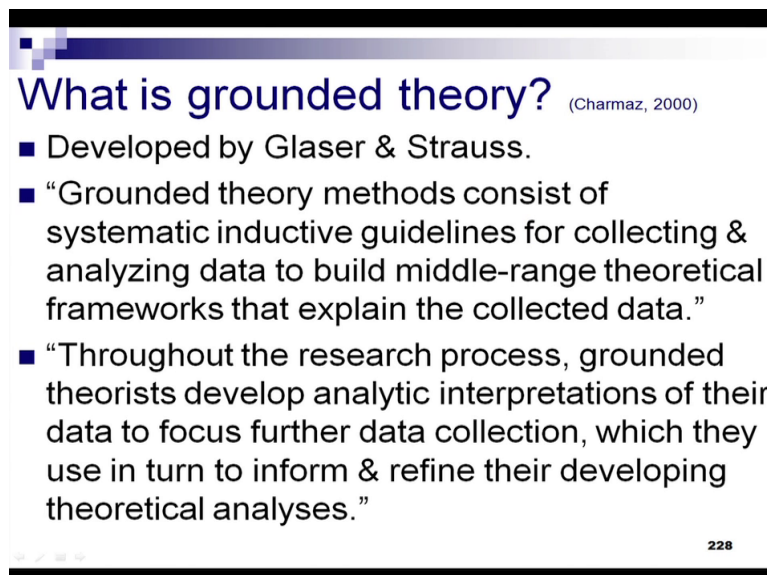


Qualitative Research Methods
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Lecture 24
Grounded Theory

Welcome back to the NOC codes titled qualitative research methods, my name is Aradhna Malik and I'm helping you with this course and we have been discussing different strategies of inquiry in qualitative research methods, today we are going to talk about grounded theory, which is a very important, well accepted tool of for a strategy of inquiry in qualitative research methods.

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What is grounded theory? (Charmaz, 2000)

- Developed by Glaser & Strauss.
- “Grounded theory methods consist of systematic inductive guidelines for collecting & analyzing data to build middle-range theoretical frameworks that explain the collected data.”
- “Throughout the research process, grounded theorists develop analytic interpretations of their data to focus further data collection, which they use in turn to inform & refine their developing theoretical analyses.”

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Grounded theory was developed by Glaser and Strauss and “grounded theory methods consists of systematic inductive guidelines for collecting and analyzing data to build middle-range theoretical framework that explain the collected data.” so we going we collect data and then we understand the data and rebuild the theory from the data we have collected, now this is very different from what we do in quantitative methods, where we collect data with the intention of fitting them into predefined categories.

So grounded theory is a very important role of exploratory research, in the social sciences or exploratory research of social phenomena. “Throughout the research process grounded theorists develop analytic interpretations of their data to focus further data collection, which they use in turn to inform and refine their developing theoretical analyses.” Now what people

do is, what researchers do is, that as they collect the data, they start thinking about it, they start writing about it, and I will explain the process to you in a minute. Now as data is collected it is connected with the theoretical basis and it is understood as it is collected and the understanding that evolved for the guides, further directs the data collection.

So we collect a little bit, we try and see where it's going and then we use that primary directions to help us go in the direction that you want to go in okay, it may sound a little confusing, but we will get clear as we move along.

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Perspectives (Charmaz, 2000)

- **Glaser** (1978, 1992, in Charmaz, 2000):
 - "... [assumes] an objective, external reality
 - a neutral observer who discovers data
 - reductionist inquiry of manageable research problems
 - and objective rendering of data."
- **Strauss & Corbin** (1990 & 1998, in Charmaz, 2000):
 - "... [assume] an objective external reality
 - [aim] toward unbiased data collection
 - [propose] a set of technical procedures
 - and [espouse] verification."

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Perspectives, there are two perspectives, the first perspective is developed by Glaser, and Glaser perspective "assumes an objective, external reality a neutral observer who discovers data, a reductionist inquiry of manageable research problems and objective rendering data." So When we talk about reductionist inquiry this is what we talked about in the previous lecture when we were talking about categorization, we drop boundaries, we try and reduce the spread of data into manageable boundaries.

We say okay this is how much we can understand, this is the category that this data of fits into, this is how this data makes sense and those bits and pieces of data that do not, that confound our understanding, that confuses from understanding whatever it is that we are trying to understand, our left out side doors margins they are accepted, they are acknowledged, but they do not form part of the understanding part process of the data that we have collected.

So its reductionist method, in the sense that we reduce the spread of data we pull whatever we can of the data into the categories that emerged out of the data itself, we are not trying to fix data into a predefined category, we are trying to categorize, we are trying to create the category as it emerges out of the data. But still we are trying to reduce, we are trying to limit the spread of the data within this emerging category.

So in that sense this becomes a reductionist process of manageable research problem and objective rendering of data and objective presentation of data. Strauss and Corbin and that later made Glaser perspective more or attempted to make, Glaser's perspective more acceptable to the research community, by adding a few more things, they said from their perspective.

We “assume, researchers as you and objective external reality just like Glaser, the aim toward unbiased data collection just like Glaser, it's a neutral observer who discovers data, now we are talking mark collecting data. We are talking about an unbiased collection of data not just observing it, propose a set of technical procedures here is where the difference starts, so Strauss and Corbin said that we need to start understanding data, we need to start using technical predefined procedures, in order to be objective, in order to be more acceptable to the research community and espouse verification.”

So these are the two different perspectives, so here verification acknowledgement validation from different sources also plays a part, because we want to, our work to mean something to the larger academic community. So Strauss and Corbin said okay, let's get practical here, yes we are trying to understand whatever is going on, but we must also be able to present it in a manner that somebody else can come in verify it.

They should be able to tell us that, yes you have done the right thing or this is how you could improve, whatever improve on, whatever you have done, so the verification, the validation process, the feedback also features into Strauss and Corbin perspectives and therefore it makes it more acceptable.

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Constructivist approach to grounded theory

(Guba & Lincoln, 1994 & Schwand, 1994, in Charmaz, 2000)

“... assumes

- the relativism of multiple social realities
- recognizes the mutual creation of knowledge by the viewer & the viewed
- and aims towards interpretive understanding of subjects' meanings.”

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Constructivist approach to grounded theory, “assumes the relativism of multiple social realities, recognizes the mutual creation of knowledge by the viewer and viewed and aims towards interpretive understanding of the subjects' meanings”. So constructivist approach says that the viewer and the viewed are constantly in interaction with each other.

It recognizes the mutual creation of knowledge of the sea, the ocean not even the sea, the ocean of data that we are going through is, you know if we make sense out of this huge volume of data that we are bombarded with by co-creating by mutually creating the knowledge out of whatever is observed by the observer and the observed.

So it is a dialogue that happens between the observer and the observed and through that this constructivist approach assume that knowledge is created together, by the observer and he observed and aims towards interpretive understandings of subjects meanings.

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Criteria for evaluating a grounded theory

(Glaser, 1978, 1992, in Charmaz, 2000)

- Fit: "... categories must explain the data they [include]."
- Work: "... [GT] must provide a useful conceptual rendering & ordering of the data that explains the studied phenomena."
- Relevance: "... [GT must offer] analytic explanations of actual problems & basic processes in the search setting."
- Durability: "... [GT must account] for variation."
- Modifiability: "... [GT allows researchers to] modify their emerging or established analyses as conditions change or further data are gathered."

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Some criteria for evaluating grounded theory proposed by Glaser, the first criterion here is Fit, we make categories, we get into data, we make categories, will discuss this in a little while, the "categories must explain the data they include." So the definition of the category must fit with descriptions of whatever is included in that category, there must be a match between what the category represents and whatever is included in that category.

Second Criterion here is Work, "grounded theory must provide a useful conceptual rendering and ordering of the data that explains the studied phenomenon." It's not only categorizing something, we are categorizing the different aspects of the phenomenon, so in order to be able to explain that phenomenon, so if the categorization does not help us explain the phenomenon, then the theory is not as useful as it should be.

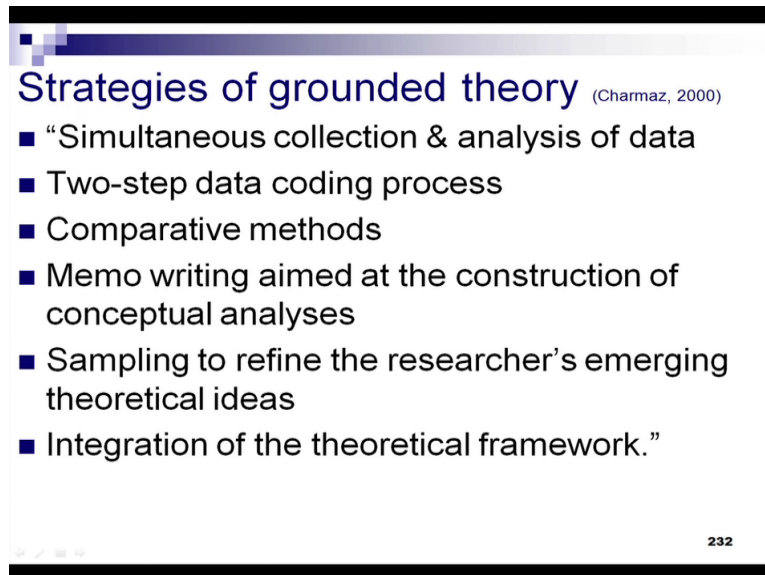
Then, Relevance "grounded theory must of analytic explanations of actual problem and basic processes in the search setting." So it must be relevant to the setting from which it has been drawn, okay there must be a fit, it must work and it must be relevant to the problems of the setting from which the theory has come out.

Durability "grounded theory must account for variation." Only then will it be durable, so on the one hand we are saying that categories must be there, on the other hand we are saying that you must account for variation, the variation should be explainable, through the theory, why is there a variation between different components of the phenomenon.

Then modifiability "grounded theory allows researchers to modify their emerging or established analyses as conditions change or further data are gathered." So when we do, when

we sample the data, when we try match the data that we have collected, match our interpretations with existing theories or the theory that is emerging, we must be able to modify whatever is evolving, these are the criteria used for evaluating the grounded theory that emerges out of all this work.

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Strategies of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2000)

- “Simultaneous collection & analysis of data
- Two-step data coding process
- Comparative methods
- Memo writing aimed at the construction of conceptual analyses
- Sampling to refine the researcher’s emerging theoretical ideas
- Integration of the theoretical framework.”

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Some strategies of grounded theory, the first you know the various strategies are used to develop grounded theory. the first one, step one is collection and analysis of data, so we simultaneously collect data and we analyze it, we collect it and we analyze it and then the analysis give the direction and we will talk more about this.

Two step data coding process, comparative methods, memo writing aimed at the construction of conceptual analysis, so we must be writing these memos, we must be able to represent whatever it is that we have understood and memo writing, will discuss the benefits of memo writing also, sampling to refine the researcher’s emerging theoretical ideas, so we sample the data, we sample the theories that are developing.

And to refine the researchers emerging theoretical ideas and integration of a theoretical framework. So these are the steps that are involved in developing grounded theory now let's talk about the steps one by one.

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Data Collection & Analyses (Charmaz, 2000)

- Gathering "... extensive amounts of rich data" with thick description
 - Thick description: "... to thickly describe social action is [...] to begin to interpret it by recording the circumstances, meanings, intentions, strategies, motivations, & so on that characterize a particular episode. It is this interpretive characteristic of description rather than detail per se that makes it thick."
- Sources of data: "... observations, conversations, formal interviews, autobiographies, public records, organizational reports, respondents' diaries & journals, & [the researcher's] own tape recorded reflections."

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The first step is data collection and analysis, data gathering, we need gather expensive amounts of rich data with thick description, when you start working on grounded theory, we must gather large amounts of data with thick description, now what is the thick description? Thick description means "to thickly describe social action is to begin to interpret it by recording circumstances, meaning, intentions, strategies, motivations, and so on that characterize a particular episode. It is this interpretive characteristic of description rather than detail that detail per se that makes it thick."

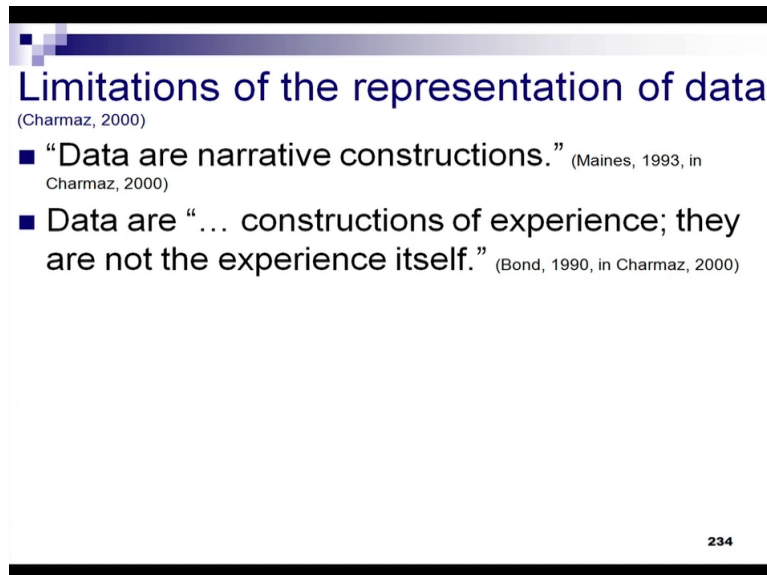
This is from the dictionary of terms by Schwandt, I forgot to mention the reference here, I will put it when you get the slides the reference will be there, in fact it may just put it here right now. This particular definition of thick description is from the book by Schwandt that have shown you earlier on, so it is this interpretive characteristic of description, rather than detail per se that makes it thick.

We collect data, we describe the social action that is to begin to interpret it by recording circumstances, we record things, we interpret them, we record them, we interpret them and that constitutes a thick description that is enriched by the interpretation that is a part of it.

Then the sources of data that we use for collecting data are, the sources that we use for collecting data to develop grounded theory are "observations, conversations, formal interviews, autobiographies, public records, organizational reports, respondents, diaries and journals and here come something new that researchers own tape recorded reflections."

This is where this strategy is different from the other strategies of research. The researcher own understanding of what the data is like, also forms part of the data that is collected. What am I seeing? Why am I seeing it? What do I feel about it? All of that becomes part of the data that is collected. So that is how rich the data needs to be.

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The slide has a blue header bar with a small graphic on the left. The title 'Limitations of the representation of data' is in blue. Below it, '(Charmaz, 2000)' is in small black text. There are two bullet points, each starting with a blue square. The first bullet point is 'Data are narrative constructions.' followed by '(Maines, 1993, in Charmaz, 2000)'. The second bullet point is 'Data are "... constructions of experience; they are not the experience itself."' followed by '(Bond, 1990, in Charmaz, 2000)'. The slide number '234' is in the bottom right corner.

Limitations of the representation of data

(Charmaz, 2000)

- "Data are narrative constructions." (Maines, 1993, in Charmaz, 2000)
- Data are "... constructions of experience; they are not the experience itself." (Bond, 1990, in Charmaz, 2000)

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Some limitations of the representation of data, "Data a narrative constructions" data after all is, if you know we observe something, then we record it, so it is our understanding as researchers of whatever we have seen, we get the respondents inputs let's go back to the sources, observations, conversations, interviews, autobiographies, public records, organizational, respondents, diaries.

So if you look at this everything except public records, revolves around narration, it revolves around a story that has been told by different people and it's the stories that we collect. When we going for grounded theory, we collect these stories, the observation, how do we record? Observations, we write them down, this is what I saw, I saw XYZ there was a an earthquake in Indonesia recently.

Now the exact numbers of all the life that was destroyed or not probably still not available, so some news channels are saying so many children died, some news channels are the saying, so many rendered homeless, some news channels are talking about how many animals died. So they you know, don't say, they have to give heading to whatever they saying, so they are focusing on the news that they think is important, it's not that the other parts of the news or not important.

But whatever we choose, the word we choose, to describe our observations then gives the data a flavor that is captured in grounded theory, and that is why, it's all narration, it is all is story that me formed, a report is nothing but a story or whatever has been told, it is not it may not be a fictional account, but it could be, it is definitely based on how we see what is going on, that is narrative. Okay.

Data are narrative constructions, so whatever we are seeing has been we construct that narration, with data are "constructions of experience; they are not the experience itself." This is what, this is the discussion I have with my colleagues, with my students, when I talk about the importance of qualitative research methods, it is important to capture the situation as it is.

And it is also important to understand that whatever we are getting, from our respondents, in the Social Sciences, in the behavioral sciences, is based on how our respondents have seen or felt or understood that situation, it is not the experience itself, it is still secondary information. For example a person who has been in an earthquake situation and is taking the most recent news, there was an earthquake in Indonesia, a couple of days ago and the devastation is immense my heart goes out to these people.

Now if you were there and you experienced this earthquake, you would not as hard as you may try, you would not be able to put everything that you have gone through in words, you would still select bits and pieces that you thought would be useful. Even if you were writing a journal, it would be humanly impossible at least at this stage, to write down everything that you felt it, every moment during that experience, when the earth shook.

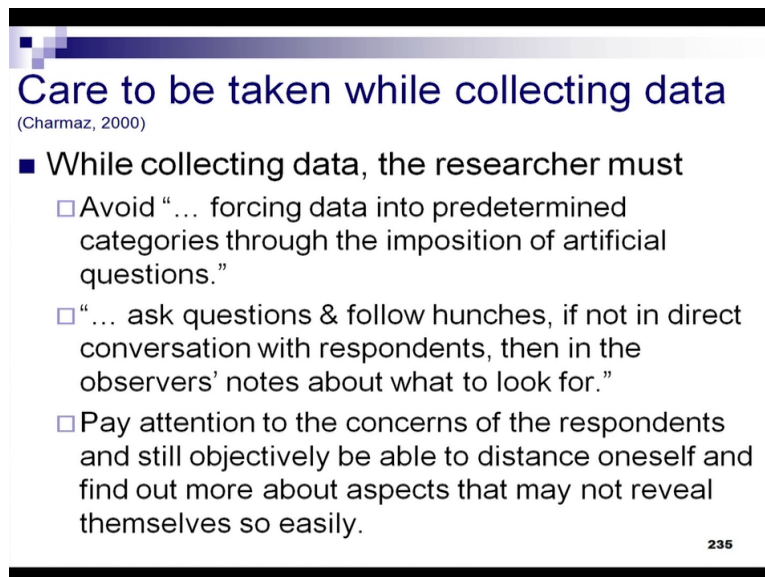
And when you were there and what you experienced, it's not experience itself. Now another person who has her different stories, who has formed the collective opinion of whatever has been said about that will be able to categorize the stories and say this is what really happened, but is it, really that. it's all of feeling that has been expressed in words, I felt this, I felt fear, I said amazement, I did not know what to do, I was confused, I got hurt, I felt pain, I was angry, I felt lost, I could not find so and so family member, my dog was buried under the rubble, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera, the list goes on.

What you describe and what you're not described, what you include and what do you leave out. So it's all a narration of the experience, it is not the experience itself and this is one

limitation of grounded theory, that we can try to capture as much as we want, but we have to acknowledge that some bits and pieces of the experience, of the phenomenon we are trying to explain is still be left out bring out, despite our best efforts.

And that's one big limitation and everything is an expression by somebody in that situation, it is not the experience itself. So it somebody experience it they would get a different flavor that somebody it reading a description of the experience.

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Care to be taken while collecting data
(Charmaz, 2000)

- While collecting data, the researcher must
 - Avoid "... forcing data into predetermined categories through the imposition of artificial questions."
 - "... ask questions & follow hunches, if not in direct conversation with respondents, then in the observers' notes about what to look for."
 - Pay attention to the concerns of the respondents and still objectively be able to distance oneself and find out more about aspects that may not reveal themselves so easily.

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So what do we do, when we collect data for grounded theory we must avoid "forcing data into predetermined categories through the imposition of the artificial questions." We go out, we interview people, we should be as open as possible, we need categories you know as researchers, we are constantly thinking about publication, we are thinking about the end result, we are encouraged to think how, what we would get at the end of it, so we go in with the preconceived notions.

But grounded theory is the complete opposite of that, grounded theory is exploratory research, so the more open-ended our questions are, the higher the likelihood of newer categories emerging out of the data we collect, if we going with a set, of course we need to get some information, but we leave the field open, the problem will be faced with us, that we will get mountains of data.

But the opportunity presents us, that new categories, new themes could emerge as a result of these mountains of data, and with all the hard work that we put in, we could bring out

something genuinely uniquely new. Okay. The second care, here is the researcher must “ask questions and follow hunches, if not in direct conversation with respondents, then in the observers’ notes about what to look for.”

You know again this may not be scientifically explained but your gut feeling has some merit, so after you become experienced with this kind of data collection many times our gut tells us, you know we have this unexplained sense, that doesn't seem to come from any logic that we have, that tells us where to look for the information and we must follow those hunches.

So ask, we must ask questions, if not directly of the respondents, then maybe we can observe things and we can say maybe I need to look at this and this, and this, have I looked at this, have I looked at, gone and looked at the suspect yes or no, etcetera. Researcher must pay attention to the concerns of the respondents and still objectively be able to distance oneself and find out more about aspects that may not review themselves so easily.

On the one hand we must protect the rights of the respondents, we must protect the comfort zones of the respondents, but at the same time, when we protect the rights of the respondents you know, when we don't ask them important questions for fear of disturbing their comfort zones, we may lose out on information. So we need to look for that information elsewhere, I am not sure if I've mentioned this here but there is a massive study going on out there, several studies going on all over the world to find out how people.

Who gone through trauma experience that trauma, one study was is still going on, I'm not sure I lost track of it. Is there stories of the Indo Pak partition, now the people who have gone through this, the actual Indo Pak partition people of our parents and grandparents ages, people who are very, very old now, have healed, they have healed considerably. But when you ask them these things, then they may come up with, you know asking them open ended questions as to what did you experience.

How did you feel, what was going on your mind, may bring back memories that may disturb their comfort zone, then they may not want to talk about them. So where does one draw the line, I need to know as a researcher, I need to know how painful it was, but do I really need to scratch the surface, do I really need to scratch the wounds of someone who has gone through that pain, in order to know how much pain they went through.

So that is very sort of we get stuck, so we must distance ourselves and find another way of finding out, maybe in directly without disturbing the comfort zones of the respondents, too much as to what the situation is really like. So this is all that we have time for in this lecture, we will continue with the strategies of grounded theory in the next class, thank you very much for listening.