straussian grounded theory, constructivist, and feminist grounded theory and quit the private and public bickering – bury the territorial hatchet.

This themed section is organized to help readers truly see the differences between classic grounded theory and constructivist grounded theory. The first article by Barney G. Glaser argues that constructivist data are only a small part of the data grounded theory uses. The article was originally published in Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung 2002. Dr. Tom Andrews provides an introduction to constructionism/constructivism, the philosophical position underlying and driving the constructivist grounded theory method. Then, the constructivist research, Constructing New Theory for Identifying Students with Emotional Disturbance: A Constructivist Approach to Grounded Theory by Dr. Dori Barnett serves as a constructivist grounded theory research exemplar. This is followed by a commentary by Tom Andrews and me; the commentary utilizes the research exemplar to delineate key philosophical and methodological differences between constructivist grounded theory and classic grounded theory. Following this, the manuscript by Dr. Jenna Breckenridge, Derek Jones, Ian Elliott, and Margaret Nicol makes additional distinctions between constructivist grounded theory and classic grounded theory research processes, acknowledging the incompatibilities between the two methodologies; these insights were identified by Dr. Breckenridge as she was undertaking her PhD thesis research.

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 biasup 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 there 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 outas 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 that the portrayal of subjects experience in it fullness ... fracturing the data imply that groundedtheory 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 though 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 is 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 it 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 contructivism is itself a reality for QDA methodologist 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 distantiated 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 contructivist 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 throughmessy 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/discuses 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. Butshe 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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What is Social Constructionism?

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Abstract

Social Constructionism has been instrumental in remodeling grounded theory. In attempting to make sense of the social world, social constructionists view knowledge as constructed as opposed to created. This paper discusses how social constructionists construct knowledge and argues that social constructionism is concerned with the nature of knowledge and how it is created and as such, it is unconcerned with ontological issues. Society is viewed as existing both as a subjective and an objective reality. Meaning is shared, thereby constituting a taken-for-granted reality. Grounded theorists understand knowledge as beliefs in which people can have reasonable confidence; a common sense understanding and consensual notion as to what constitutes knowledge. If it is accepted that social constructionism is not based on a relativist perspective, then it is compatible with Grounded Theory methodology.

Introduction

Social constructionism originated as an attempt to come to terms with the nature of reality. It emerged some thirty years ago and has its origins in sociology and has been associated with the post-modern era in qualitative research. This is linked to the hyperbolic doubt posed by Bacon, the idea about how observations are an accurate reflection of the world that is being observed (Murphy *et al.*, 1998). Social constructionism is essentially an anti-realist, relativist stance (Hammersley, 1992). The influence of social constructionism is a current issue within grounded theory (Charmaz, 2000) and as such an understanding of its core concepts is important in evaluating its impact on the methodology. It is imperative for those considering grounded theory as a methodology for their research to appreciate the differences between grounded theory as originated by Glaser and Strauss (1997) and subsequently remodelled using a constructionist perspective.

Given its current and profound influence on grounded theory, constructionism needs to be understood so that they can better evaluate the nature and validity of the arguments surrounding its use. The terms constructivism and social constructionism tend to be used interchangeably and subsumed under the generic term 'constructivism' particularly by Charmaz (2000, 2006). Constructivism proposes that each individual mentally constructs the world of experience through cognitive processes while social constructionism has a social rather than an individual focus (Young & Colin, 2004). It is less interested if at all in the cognitive processes that accompany knowledge. The aim of this article is to familiarise readers with the idea of social constructionism. Its impact on grounded theory is the subject of a subsequent article.

Origins

Burr (1995) acknowledges the major influence of Berger and Luckmann (1991) in its development. In turn they acknowledge the influence of Mead, Marx, Schutz and Durkheim on their thinking. Their writing therefore constitutes a synthesis of

these influences. The origins of social constructionism can be traced in part to an interpretivist approach to thinking. Mead, one of the originators of symbolic interactionism, is the common link. However, my understanding is that while they may share common philosophical roots, social constructionism is distinct from interpretivism.

In common with constructionists, interpretivists in general focus on the process by which meanings are created, negotiated, sustained and modified (Schwandt, 2003). Proponents share the goal of understanding the world of lived experience from the perspective of those who live in it. Both arose as a challenge to scientism and have been influenced by the post-modernist movement. Interpretivism differentiates between the social and natural sciences and has as its goal the understanding of the meaning of social phenomena. While interpretivists value the human subjective experience, they seek to develop an objective science to study and describe it. There is then a tension evident between objective interpretation of subjective experiences. In other words, they attempt to apply a logical empiricist methodology to human inquiry. Schwandt (2003) views symbolic interactionism as an interpretative science.

Nature and Construction of Knowledge

Constructionists view knowledge and truth as created not discovered by the mind (Schwandt 2003) and supports the view that being a realist is not inconsistent with being a constructionist. One can believe that concepts are constructed rather than discovered yet maintain that they correspond to something real in the world. This is consistent with the idea of Berger and Luckmann (1991) and the subtle realism of Hammersley (1992) in that reality is socially defined but this reality refers to the subjective experience of every day life, how the world is understood rather than to the objective reality of the natural world. As Steedman (2000) notes, most of what is known and most of the knowing that is done is concerned with trying to make sense of what it is to be human, as opposed to scientific knowledge. Individuals or groups of individuals define this reality. This branch of constructionism is unconcerned with ontological questions or questions of causation. It is worth emphasising this, since a lot of the criticisms of constructionism arise from ascribing claims to it made beyond this social understanding of the world.

Berger and Luckmann (1991) are concerned with the nature and construction of knowledge: how it emerges and how it comes to have the significance for society. They views knowledge as created by the interactions of individuals within society which is central to constructionism (Schwandt, 2003). For Berger and Luckmann (1991), the division of labour, the emergence of more complex forms of knowledge and what they term economic surplus gives rise to expert knowledge, developed by people devoting themselves full-time to their subject. In turn, these experts lay claim to novel status and claim ultimate jurisdiction over that knowledge. For example, Hunter (1991) makes this claim for medicine, in that it has in time assumed much more control over defining illness and as a result has assumed control in situations well beyond its original mandate and so, enjoys a privileged position in society.

Berger and Luckmann (1991) view society as existing both as objective and subjective reality. The former is brought about through the interaction of people with the social world, with this social world in turn influencing people resulting in routinisation and habitualization. That is, any frequently repeated action becomes cast into a pattern, which can be reproduced without much effort. This frees people to engage in innovation rather than starting everything anew. In

time, the meaning of the habitualization becomes embedded as routines, forming a general store of knowledge. This is institutionalised by society to the extent that future generations experience this type of knowledge as objective. Additionally this objectivity is continuously reaffirmed in the individual's interaction with others.

The experience of society as subjective reality is achieved through primary, and to a lesser extent, secondary socialisation. The former involves being given an identity and a place in society. Indeed, Burr (1995) suggests that our identity originates not from inside the person but from the social realm. Socialisation takes place through significant others who mediate the objective reality of society, render it meaningful and in this way it is internalised by individuals (Berger & Luckmann, 1991). This is done through the medium of language. Burr (1995) comments that within social constructionism language is not an unproblematic means of transmitting thoughts and feelings, but in fact makes thought possible by constructing concepts. In other words, it is language that makes thoughts and concepts possible and not the other way around. Language predates concepts and provides a means of structuring the way the world is experienced.

Berger and Luckmann (1991) maintain that conversation is the most important means of maintaining, modifying and reconstructing subjective reality. Subjective reality is comprised of concepts that can be shared unproblematically with others. In other words, there is shared meaning and understanding, so much so that concepts do not need to be redefined each time they are used in everyday conversation and come to assume a reality which is by and large taken for granted. They use the example 'have a good day at the office' as an example of this. The words imply a whole world within which these propositions make sense.

Schwandt (2003) differentiates between radical and social constructionism, the latter has been outlined above, while the former is concerned with the idea that knowledge cannot represent or correspond to the world. In essence, that the world can only be known in relation to peoples' experience of it and not independently of that experience. Burningham and Cooper (1999) discuss constructionism in terms of being either contextual or strict. Contextual constructionism recognises objective reality and its influence, while the latter maintains a relativist position, that is the belief that there are multiple realities and all are meaningful. As will be discussed next, this relativist position is the source of most of the criticisms levelled at constructionism.

Realism and Relativism

The main criticisms levelled against social constructionism can be summarised by its perceived conceptualisation of realism and relativism. It is accused of being anti-realist, in denying that knowledge is a direct perception of reality (Craib 1997). Bury (1986) maintains that social constructionism challenges biomedical reality and questions apparently self-evident and stable realities, but he offers little evidence to support this contention. As an example, Bury (1986) claims that it views the discovery of diseases as themselves social events rather than having an objective reality. This criticism of social constructionism not recognising an objective reality is both widespread and common (Bury 1986; Burr 1995; Craib 1997; Schwandt, 2003; Sismondo 1993), that nothing exists beyond language (Bury 1986).

If it is accepted that researchers themselves construct a social world rather than merely representing some independent reality, then this is the source

of tension between realism and relativism (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). There is an increasing tendency within qualitative research to adopt the relativist position which leads Hammersley (1992) to question the usefulness of the findings generated from studies using this method, given that the multiplicity of accounts produced can each claim legitimacy. If all are legitimate and given the logical conclusion of relativism, then there is no reason to prefer one account to another. That is, the conclusions of research themselves constitute just another account and as such cannot claim to have precedence over any other account. The relevancy of such research can be questioned. In other words, if research is not contributing to knowledge in any meaningful way, then its usefulness may be questioned, particularly in relation to health care research (Murphy *et al.*, 1998).

Realism and relativism represent two polarised perspectives on a continuum between objective reality at one end and multiple realities on the other. Both positions are problematic for qualitative research. Adopting a realist position ignores the way the researcher constructs interpretations of the findings and assumes that what is reported is a true and faithful interpretation of a knowable and independent reality. Relativism leads to the conclusion that nothing can ever be known for definite, that there are multiple realities, none having precedence over the other in terms of claims to represent the truth about social phenomena.

However, this is to confuse epistemology with claims about ontology and is a fundamental misunderstanding of the philosophy that underpins social constructionism. As outlined, social constructionism as discussed by Berger and Luckman (1991) makes no ontological claims, confining itself to the social construction of knowledge, therefore confining itself to making epistemological claims only. The idea that disease can and does exist as an independent reality is compatible with the social constructionist view. The naming of disease and indeed what constitutes disease is arguably a different matter and has the potential to be socially constructed. This is not the same as claiming that it has no independent existence beyond language. One can imagine the situation where a skin disorder such as psoriasis might be thought of as a contagious disease, but with continued empirical investigation, as knowledge increases about the condition, then attitudes to it and how it is constructed change. It is in this sense that disease is socially constructed but importantly makes no claims about its ontological status.

For Hammersley (1992) the solution is to adopt neither position but one midway between the two, one that he terms subtle realism. This acknowledges the existence of an independent reality, a world that has an existence independent of our perception of it, but denies that there can be direct access to that reality, emphasising instead representation not reproduction of social phenomena. Representation implies that it will be from the perspective of the researcher, thereby implicitly acknowledging reflexivity, which is acknowledgement that researchers influence the research process.

Consistent with this middle course, Hammersley (1992) accepts the usefulness of what he terms common-sense knowledge, while at the same time rejecting the notion that all such knowledge is valid in its own terms. Central to this is a rejection of the view that knowledge is independent of the researcher, whose reality can be known with certainty. Both realism and relativism share this view of knowledge in that both define it in this way as the starting point of their stances. In turn this results in the current dichotomy in qualitative research. The contention is that by avoiding such a definition, the negative implications for research associated with both philosophical perspectives can be avoided.

Hamilton (2002) offers an alternative definition of knowledge as beliefs in which one can have reasonable confidence in their validity or truth. This is appeals to what Hammersley (1992) considers a common sense understanding and consensual notion of what constitutes social knowledge, particularly in judging the validity or truth of such knowledge generated through research findings. This is a pragmatic view of knowledge based on how society resolves such matters in everyday life by judging its truth in relation to what is already known, not by appeal to philosophy. In a sense, this is an example of what Burr (1995) refers to as the self-referent system, where concepts can only be defined in terms of other concepts existing in the same language system.

In appealing for the adoption of a subtle realist approach, Hammersley (1992) is trying to resolve the seemingly intractable issue of realism versus relativism. In support of this, Murphy *et al.* (1998) conclude that qualitative research resists the tendency to fix meanings but instead draw inferences about meaning. However the current trend within qualitative research is not to draw such a sharp distinction between the realism and relativism (Danermark *et al.*, 2002; Denzin & Lincon, 2005)

In response to the realist critique, Sismondo (1993) differentiates between strict, radical or extreme constructionism and mild or contextual constructionism. He maintains that criticism is levelled at the former, which is said to deny physical reality. Burningham and Cooper (1999) note that in the critique of constructionism very few empirical studies adopting this approach are ever discussed. In other words, critics fail to evaluate the evidence as to how the theory is applied in practice in order to support their critique. In a review of studies using social constructionism, Sismondo (1993) claims that the vast majority of studies adopt the mild or contextual form of analysis, where a distinction is maintained between what participants believe or claim about the social world and what is in fact already known. In practice social constructionists recognise reality and Sismondo (1993) concludes that the realist critique is misguided in that it does not fit what is actually going on in empirical studies. Burningham and Cooper (1999) have summarised the strict constructionist position as a scepticism about ontological claims and not as an ontological claim about the non-existence of reality, that is, while they do not deny the existence of reality, they maintain that the meaning of reality is socially constructed.

In terms of social constructionism, the arguments in relation to relativism are similar to those outlined earlier. Relativism maintains that because there are multiple realities, there are multiple interpretations of those realities. This leads in the opinion of Bury (1986) to a circular argument, in that there is no way of judging one account of reality as better than another. Craib (1997) in particular ridicules social constructionism for its alleged position on the realist-relativist argument and views it as a comforting collective belief rather than a theoretical position. He engages in what Hammersley (1992) terms a nihilist argument, namely the contention that because social constructionism is itself a social construct, then it has no more claim to be advanced as an explanation than any other theory. This results in there being no notion of what constitutes truth (Burr 1995). Hammersley (1992) refers to this as the self-refuting character of relativism and attempts to counter it by proposing the adoption of subtle realism, as outlined previously. Radical social constructionism is a trivial position (Murphy *et al.,* 1998).

This gives rise to the further criticism that research using social constructionist framework lacks any ability to change things because there is nothing against which to judge the findings of research (Bury, 1986). In this sense it becomes a methodological issue. This results in political inertia because

of the reluctance of social constructionist research to make any recommendations (Bury, 1986). Burningham and Cooper (1999) maintain that this arises because of a misreading of the process in that researchers adopting this approach do not ground their arguments in, or discredit opposing arguments by comparing them unfavourably with objective reality, that is, in presenting their findings, social constructionists do not present them in objectivist terms, but rely instead on the plausibility of their findings. In other words, they set out to have their findings accepted by presenting a convincing argument rather than arguing that their results are definitive. This is consistent with the idea in constructionism that the findings of research are one of many discourses. The suggestion here is that far from being neutral, social constructionism can generate real debate and lead to change.

There is another sense in which change becomes problematic and this is related to what social constructionism has to say about human agency, that is, human activity, which according to Burr (1995) has not been fully addressed within social constructionism. Berger and Luckmann (1991) maintain that change is brought about by human activity. They note that while reality is always socially defined, it is individuals and groups of individuals who define it. People always try to present themselves and their version of events in such a way that it will prevail over other versions (Burr 1995). For Burr (1995) this is linked to power, in that it tends to be the more powerful who are the most successful at having their version of events predominate. This suggests that social constructionism supports the idea that people can indeed be agents of change but nonetheless, Burr (1995) argues that this is one of the least developed areas of constructionism.

Craib (1997), a sociologist and psychotherapist, suggests that like interactionism, social constructionism is no more than a coping mechanism for dealing with rapid change; that social constructionists embrace change in order to avoid having to defend or justify their position on anything. This enables them to claim that their position, or any other, is just another social construct, no position having precedence over any other. He views social constructionism as a form of interactionism. As outlined, interactionism is different from constructionism. Craib (1997) seems to have confused some shared philosophical roots with being one and the same theory. It suggests that Craib (1997) has a selective understanding of social constructionism and that his criticisms arise from this partial understanding. Additionally, his arguments assume that all social constructionists hold a relativist position. As outlined earlier, this is not so.

Conclusion

Social constructionism accepts that there is an objective reality. It is concerned with how knowledge is constructed and understood. It has therefore an epistemological not an ontological perspective. Criticisms and misunderstanding arise when this central fact is misinterpreted. This is most evident in debates and criticisms surrounding realism and relativism. The words of Kirk and Miller (1986) are relevant when they suggest that the search for a final, absolute truth be left to philosophers and theologians. Social constructionism places great emphasis on everyday interactions between people and how they use language to construct their reality. It regards the social practices people engage in as the focus of enquiry. This is very similar to the focus of grounded theory but without the emphasis on language. Social constructionism that views society as existing both as objective and subjective reality is fully compatible with classical grounded theory, unlike constructionist grounded theory which takes a relativist position. Relativism is not compatible with classical grounded theory. Social constructionism as influence by Berger and

Luckman makes no ontological claims. Therefore choosing constructionist grounded theory based on the ontological assumptions of the researcher seems incompatible with the idea of social constructionism. How this stance has influenced and remodelled grounded theory into socalled constructionist grounded theory will be the subject of another article.

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Constructing New Theory for Identifying Students with Emotional Disturbance: A Constructivist Approach to Grounded Theory

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Abstract

A grounded theory study that examined how practitioners in a county alternative and correctional education setting identify youth with emotional and behavioral difficulties for special education services provides an exemplar for a constructivist approach to grounded theory methodology. Discussion focuses on how a constructivist orientation to grounded theory methodology informed research decisions, shaped the development of the emergent grounded theory, and prompted a way of thinking about data collection and analysis. Implications for future research directions and policy and practice in the field of special and alternative education are discussed.

Introduction

A grounded theory study examined how practitioners in a county alternative and correctional education setting identify youth with emotional and behavioral difficulties for special education services, given the criteria for emotional disturbance (ED) contained in the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) of 2004. This study serves as an exemplar for a discussion of how a constructivist orientation to grounded theory methodology informed research decisions, shaped the development of the emergent grounded theory, and prompted a way of thinking about data collection and analysis to construct new knowledge for practice.

Children and youth with emotional and behavioral disorders are considered the most under identified and underserved of all the disability groups (Forness & Kavale, 2001; Gresham, 2005, 2007). Problems associated with the identification of students with behavioral and emotional difficulties for special education services are often attributed to the definition and criteria for ED found in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Hughes & Bray, 2004; Merrell & Walker, 2004). For purposes of special education classification, IDEA defines ED as one or more of five characteristics, exhibited to a marked degree, and over a period of time. The five characteristics include (a) depression, (b) school phobia, (c) an inability to build or maintain satisfactory inter-personal relationships, (d) inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal conditions and (e) an inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors. Definitional problems are further compounded by an 'exclusionary clause' in the ED criteria which states, "the term does not apply to children who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they are emotionally disturbed" (§34CFR 300.8 (c)(4)(ii)). The exclusionary clause poses a definitional conundrum that is particularly confounding for practitioners working in alternative and correctional education settings, where high numbers of youth exhibit serious emotional and behavioral difficulties.

Critics have referred to the definition of ED as "nebulous and highly subjective" (Gresham, 2005, p. 215), "vague and uncertain" (Olympia, Farley, Christiansen, Pettersson, Jenson & Clark, 2004, p. 835) and even "bordering on oxymoronic" (Gresham, 2007, p. 330). Moreover, a preliminary review of the literature revealed the absence of an existing theory to explain the underlying processes practitioners are using to identify emotional disturbance and to distinguish between ED and social maladjustment (SM) for purposes of special education classification. Thus, a grounded theory methodology was selected to address a primary and secondary research question posed by this study:

1. How do practitioners in an alternative and correctional education setting identify students with emotional disturbance for purposes of special education classification?
2. How do practitioners in an alternative and correctional education setting distinguish between ED and SM for purposes of special education classification?

Methodology

Grounded theory methodology employs a systematic set of procedures to inductively develop theory that is "grounded" in the data from which it was derived (Charmaz, 2000, 2006, 2009; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1994, 1998). The ultimate aim of a grounded theory study is to produce new theory that is grounded in data collected directly from participants on the basis of their lived experiences (Fassinger, 2005). The theory produced from grounded theory methodology is 'grounded' in practitioners' real-world practice, is sensitive to practitioners in the setting, and represents the complexities found in participants' experiences. Glaser (1992) stated, "Grounded theory renders as faithfully as possible a theory discovered in the data which explains the subjects' main concerns and how they are processed" (p. 14). The outcome of a grounded theory study is an emergent theory "from the data that accounts for the data" (Charmaz, 2008a, p. 157).

Signature characteristics of grounded theory methodology include (a) simultaneous processes of data collection and analysis, (b) an inductive approach leading to conceptual understanding of the data, (c) pursuit of core themes early in the data analysis, (d) sampling procedures driven by constant comparative analysis, and (e) the integration of categories into theoretical frameworks (Birks & Mills, 2010; Charmaz, 2003b, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006). "The comparative and interactive nature of grounded theory at every stage of analysis distinguishes grounded theory from other approaches and makes it an explicitly emergent method" (Charmaz, 2008a, p. 163).

Grounded theory methodology was best suited for this study because the research questions and problems indicated the need to develop a sound theoretical foundation for identifying students with emotional disturbance and because a sound theoretical foundation does not currently exist. Grbich (2007) proposed that grounded theory methodology is appropriate "when there is a need for new theoretical explanations built on previous knowledge to explain changes in the field" (p. 70). Further, the existing ED identification criteria lack clear guidelines for defining social maladjustment and for distinguishing between ED and SM for purposes of special education classification. Skeat and Perry (2008) surmise, "Grounded theory is considered to be an appropriate choice for a research study 'when a phenomenon has not been adequately described, or when there are few theories that explain it'" (p. 97).

Moreover, the flexible and creative nature of grounded theory methodology is seen in the array of approaches described in the grounded theory literature. Methodological

variations are linked to the researcher's philosophical position along the methodological spiral, most often distinguishing the positionality of the researcher and the approach to data analysis within a grounded theory research design (Annells, 1996; Birks & Mills, 2010; Mills *et al.*, 2006). This study followed a constructivist grounded theory orientation as described by Bryant (2009); Bryant and Charmaz (2007a, 2007b), Charmaz (2000, 2003a, 2006, 2008a, 2008b, 2009), Clark (2003, 2005, 2009), and Mills *et al.* (2005, 2006).

Constructivist Grounded Theory

Mills *et al.* (2006) assert that constructivist grounded theory is distinguished by (a) "the nature of the relationship between the researcher and participants," and (b) "an explication of what can be known" (p. 2). In contrast to classical versions of grounded theory, constructivist grounded theory is described as "epistemologically subjective" and "ontologically relativist" (p. 6). A relativist stance assumes that theoretical analyses derived from the grounded theory process "are interpretive renderings of a reality, not objective reportings of it" (Charmaz, 2008b, p. 206). Meaning is constructed through the qualitative researcher's interpretive understandings, an emic perspective that assumes a relativist and reflexive stance toward the data (Charmaz, 2009).

Charmaz (2009) posited, "Grounded theory in its constructivist version is a profoundly *interactive* process" (p. 137). Drawing from the epistemological and ontological foundations of social constructivism, meaning is co-constructed with participants through interactive processes of interviewing, communication, and actions in practice (Nagy Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2008). It is through such reflexive processes that new theory emerges from—rather than is discovered in—the data reflecting practitioners' lived experiences (Charmaz, 2009; Fassinger, 2005).

Methods, Participants, and Data Collection

These characteristics of a constructivist grounded theory approach were implemented in the context of a county alternative and correctional education program serving approximately 8,000 children and youth enrolled in juvenile corrections, social service, and community day school settings in a large suburban county in southern California. A profile of typical youth enrolled in this setting involves youth who are referred by local school districts, or temporarily placed in group homes, or incarcerated in local probation or sheriff operated facilities, or who are housed in social service institutions, or who are teen parents (OCDE, 2008). Given the complex emotional, social, and behavioral needs of such students, this setting was particularly well suited for exploring practitioners' perceptions of ED and their underlying social and psychological processes for distinguishing between ED and SM for purposes of special education classification.

The participants were twenty-seven practitioners and one parent involved in the identification of students with emotional disturbance in this practice setting: eight school psychologists, eight administrators from county and local school districts, three special and general education teachers, two clinicians, and two designated instructional service providers—a speech and language specialist and a school nurse. Four practitioners were representatives from collaborative county agencies including a therapist and psychologist from the County Mental Health Care Agency, the coordinator of Foster Youth Services, and a juvenile court probation officer. One parent of an emotionally disturbed student also participated.

Data collection consisted of (a) semi-structured interviews conducted with each of the 28 participants in the study; (b) five focus group interviews conducted with small groups of participants on topics selected from critical issues that emerged from the data, such as substance abuse and emotional disturbance and trauma-induced emotional disturbance; (c) document reviews collected from over 300 pages of case conference notes, multi-disciplinary assessment reports, parent correspondence, evaluations for county mental health services, and relevant inter-office e-mail correspondence; and (d) five participant observations conducted in classrooms and programs for students with emotional and behavioral disabilities throughout the county. Following theoretical sampling procedures—where data from prior interviews guided the researcher about whom to interview or what to observe next—new participants were added and semi-structured interview questions were adapted as new concepts emerged from the data.

Data Analysis

Three distinct but overlapping generic stages of data analysis were implemented including the initial, interim, and theoretical stages. Within the constructivist grounded theory research design, these generic stages translated to the processes inherent in open coding, focused coding and theoretical coding. *Open coding* refers to the first level of coding in grounded theory analysis, "in which data are transcribed and broken down into units of meaning" (Fassinger, 2005, p. 160). During open coding, the researcher labels and assigns units of meaning to incidents, actions, and events derived from the data. *Focused coding* occurs as the researcher begins identifying preliminary themes and concepts emerging from the data. In this stage the researcher focuses on the most significant and frequently occurring codes (Charmaz, 2003a). *Theoretical coding* is the final stage in which the researcher begins merging concepts into thematic categories. The grounded theory is constructed from analysis of the inter-relationships among the themes. As recommended in grounded theory methodology, all stages incorporated signature grounded theory processes of constant comparison, whereby data are continually compared and contrasted at each level of analysis; theoretical sampling, where emergent concepts and concerns arising from the data guide subsequent data collection; and theoretical sensitivity, which relies on the researcher's intuitive and interpretive analysis of the data.

Findings

A constructivist grounded theory research design produced six emergent themes which are integrated into the grounded theory. The integration of six emergent themes constitutes the new grounded theory capturing the core social and psychological processes practitioners are implementing to identify students with emotional disturbance and to distinguish between ED and SM for purposes of special education classification in this practice setting:

(1) *Practitioners identified emotional disturbance along three inter-related dimensions— social, behavioral, and emotional.* According to the participants, students with emotional disturbance were characterized as (a) struggling socially with interpersonal relationships; (b) demonstrating atypical behaviors and extreme reactions; and (c) having difficulty managing their feelings and emotions.

(2) *Practitioners distinguished between ED and SM with respect to the nature of the student's social, behavioral, and emotional functioning.* Distinctions between ED and SM were delineated with respect to (a) the nature of the student's interpersonal relationships; (b) the extreme and typical nature of the student's

behaviors; and (c) the student's ability to control and manage his or her emotions.

(3) *Practitioners implemented reflexive and collaborative processes to identify students with emotional disturbance.* In addition to traditional standardized assessment procedures, practitioners emphasized reflexive and collaborative identification processes such as (a) adhering to the child find process of early intervention and identification of children with disabilities; (b) collaborating with peers; (c) exploring the etiology of the child's behavior; and (d) linking students' needs to available services.

(4) *Practitioners are engaging in pragmatic problem-solving in response to new student trends.* Practitioners identified new student trends which are complicating the identification process for ED: (a) substance abuse and ED, (b) early exposure to trauma and ED, and (c) co-morbid emotional and behavioral conditions. In the absence of clear procedural guidelines, practitioners are engaging in pragmatic problem-solving to resolve such issues.

(5) *Practitioners' decisions were informed by ethical considerations related to caring.* Ethical considerations, especially the ethic of care, were instrumental in practitioners' decisions for determining special education eligibility under the classification of ED. Ethical considerations were characterized as (a) focusing on students' best interests, (b) having compassion, and (c) establishing harmonious professional relationships.

(6) *Practitioners espoused a socially just perspective toward identifying students with ED.* Practitioners identified socially unjust practices that impinged upon the process of identifying students with ED: (a) under-identifying students with ED, (b) delays in providing services to ED students, and (c) shifting the responsibility for identifying ED students from one organization to another. In turn, practitioners advocated for a socially just perspective in identifying students with emotional disturbance.

The emergent grounded theory suggests new theoretical propositions regarding how practitioners are identifying students with emotional disturbance and how they are distinguishing between ED and SM for purposes of special education classification: (a) practitioners are conceptualizing ED and SM as inter-related dimensions of social, emotional and behavioral functioning; (b) practitioners are distinguishing ED and SM along fluid continua, as opposed to the exclusive polarities of ED and SM indicated by the exclusionary clause in the federal definition; (c) practitioners are emphasizing reflexive and collaborative identification processes in addition to traditional standardized assessment measures; (c) practitioners are engaging in pragmatic problem-solving in response to new student trends, such as substance abuse and exposure to trauma, that are complicating the ED identification process; (d) decision-making is informed by ethical considerations related to caring and focusing on students' best interests; and (e) practitioners are advocating for a socially just perspective to overcome barriers to identification. In sum, the emergent grounded theory reflects a student centered approach to identifying emotional disturbance that is guided by an ethical and socially just perspective.

Discussion

"All research is interpretive; it is guided by the researcher's set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 22). This grounded theory research design reflects a postmodern constructivist perspective, and, as such, incorporates postmodern sensibilities, assumes a relativist and reflexive stance toward the data, and takes a pragmatic approach to problem-solving. These theoretical

underpinnings of a constructivist grounded theory approach translate into the following research practices: (a) taking a relativist stance that reflects multiple and diverse perspectives; (b) positioning the researcher as a reflexive participant in data collection and analysis; and (c) exercising a pragmatic approach to problem-solving. This discussion will examine how these essential elements of a constructivist grounded theory approach prompted a way of thinking about data, informed research decisions, and shaped the development of the emergent grounded theory.

A relativist perspective

Clarke (2005) proposed that an epistemological shift toward a constructivist orientation "enhances our capacities to do incisive studies of differences of perspective, of highly complex situations of action and positionality" (p. xxiii). A relativist stance inherent in a constructivist grounded theory approach values the diversity of perspectives and invites the sharing of pluralistic viewpoints. For instance, a juvenile probation officer reinforced the emergent concept of overlapping conduct and emotional issues among adjudicated youth. The school nurse added the perspective of acknowledging early behavioral warning signs of emotional disturbance. The director of foster youth services emphasized the relationship between early childhood trauma and emotional disturbance. Moreover, through comparative analysis and theoretical sampling procedures, practitioners' multiple perspectives of emergent themes contributed to the co-construction of the grounded theory.

Inclusion of multiple perspectives contributed to a "layered" analysis, thus broadening and deepening the scope of the study (Charmaz, 2009). This grounded theory reflects practitioners' diverse and heterogeneous viewpoints of emotional disturbance. For example, emergent themes reflected that practitioners are conceptualizing ED and SM as inter-related dimensions of social, emotional, and behavioral functioning, rather than five discrete characteristics described in the federal definition. Further, this grounded theory demonstrates that practitioners were interpreting ED and SM along fluid behavioral continua, as opposed to two exclusive polarities as indicated by the exclusionary clause, which distinguishes between ED and SM for purposes of special education classification. Taken together, practitioners' multiple perspectives of emergent themes are integrated into the grounded theory that reconstructs the category of emotional disturbance in an alternative and correctional education setting.

Reflexive Role of the Researcher

A constructivist perspective assumes that new knowledge is socially and culturally produced through interactions among participants within a social context (Blumer, 1969; Berger & Luckman, 1966). Taking a constructivist approach means, "The researcher engages in an inquiry process that *creates* knowledge through interpreted constructions" (Annells, 1996, p. 385). In this study a constructivist approach, which involved the standpoints and interactions of the researcher, translated into activities such as actively engaging with participants during structured interviews, responding reflexively to emergent concepts in the data, and acting upon analytic hunches. For instance, the researcher listened to practitioners' concerns about new student trends, such as substance induced emotional disorders that were complicating the ED identification process, and responded by refining questions to probe more deeply into how they handled such issues in practice. Such reflexive processes allowed the researcher to build rapport, respond to participants' underlying tensions and concerns, and to enter more deeply into their eidetic worlds.

"Constructivist grounded theory aims to position the research relative to the social circumstances impinging on it" (Charmaz, 2009, p. 134). Positioning the researcher directly within the social and cultural context of an alternative education organization, allowed her direct access to practitioners' unique, first-hand experiences determining special education eligibility for students who exhibit complex emotional and behavioral issues and surfaced their unique concerns and tensions within this practice setting. However, constructivist grounded theory goes beyond other qualitative research methodologies, such as ethnography and phenomenology, because through such reflexive and reflective processes, new theory is co-constructed and emerges gradually over time. Charmaz (2009) observed, "By locating participants' meanings and actions in this way, we show the connection between micro and macro levels of analysis, and thus link the subjective and the social" (p. 131). For instance, an emergent theme revealed that practitioners in this alternative education setting were experiencing moral tensions regarding the exclusion of students with social maladjustment from receiving special education services under the classification of ED. The grounded theory also reflects that ethical considerations related to caring—having compassion, establishing harmonious relationships, and focusing on students' best interests—were instrumental in practitioners' eligibility decisions for special education placement. These themes are uniquely woven into the emergent grounded theory that reflects ethical decision making as a core social and psychological process practitioners are using to identify students with emotional disturbance in an alternative and correctional education setting.

Pragmatic problem solving

Bryant (2009) and Charmaz (2009) link the postmodern turn in constructivist grounded theory to the pragmatic roots of the methodology. "Constructivist grounded theory assumes that we produce knowledge by grappling with empirical problems" (Charmaz, 2009, p. 130). The emergent themes revealed practitioners' underlying tensions and concerns about the emotional disturbance identification process as well as how they resolved such issues in a contemporary practice setting. For instance, an emergent theme demonstrated that, in the absence of clear procedural guidelines for resolving complex identification issues, such as co-occurring emotional and behavioral conditions and psychological problems related to trauma and substance abuse, practitioners are engaging in pragmatic problem solving. It was also apparent that practitioners are engaging in collaborative problem-solving with colleagues as a strategy for resolving the increasingly complex issues compounding the identification process. Thus, theory is connected and linked to practice through an analysis of the processes by which practitioners are attempting to resolve practical problems in their everyday world.

Further, pragmatic underpinnings of a constructivist grounded theory approach encouraged the use of inductive and abductive data analysis in the development of the grounded theory. Reichertz (2007) describes abductive analysis as "a cerebral process, an intellectual act, a mental leap, that brings together things which one had never associated with one another: A cognitive logic of discovery" (p. 220). Inductive and abductive analytical processes contributed to the development of emergent themes that went beyond basic descriptions of ED and SM and revealed the underlying social and psychological processes involved in the identification of emotional disturbance in this practice setting, such as taking into account ethical considerations and espousing a socially just perspective.

Limitations of the Study

The application of a constructivist grounded theory approach presents methodological challenges and limitations with respect to (a) researcher bias inherent in a constructivist grounded theory study and (b) limitations on the generalizability of knowledge constructed within a social context. The quality of the reflexive process inherent in a constructivist grounded theory study relies heavily on the researcher's subjective interpretations and value laden perspectives of the data, which can pose limitations on the validity of the emergent grounded theory. Further, the limitations of a constructivist grounded theory approach include the difficulty of conducting research in a setting outside the researcher's area of familiarity and expertise, where an unfamiliar setting may pose restrictions on the researcher's ability to reflexively interact with participants and to anticipate their concerns. Finally, given the multiple variations of grounded theory and the flurry of arguments surrounding the current methodological divide between constructivist and classical grounded theory, a potential limitation may be the reluctance of the novice researcher to embark on such a study.

Implications for Research and Practice

"The content of theorizing cuts to the core of studied life and poses new questions about it" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 135). The emergent grounded theory indicates that practitioners were moving well beyond the confines of the existing ED criteria and reframing the identification process within a contemporary practice setting, raising new questions about the ED identification criteria and procedures. Future research directions suggested by the outcomes of this study include: (a) moving beyond the ED/SM controversy and directing future research toward identification of practices and service delivery models that efficaciously address the needs of students with emotional and behavioral disabilities (Merrill & Walker, 2004); (b) the emergence of new student trends which are complicating the identification process for ED suggest that the existing guidelines are outdated and indicate the need for a new research base to update the ED criteria in contemporary practice; and (c) the findings point to the need to expand this study to a larger group of practitioners representing a wider range of educational settings.

Charmaz (2008a) posits that the critical stance inherent in a postmodern constructivist grounded theory inquiry can advance social policy and contribute to social change by anchoring "agendas for future action, practice, and policy" (p. 210). Because theory and practice are pragmatically linked through a constructivist approach, which emphasizes the utilitarian value of the grounded theory (Annells, 1996; Strübing, 2007), the emergent theory has implications for informing social policy and practice in the fields of alternative and special education. Recommendations for policy and practice stemming from this study include: (a) broadening the ED criteria to address students' social, emotional, and behavioral needs; (b) shifting toward inclusive service delivery practices for students with emotional and behavioral disabilities; (c) developing and implementing collaborative problem-solving identification and intervention models; and (d) adopting ethical guidelines for identifying students with ED.

Moreover, Clarke (2003, 2005) asserts that an epistemological shift toward a more constructivist reframing of grounded theory has the capacity to move the field of qualitative inquiry around the postmodern turn. Thus, an implication is that, rather than focusing on subtleties and differences in approaches, the field may be better served by embracing the possibilities presented by various approaches in grounded theory methodology. Taken together, the various methodological perspectives of grounded theory reflect multiple

systems of beliefs and assumptions, opening "an ongoing array of possibilities" (Clarke, 2005, p. xxiv).

Summary

Morse (2009) stated, "Every application, every time grounded theory is used, it requires adaptation in particular ways as demanded by the research questions, situation, and participants for whom the research is being conducted...Grounded theory is...a particular way of thinking about data" (p. 14). The research questions, the unique social and cultural context of an alternative education setting, and practitioners' diverse viewpoints about identifying emotional disturbance invited a constructivist approach to grounded theory methodology. The emergent grounded theory generated by such an approach reflects practitioners' multiple and diverse perspectives, is co-constructed from practitioners' lived experiences, and is pragmatically linked to practice in an alternative and correctional education setting. The emergent grounded theory holds promise for reconstructing the category of emotional disturbance and for informing educational policy to address the rights and needs of students with emotional and behavioral disabilities.

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Commentary on "Constructing New Theory for Identifying Students with Emotional Disturbance"

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First we would like to commend and thank Dr. Dori Barnett for her willingness to submit her work for the purpose of acting as a constructivist grounded theory research exemplar, with the understanding that she was subjecting her work to the scrutiny of researchers from another grounded theory tradition. We have developed this commentary on Dr. Barnett's work in the spirit of respect and colleagueship that was recommended in the guest editorial of this Grounded Theory Review issue. We acknowledge that her study is very significant and will be very useful to practitioners. Our purpose is to use the research exemplar to identify differences between this type of research and that of classic grounded theory.

Readers who have been schooled and grounded in classic grounded theory methodology will have noticed at least five major differences between the constructivist grounded theory exemplar and classic grounded theory. This commentary will delineate and describe these differences.

1. Development Versus Discovery of the Research Problem

In the constructivist grounded theory exemplar, the research problem was developed through a preliminary review of the literature. This review revealed a gap in the literature and the problem of how practitioners distinguish between emotional disturbance and social maladjustment. In classic grounded theory, the researcher decides to do a study in an area in which s/he is interested and begins to collect data with no preconceptions (personal, professional, literature-based). The study problem is discovered as data are collected in the substantive area in which the researcher is interested.

In addition, the questions asked are distinctly different in constructivist grounded theory, which begins with very specific questions such as the way practitioners define and distinguish between emotional disturbance and social maladjustment. In contrast, the classic grounded theory research begins the study with a desire to find out what is going on in a particular substantive area. The research problem is not preconceived prior to the study beginning, and even when the research problem has been discovered, the questions asked of the data are very different that in constructivist grounded theory. In classic grounded theory, there are three very open questions designed to help the researcher determine what the data are indicating rather than in answering a set of predetermined questions. In classic grounded theory, these three questions are asked during data collection and analysis: What is this data a study of? What category does this incident indicate? What is actually happening in the data? (Glaser, 1978, p. 57).

2. Timing and Approach to Review of the Literature

Constructivist grounded theory begins with a review of the literature which is necessary to find out what has been done and not been done in an area so that the study problem can be identified/ articulated. In classic grounded theory, Glaser advises researchers to delay the review of the literature so as not to be unduly influenced by it (Glaser, 1992) and so that s/he can be open to finding what is in the data, rather than forcing the data to fit pre-existing concepts (Glaser, 1978, p. 31). The research problem and the resolution of that problem are found in the data, that is, they are "grounded in the data"- hence the term ***grounded*** theory. The classic grounded theory research does not turn to the literature until the core category, that represents how the problem is continuously being processed, has been found along with the theoretical code of how all the codes/categories relate to this core category. At this time, the literature is reviewed to identify if, and how, other scholars have found similar categories with potential relevance. The classic grounded theory often can act as an overarching framework for a substantive area, making sense of a seemingly disparate body of facts/theories. Glaser (1978) affirmed that "a well done grounded theory will usually, if not invariably, transcend diverse previous works while integrating them into a new theory of greater scope than extant ones" (p. 10).

Although the 'ideal' approach in classic grounded theory is to delay review of the literature to avoid preconceptualization of a substantive area, this is frequently impossible due to requirements of institutional review boards and/or funding bodies. In such instances, Glaser recommends that the review of the literature be done to allow the research to continue but the researcher needs to acknowledge that there may be some preconceptions that s/he will need to be careful not to overlay on the research data. However, classic grounded theory is "self-correcting" in that through constant comparison, if done according to the tenets of classic grounded theory will correct preconceptions and bias.

3. Methodological Versus Philosophical Positioning

Dr. Barnett points out that her philosophical position is grounded in a constructivist grounded theory orientation which involves an epistemologically subjective and an ontologically relativistic stance. A relativist stance assumes that theoretical analyses derived from the grounded theory process "are interpretive renderings of a reality, not objective reportings of it" (Charmaz, 2008, p. 206). Meaning is constructed through the qualitative researcher's interpretive understandings, an emic perspective that assumes a relativist and reflexive stance toward the data (Charmaz, 2009). This takes account of multiple realities. The limitations of such a perspective are outlined in the paper by Dr. Andrews. This philosophical position guides the research method, the decisions that are made, and the research product. In contrast, Glaser has repeatedly asserted that classic grounded theory is a methodology that is not contingent upon any particular philosophy, and that the classic grounded theory researcher can ascribe to any philosophical orientation as long as all such views are suspended so as not to preconceive the study, and to allow the grounded theory to emerge.

In addition, constructivist grounded theory researchers view their work as a construction or co-construction (with research participants) through the researcher's interpretation of the participants meaning. If data are co-constructed, what is the relative contribution of participants and the researcher to that co-construction? This is problematic since such an interpretation is dependent on the researcher's view (Charmaz, 2006) suggesting that the views of the researcher are privileged above those of participants. In contrast, classic grounded theory tries to understand the action in a substantive area from the perspective of

participants or in the words of constructivist grounded theory multiple perspectives, while the role of the researcher is one of discovery. However those multiple perspectives are conceptualised in classic grounded theory but remain at the descriptive level in constructivist grounded theory. It is not surprising that the end product is very descriptive concepts or themes. Theories generated using constructivist grounded theory tend to be plausible accounts rather than theories that can claim any objective status (Chamaz, 2006); so why use the term "theory" in describing this methodology?

Classic grounded theory does not in fact make the claim of "objective theory" in relation to theories generated since they are a theoretical abstraction of the doings of people and is readily modifiable. It is not representative of an objective reality as constructionist grounded theorists maintain. Again the dichotomy between reality as relative or objective is evident. As argued by Dr. Andrews, when adopting a position of subtle realism then this dichotomy is resolvable. The role the researcher has in co-construction is not made explicit in constructivist grounded theory, therefore, it is difficult to determine the relative contribution of the researcher to the analysis and how the findings have been influenced. There is the danger that the perspectives of participants are overshadowed by those of the researcher. Classic grounded theory takes the view that the perspective of the researcher is a source of bias. The classic grounded theory researcher is not meaning making but rather discovering the substantive problem and finding the ongoing resolution or processing of that problem.

Charmaz paradoxically concludes that grounded theory need not be tied to a single epistemology or to a specific theoretical perspective, yet tries to do just that by discussing grounded theory exclusively in terms of constructionism to overcome what she perceives to be the objectivist nature of grounded theory as originated. Glaserian grounded theory has been linked to interpretativism (Norton, 1999) yet is criticised for being positivist in nature (Charmaz, 2006). Clearly it cannot be both and this highlights the confusion that is evident in the literature discussing this methodology. It suffers from what Johnson (1999) terms varied understandings of its nature and purpose.

4. Other Methodological Differences

Dr. Barnett describes the three types of coding found in constructivist grounded theory: open, focused, and theoretical whereas in classic grounded theory there are two coding phases *open* (which continues until the core category is found) and *selective* (in which only those categories that relate to the core category are saturated and the theoretical code is found). Although the notion of open coding as labelling concepts is somewhat similar to that found in classic grounded theory, the meaning of the theoretical coding is very different. In constructivist grounded theory, theoretical coding is when the researcher "merges concepts into groups or thematic categories" which is a process that occurs during both open and selective coding in classic grounded theory. In classic grounded theory, the theoretical code is how the grounded theory gets integrated; it is the "conceptual model of the relationship of the core category to its properties (e.g., causes or conditions) and to the other (non-core) categories" (Hernandez, 2010, p. 159). Within constructivist grounded theory there is no attempt to integrate the core category with other categories since theoretical coding plays no part in the analysis.

There are other differences in terminology between classic grounded theory and constructivist grounded theory. In classic grounded theory the core category is essential to the development of the substantive theory, while this is not the case in constructivist grounded theory. Charmaz maintains that a core category is not necessary, but this is

considered one of the defining characteristic of classic grounded theory. Without a core category then a study cannot be characterised as a grounded theory study (Murphy *et al.,* 1998). Also, the term *theoretical sensitivity* does not carry the same meaning in both methods. In constructivist grounded theory, theoretical sensitivity "relies on the researcher's intuitive and interpretive analysis of the data" (i.e., is researcher-driven) whereas in classic grounded theory, theoretical sensitivity is the deliberate attempt to suspend intuition/preconceptions and uncover what is found in the data, that is, what the data are indicating/disclosing (data-driven). The prior knowledge of the researcher is also used to enhance theoretical sensitivity even if derived from the literature. In constructivist grounded theory the literature is used to develop aims and objectives as well as questions to be asked of participants. This may lead to preconception and studying the professional problem. In classic grounded theory the function of the literature is to enhance theoretical sensitivity initially and ultimately to be used as data for constant comparison purposes.

In constructivist grounded theory, the researchers is viewed as a "reflexive participant in data collection and analysis" whereas in classic grounded theory the researcher is a discoverer of what can be found in the data when it is approached in an open, non-preconceived manner. In constructivist grounded theory, process is deliberately built into the analysis; however the classic grounded theory theory can be a static or a process theory.

5. Research (Theoretical) Product

The research product in both constructivist grounded theory and classic grounded theory is a theory but there are differences. The constructivist grounded theory product is a rich, *descriptive* theory that captures the "core social and psychological processes" that practitioners were using to distinguish between emotional disturbance and social maladaptation. In classic grounded theory, the research product is an *explanatory* theory which explains how the problem of the substantive area is continuously being process, solved, or resolved. Classic grounded theory takes account of the multiple perspectives of participants, but raises these to the abstract level of conceptualization.

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Choosing a Methodological Path: Reflections on the Constructivist Turn

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Abstract

Researchers deciding to use grounded theory are faced with complex decisions regarding which method or version of grounded theory to use: Classic, straussian, feminist or constructivist grounded theory. Particularly for beginning PhD researchers, this can prove challenging given the complexities of the inherent philosophical debates and the ambiguous and conflicting use of grounded theory 'versions' within popular literature. The aim of this article is to demystify the differences between classic and constructivist grounded theory, presenting a critique of constructivist grounded theory that is rooted in the learning experiences of the first author as she grappled with differing perspectives during her own PhD research.

Introduction

Reflecting on the PhD process, it could be said that the decision to use grounded theory is only a starting point. Often armed with only a limited understanding of 'grounded theory', new PhD researchers are faced with the challenge of navigating their way through the methodological mire in order to arrive at an informed decision about which 'version' of grounded theory to use: Classic (or glaserian) grounded theory, straussian grounded theory, feminist grounded theory or constructivist grounded theory. Cutcliffe (2004) has identified, however, that many researchers appear to have avoided this challenge altogether, opting simply for an ambiguous medley of aspects from each version without regard for their inherent incompatibilities. Ultimately, this 'pick and mix' approach to grounded theory poses a significant challenge for novice researchers as, without being able to refer to useful exemplars of grounded theory studies, it is difficult to understand and prepare for the practicalities of carrying out one's own grounded theory research (Breckenridge & Jones 2009).

By sharing the methodological reasoning developed by the first author during her own PhD study, the aim of this article is to assist novice researchers in understanding the differences between two of the main grounded theory versions: constructivist grounded theory and classic grounded theory. Writing as a classic grounded theorist, the aim of this article is not to discredit constructivist grounded theory, but is instead to illustrate the incompatibilities between versions in order to share learning and emphasise the importance of using classic grounded theory as a full package methodology.

Constructivist grounded theory

Constructivist grounded theory was proffered by Charmaz (2003, 2006) as an alternative to classic (Glaser 1978, 1992, 1998, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2011) and straussian grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin 1990, 1998). Charmaz (2003) has advocated that her constructivist version of grounded theory "takes a middle ground between postmodernism and positivism, and offers accessible methods for taking qualitative research into the 21st century" (p. 250). Certainly, for the first author choosing between versions, Charmaz's (2003) attempt at 'modernising' (or, indeed, 'post-modernising')

grounded theory had immediate appeal. Her method appeared to value the inductive creativity of the classic methodology, and also resonated with the current popularity of constructivism within social research. As an epistemological stance, constructivism asserts that reality is constructed by individuals as they assign meaning to the world around them (Appleton & King 2002). From a constructivist perspective, meaning does not lie dormant within objects waiting to be discovered, but is rather created as individuals interact with and interpret these objects (Crotty 1998). Constructivism thus challenges the belief that there is an objective truth that can be measured or captured through research enquiry (Crotty 1998). Charmaz (2003) has therefore proposed a version of grounded theory that: "assumes the relativism of multiple social realities, recognises the mutual creation of knowledge by the viewer and viewed, and aims toward an interpretive understanding of subjects' meanings" (p. 250).

Taking this perspective on the nature of reality, Charmaz (2006) is naturally critical of the way in which classic grounded theorists purport to discover latent patterns of behaviour within the data. Instead, she suggests that data and analysis are created through an interactive process whereby the researcher and participant construct a shared reality. She suggests that, rather than look for one main concern, grounded theorists should seek to construct a "picture that draws from, reassembles, and renders subjects' lives" (Charmaz 2003, p. 270).

Ultimately, however, through careful and critical exploration of constructivist grounded theory, it is apparent that, in common with Glaser's (2002) criticisms of Strauss and Corbin, Charmaz has similarly 're-modelled' the original methodology. This notion of 're-modelling' methodologies poses an interesting dilemma for all researchers. While it is important that methodologies are open to development and improvement, it is important to be wary of the point at which a methodology has been changed so much that it has become something different altogether. Indeed, as Bryant (2009), another proponent of constructivist grounded theory, has recognised "how far can one go with altering or revising GTM [grounded theory method] basic tenets before one ceases to be doing GTM" (para. 18).

While some would suggest that there are multiple versions of grounded theory, each with a family resemblance, Glaser has contended that they differ sufficiently from the original methodology that they serve a different purpose (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). Thus, this article does not contend that either version is superior, simply different. As such, the first author's decision to avoid constructivist grounded theory in favour of the classic methodology in her own research was based upon several points of difference: the 'interpretive understanding of subjects' meanings'; the co-construction of data; the notion of relativism; and the predetermined lens through which data are processed. These will now be dealt with in turn, demonstrating for the reader the ways in which these core facets of the constructivist methodology differ from classic grounded theory.

The interpretive understanding of subjects' meanings

A central tenet of constructivist grounded theory is to give voice to participants. Charmaz (2006) has encouraged grounded theorists to incorporate the multiple voices, views and visions of participants in rendering their lived experiences. In so doing, constructivist grounded theory has deviated significantly from the original intent of the classic methodology. To agree with Glaser (2002), the purpose of grounded theory is not to tell participants' stories, but rather to identify and explain conceptually an ongoing behaviour which seeks to resolve an important concern. Essentially, the 'findings' of a grounded theory study are not about people, but about the patterns of behaviour in which people engage. Indeed, the main concern conceptualised in the grounded theory may not have been voiced explicitly by participants, but instead abstracted from the data in which the concern was acted out all the time (Glaser 1998). The unit of analysis is not

the person themselves, but incidents in the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Thus, in criticising classic grounded theory for focussing on "analysis rather than the portrayal of subjects experience in its fullness", Charmaz (2003, p.269) appears to be dismissing classic grounded theory for failing to do something that it does not purport to do. Classic grounded theory aims for a conceptual understanding of social behaviour, rather than the constructivist focus on interpretive understandings of participants' meanings.

This is not to say that classic grounded theory is not concerned with participant perspectives. Indeed, Glaser (2002) has identified classic grounded theory as a perspective methodology. The key difference, however, is that participant perspectives are explored not from a descriptive or interpretive approach, but with an aim to raising these perspectives to a conceptual level (Glaser, 2002). Multiple perspectives are not denied, indeed, participants' perspectives influence their behaviours. However, through constant comparison and the interchangeability of indices, classic grounded theory aims to conceptualise an ongoing pattern of behaviour that will account for as much variation in the data as possible. While on an empirical level participant perspectives will undoubtedly vary, the concepts themselves may not change. Through constant comparison, the latent behaviour is conceptualised, saturating concepts and transcending the descriptive level of multiple perspectives to account for as much variation in the data as possible. Classic grounded theory aims to identify a pattern of behaviour that transcends empirical difference in order to provide a conceptual, rather than descriptive or interpretive, rendering of participant behaviour.

The co-construction of data

A further key principle in constructivist grounded theory is that data and analysis are co-constructed in the interaction between the viewer and the viewed, the researcher and the participant (Charmaz, 2003, 2006). Charmaz (2006) offers this as an alternative view to classic grounded theory, which she criticises for retaining a 'distant' relationship with participants, whereby researchers "assume the role of authoritative experts who bring an objective view to the research" (p. 132). In response to this claim, it is argued here that the contribution of the researcher in shaping data and analysis within classic grounded theory is certainly not ignored. Glaser (2002) has asserted that

> researcher 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 (para. 12).

Thus, classic grounded theory does not necessarily assume the naive objectivity of the researcher, but rather through the rigorous application of the methodology, researcher biases are revealed and accounted for (Glaser 1998). The researcher's perspectives are not ignored, but are incorporated as simply more data to be constantly compared. Glaser (1998) has recommended that the researcher 'interviews oneself' and analyses this interview as any other, comparing it with other data, codes and emerging categories. By 'interviewing oneself', researcher biases become simply more data and any inappropriately presumed relevancies can be corrected for through constant comparison. As such, throughout her PhD study, the first author wrote several memos exploring her own perceptions, experiences and existing knowledge which were then constantly compared with other data. The researcher perspective is thus interwoven into the analysis as simply another perspective.

Moreover, as only one slice of the data, the researcher's perspective is not privileged or considered different to the other multiple slices of data that inform theory development. Charmaz (2003) has been critical of the 'objectivist' stance within classic grounded theory, advocating instead for a mutual relationship between the researcher and participants resulting in the creation of a shared reality. Indeed, while classic

grounded theory does not ignore researcher perspective, researchers do strive for a degree of objectivity as fulfils their purpose; to generate a conceptual theory that is *abstract* of the descriptive detail from which it was derived. In contrast to Charmaz's (2003, 2006) assertions that this objectivist stance is an attempt at discovering truth, however, it is argued here that the objective positioning of the researcher is about privileging the participants' main concern rather than seeking objectivist accuracy and verification. Indeed, Glaser (2002) has warned against using the guise of constructivism to discount participants' concerns, accusing constructivist grounded theory of making "the researcher's interactive impact on the data more important than the participants" (p.4). Thus, maintaining a degree of objectivity in classic grounded theory is not necessarily about trying to find 'truth' in the data. Rather, by privileging participants' main concerns over the professional concerns of the researcher, this objective stance strives to generate a theory that is useful, meaningful and relevant to participants. In contrast to the above quotation from Charmaz (2006), while classic grounded theorists do strive for a degree of objectivity, they certainly cannot claim to be 'authoritative experts'. Instead, classic grounded theory can claim only to produce potentially useful hypotheses about participants' concerns and behaviours. A grounded theory is not an authoritative truth claim but a theory; it is not intended to be proven but to be used and modified (Glaser, 1992).

Relativism

Constructivist grounded theory assumes the relativism of multiple social realities (Charmaz, 2003; Charmaz, 2006). As a result, whereas classic grounded theory seeks to identify and conceptualise one main concern and its continual resolution, constructivist grounded theory presents a more diffuse theoretical product which does not centre upon a core category (Martin, 2006). This is intended to allow for the multiple truths perceived within constructivist research, and the emphasis on capturing multiple participant perspectives rather than looking for one main concern. In abandoning the search for a core category, however, constructivist grounded theory can again be considered to have deviated significantly from the original methodology. Indeed, for the classic grounded theorist, the emergence of a core category is an "indisputable requirement" (Holton, 2007, p. 280). It is the isolation of one main concern and the focus on one core category that enables the classic grounded theorist to present an integrated, parsimonious theoretical product.

It is pertinent to note that, by focusing on a main concern, the classic grounded theorist does not assert that this is the participants' only concern, but rather that it is one particular and significant concern with which participants are continually dealing. Where there is more than one concern competing for the researcher's attention, Glaser (1998) has recommended that, in the service of presenting an integrated, parsimonious and theoretically complete grounded theory, these can only be dealt with one at a time. Thus, the core category presented in the grounded theory does not necessarily account for *all* of the behaviour under investigation, but rather accounts for one particular behaviour that is highly relevant for participants in the substantive area (Glaser, 1998).

The relativist stance within constructivist grounded theory is presented by Charmaz (2006) as a revolt against 'objectivist' grounded theory, which seeks to develop a "provisionally true" and "verifiable" theory of reality (p. 273). While in classic grounded theory the notion of 'discovering' a latent pattern of behaviour does appear to reflect a positivist search for truth, in contrast to this criticism from Charmaz, classic grounded theory aims only to present plausible hypotheses about participants' behaviour. The focus is not on producing and verifying facts, findings or accurate results but in generating concepts that are variable and modifiable (Glaser, 2004). As such, it is acknowledged that concepts generated in classic grounded theory will indeed have different meanings to different people, but whatever the meaning, the concept will still

exist (Glaser, 2004). Through the interchangeability of indices achieved in theoretically saturating categories, the categories presented in the final theory are conceptual rather than descriptive, meaning that they can account for much variation in the data. The final theory is therefore presented as transient, open to modification as it is exposed to new data. It is this conceptual level that enables grounded theory categories to transfer to different situations; not on account of transferring descriptions from one unit to another but in the modifiability of concepts within different settings (Glaser, 2004).

Philosophical position

Glaser (2002) has criticised constructivist grounded theory for contradicting the openness of the original methodology by predetermining one particular lens through which to analyse data. Instead, classic grounded theory is presented as a general method, which can use any type of data and is not attached to any one theoretical perspective; it is essentially ontologically and epistemologically neutral. As such, Glaser (2005) has argued that discussions of ontology (what we believe about the world) and epistemology (how we can come to know what we know) are moot within classic grounded theory. Within social research, however, this position proves somewhat problematic, where there is an increasing expectation that researchers are explicit about their philosophical position (Grix, 2002). Glaser's assertions that classic grounded theory is epistemologically and ontologically neutral have therefore been attacked as non-committal, naive and as perpetuating an "epistemological fairytale" (Bryant, 2009, para.13). In response, Holton (2007) has provided a helpful clarification of Glaser's position:

> this is not to say that classic grounded theory is free of any theoretical lens but rather that it should not be confined to any one lens; that as a general methodology, classic grounded theory can adopt any epistemological perspective appropriate to the data and the ontological stance of the researcher (p. 269).

While it is generally understood that substantive codes and categories emerge from the data – that is, they are not predetermined by a specific research question, extensive review of literature or rigid interview protocols – researchers have found it more difficult to grasp the notion of theoretical emergence (Holton, 2007). Rather than assuming a theoretical perspective in advance of the study, the classic grounded theorist stays open to theoretical codes from multiple theoretical perspectives with which to organise the emergent theory (Glaser, 2005). Thus, for example, the constructivist view is only one way of looking at the data. While a constructivist perspective may be highly appropriate for particular studies, it must emerge to have relevance rather than being predetermined at the outset. Thus, "where grounded theory takes on the mantle for the moment of prepositivist, positivist, postpositivist, postmodernism, naturalism, realism etc, will be dependent on its application to the type of data in a specific research" (Glaser, 2005, p. 145). In classic grounded theory, the theoretical perspective is thus specific to each study, unlike the constructivist version which pre-frames the lens through which data are processed.

While the classic grounded theory methodology is not defined by one particular theoretical perspective, the emergent theoretical product of a study will be situated within a particular perspective based on the emergence of appropriate theoretical codes. Typically, theoretical perspective is implicit within the presentation of classic grounded theory studies. Although there is increasing expectation within the qualitative domain that researchers are explicit about the philosophical position of their studies, within classic grounded theory, as a general inductive methodology that strives for abstract conceptualisation, this is not considered necessary (Holton, 2007). Within the current climate of social research, this philosophical position will undoubtedly continue to be subject to much debate. It is certainly a debate in which classic grounded theorists need

to be more involved. Amidst such debate, however, it is important to note that a preoccupation with the ontological and epistemological issues of grounded theory may distract from the simplicity of its purpose: to generate a theory from the data that fits, works and is relevant within the area from which it was derived. As such, Bryant (2009) has suggested that the epistemological differences between grounded theory versions may be reconciled if researchers focused less on the nature of the process, and more on the product:

> the key issue becomes the extent to which their substantive research produces conceptual innovations and theoretical insights that prove useful ..the ultimate criterion for good research is that it makes a difference (para. 102).

This is indicative of a wider concern with the pragmatics, rather than the philosophy, of research. Although this is another area in which there is much debate, particularly surrounding the ontological compatibility of different perspectives, there is a rapidly growing interest in the use of mixed methodologies which seek to combine different philosophical positions as a means of best answering research questions (Duncan & Nicol, 2004). In light of this current progression towards a combinist approach in research, particularly in health, the potential for classic grounded theory to assume any theoretical perspective may soon be more willingly embraced. In attempting to address the real concerns of participants, using whatever perspectives and methods will best address the purposes of the research, classic grounded theory is perhaps more aligned with the direction in which modern healthcare research is travelling; seeing philosophical positions not as discrete, incompatible opposites, but as offering multiple and complementary approaches to understanding social phenomena.

Conclusion

Ultimately, it can be concluded that constructivist grounded theory is distinctly different to the classic methodology. Where constructivist grounded theory attempts to interpret how participants construct their realities and present multiple perspectives, it has re-modelled the original purpose of classic grounded theory, which is to conceptualise a latent pattern of behaviour. Similarly, the relativism inherent within constructivist grounded theory and the predetermined philosophical lens are fundamentally at odds with the general inductive nature of the classic approach. It is hoped that this article has been able to clarify some key differences in both 'versions' of grounded theory, thus facilitating for the reader a greater understanding of the incompatibilities between the two. Given these fundamental differences, it is essential that researchers are clear and consistent in their choice of methodology, following one path rather than engaging in a methodological pick and mix.

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