GROUNDED THEORY

Dr. Teresa Ogina

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Background

- Developed by two sociologist Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in the School of Nursing – University of California.
- Awareness of dying - research in the 1960s
- In 1967 wrote a book The discovery of GT (Developing theory from research grounded on data rather than from deducing hypotheses from existing theories)
- Glaser come from Columbia University, strong background in QN research influenced his approach to GT (inductively, clear set of procedures, researcher's creativity).

Cont

- Strauss was from University of Chicago with a long history of QL research. Was influence by Symbolic interactionism (understanding the world by interpreting human interaction which occurs through the use of symbols and language)
- 1980's Strauss started working with Julia Corbin (validating categories and systematic approach)
- Katharine Charmaz adopted a constructivist GT approach (interaction between the researcher and the participant, data and theory are co-constructed).

What is Grounded Theory (GT) about?

- Research approach that aims at generating or discovering theory inductively from data.
- Explore what is “out there” (when little is known about a topic)
- When previous research have identified constructs or variable but no theory has been generated that speculates the relationship between the variable.
- The researcher starts the study with an open mind and not an empty mind (tabula rasa)
- Prior knowledge is used to inform the analysis and not to direct it.

Literature Review for GT

- Literature can be used as data and constantly compared with the emerging categories to be integrated in the theory.
- Literature is not given a position of privilege compared to data (Glaser,1992).
- Literature remains essential, even though your contribution will be a theory based on rich thick data you need literature to demonstrate what is known about the research topic and what is not know.
- Literature is woven into the discussion to put theory in a scholarly context
- Your chapter on research findings maybe longer than the literature chapter

Aims of GT

Note: Any discipline can use GT

Research topics should aim at

- Increasing the understanding of a phenomenon
- Exploring the meaning of a phenomenon
- How contextual factors contributes to the understanding of a phenomenon
- Process – how and why things happen the way they do
- The way in which X affects Y.
- Predict and explain behaviour

Examples of research questions

- What are the experiences and consequences of …
- What is the role of…
- How do …
- What the issues surrounding…
- What is the relationship between X and Y

My study – What is the role of educators in managing the needs of orphaned learners?

Features of GT

- Simultaneous data collection and data analysis (back and forth process)
- Codes and categories developed from the data and not by using pre- existing conceptions
- Creation of analytical codes
- Theoretical sampling to refine categories
- Writing analytical memos
- Integrating categories into theoretical framework
- End goal is to generate a theory

Research approach

Qualitative approach – GT traditionally used qualitative methods such as (interviews, observation notes, audio recordings, pictures)

Quantitative approach - can also be used but it is not often used because QN methods are deductive and used to test existing theories not generate them

For QN approach- (use open ended questionnaires) the researcher generate a grounded theory about the relations between different variables.

GT Process

- Start the research by identifying area of interest (avoid theoretical pre-conceptions)
- Data collection methods
- Sampling
- Analytical procedures
- Stop data collection when theoretical saturation is reached

Data collection methods

Qualitative approach

In-depth interviews commonly used (open ended questions – questions modified to reflect emerging theory)

Develop categories and components of the theory

By narrowing down the area of interest and concern to participants (theoretical sensitivity)

SAMPLING GT

Note: There is no definite number of participants at the beginning of the study because the goal is on saturating the descriptive data than on the number of participants.

- Starts with ***purposive sampling*** – people who have experienced the phenomenon under study to develop the initial categories (Chamaz,1990)

- ***Theoretical sampling*** – theoretical sampling is then used to generate further data to confirm or refute original categories from the same participant or different participants (Glaser & Strauss,1967).

Data Analysis

- Data collection and data analysis is a concurrent process – on-going analysis informs and directs the next data collection

- The ***first step*** read and re-read the data to become familiar with them.
- The ***second step*** is to start identifying codes.(Collected data is coded in 2 steps)

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Step three - Line by line open coding to identifying words or phrases that indicates meaning from data segments

axial coding – connecting and collapsing data (substantive codes).

Step four - Theoretical coding – finding the relationship between the substantive codes and integrating them (Glaser, 1978). Developing an hypothesis/propositions and then collecting more data to refine it.

MEMO WRITING IN GT

- Memo writing is done continuously between from coding to writing the first draft of the dissertation/thesis
- Memo writing includes ideas, researcher's assumption, observations, textual (during coding) reflections during data collection and analysis process.
- Memos help the researcher to decided on what to include/exclude in subsequent data collection process
- Serves as audit trail for theory development

Memos in QL GT

- ***Operational memo*** – reminders for example the questions to ask in the next data collection or sampling.

- ***Conceptual/theoretical memos*** – describe the development of a category by asking the question “what is happening here?”

Development of categories

- Selective coding – choosing one category that will be a core category and relating all the other categories to that category.
- Core category accounts for the most variation of data.
- Theory is generated from the core category

(Glaser,1978)

Theoretical Sensitivity

- Researchers immerses themselves in the data and try to understand what the participants see as being significant and important.

- Concurrent data collection and data analysis enables the researcher to be theoretically sensitive

When to stop data collection and data analysis

- Theoretical saturation of concepts - a stage where no additional data is being found whereby the researcher can develop the properties of the categories (Glaser 1967)

Theory outline

- The memos are sorted out into an outline of an emergent theory which may require more data collection and memos.
- The final theory and report is the integration of several theoretical memos
- Once you have developed your theory, analyse and integrate relevant existing literature into it.
- Present the theory as a set of propositions or a story line from emerging relationship between the categories explained by theoretical memos.

Figure explaining the data collection anf data analysis process

Rigour in GT

Criteria

- Fit and relevance (do the categories relate to data? Are the categories derived from constant comparison of data)
- Modifiability – all important concepts are drawn from the process of constant comparison analysis. Theory generated can be further modified (Other context)
- Workability (How are the main categories integrated to the core category that emerges)

Ensuring Quality in GT Studies

For credibility of the data - strategies to be used include :

- Triangulation – multiple methods and data sources
- Prolonged contact with the participants
- Members check
- Saturation of data
- Reflexivity (memos)
- Peer review of data and findings

Cont

Transferability –

Use rich, thick descriptions from data

Participant selection should include sufficient variation

Dependability-

Audit trail (detailed description of the research design, data collection and data analysis)

Triangulation towards common findings

Reflective notes related to understanding the phenomenon.

Chapter outline

- Chapter 1 Introduction and overview
- Chapter 2 Research methodology
- Chapter 3 Findings
- Chapter 4 Findings
- Chapter 5 Emerging core category
- Chapter 6 Examining the emerging theory in relation to literature

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