Qualitative Research Methods
Assistant Prof. Aradhna Malik
Vinod Gupta School of Management
Indian Institute of Technology - Kharagpur

Lecture 26
Grounded Theory (Contd.)

Welcome back to the NOC course title qualitative research methods, my name is Aradhna Malik and I'm helping you with this course and we have been talking about grounded theory, we discussed grounded theory in the last class today, we will continue with that discussion and we will finish of the discussion on grounded theory. So we were talking about, how we do grounded theory? How we conduct grounded theory research? And we started with data collection. Now we will talk about coding, we have collected large volumes of data, what do we do?

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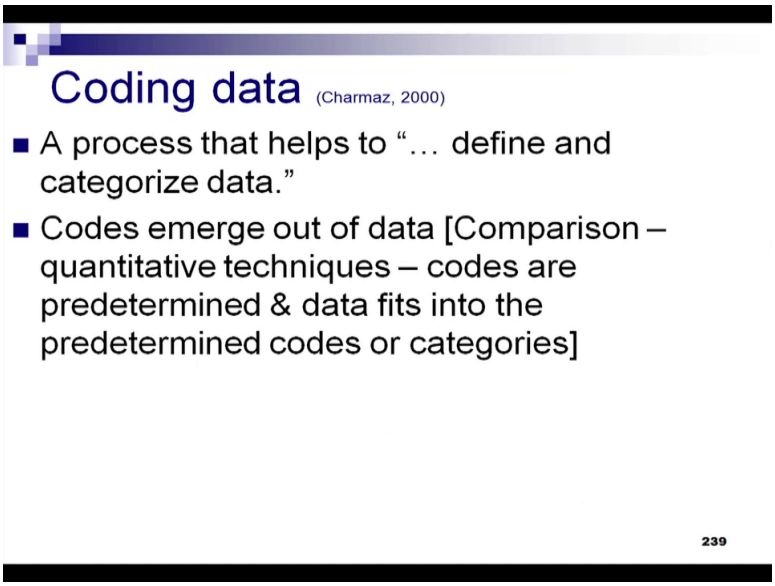

Coding is a process that helps to "define and categorize data." So this codes emerge out of data, we take the data and we compare different aspects of the data and we draw categories around the data and we give them names, so we categorize, we see the data that has similar characteristics, we put it in clusters, we will talk about this, when we talk about methods and so we will put it in you know, groups and their be given name to the group that describes most of the characteristics, of most of its members and that is how we code the data.

These codes emerge out of the data and I told you this in the previous lecture that in quantitative techniques codes are predetermined and we find data that fits into this

predetermined categories. But here because is exploratory research, we don't know what we are going to find, so we collect whatever we can and then we draw boundaries around similar things or similar data points and then we say okay.

These are the characteristics that established this similarity. And then we make codes you know we give the codes, evolve out of the data.

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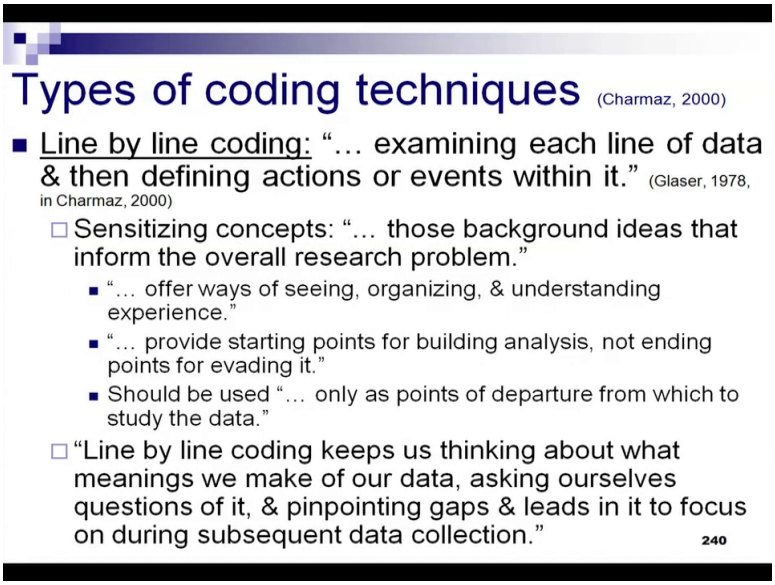

Some types of coding techniques, the first method of coding is line by line coding, we "examine each line of data and then define actions all events within it." And these actions or events are defined through sensitizing concept. So sensitizing concepts are "those background ideas that inform the overall research problem." Sensitizing concepts are the ideas that are that we are really that that give direction to do the research problem.

Sensitizing concepts "offer ways of seeing, organizing and understanding the experience." There is a large volume of data, what is it that you're looking for? That is the sensitizing concept. What is it? Am I looking for trauma, when we talk about, say let's take the example of earthquake, what am I looking for? I'm looking for trauma, I am looking for families, I am looking for recovery, I am looking for communication how did the message go through.

So these are the sensitizing concepts, they offer ways of seeing, organizing and understanding experience. They "provide starting points for building analysis not ending points for evading it." So if I say I am looking for trauma, I pick incidents you know we will talk about

significant incidents, when we talk about axial coating, but so incidents are picked up and then we say okay, trauma means this, trauma means this, trauma means this.

So they provide starting points, I'm looking for trauma, I go through mountains of data and I pick everything that gives me an indication of trauma. So then be categorize into physical trauma and emotional trauma and psychological trauma, I'm looking for three strains of trauma and made it other things also but I'm just telling you we go with some ideas, some direction in our minds as to what it is that you are looking for.

Then sensitizing concepts should be used "only as points of departure from which to study the data." My discussion doesn't end at trauma, trauma gives me a direction, when we say earthquake maybe I want to find out about trauma I also fine want to find out about the recovery from the trauma maybe, you know in order to understand that experience fully. So it is a sore point of departure.

Then "line by line coding keeps us thinking about what meanings we make of a data, asking ourselves questions of it and pinpointing out gaps and leads need to focus on during subsequent data collection." So, we line by line coding give us something to work on, it gives us, it helps us point gaps in the interpretation and it helps us focus on what we need to do next, in order to complete our data collection.

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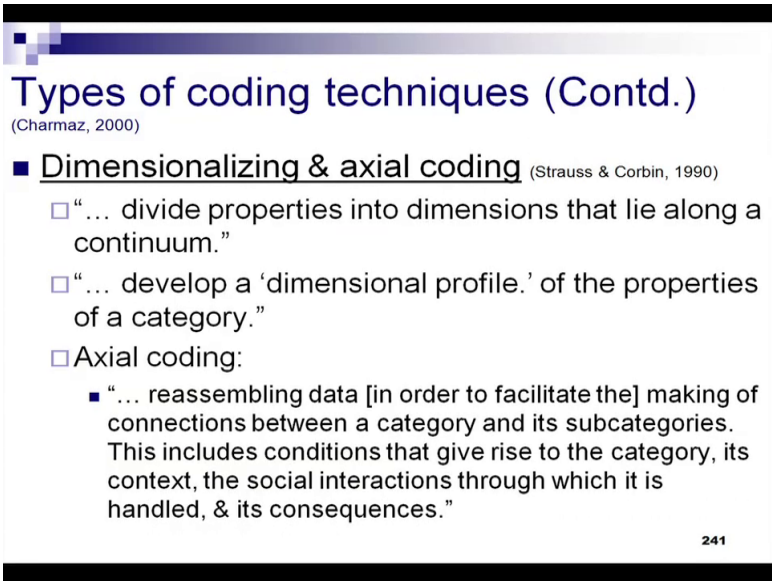

Dimensionalizing and axial coding "divide properties into dimensions that lie along a continuum." "Develop a 'dimensional profile' of the properties of a category." So we divide

the properties of the data that we have collected, on and put them on a continum and then we develop a dimensional profile, we develop definition, we develop a structure of the category and then we say okay these are the properties of that category.

Then we go in for Axial coding, which is “reassembling data in order to facilitate the making of connections between a category and subcategories, so we reassemble the data, we take the data in its natural form then we reassemble the data and we try to make connections between the category and its subcategories. So we try and see how these categories and subcategories connect and we try and establish those connections we try and explain those connections. This includes conditions that give rise to the category, its context.

We try and understand where are these categories coming from, what is giving rise to these categories? Where are they situated? the context, to social interactions through which it is handled and its consequences.” What is the category doing to the phenomenon consequences means we have drawn boundaries around a category was okay these are the similar characteristics of these aspects of the phenomenon.

How do they fit into the main phenomenon, how do they interact with the main phenomenon, are they part? Is this category is really a part of the phenomenal? Or we trying to create something that's not a part of the phenomenon. We try and understand how these categories came to be and how they are interacting with the phenomenon under study.

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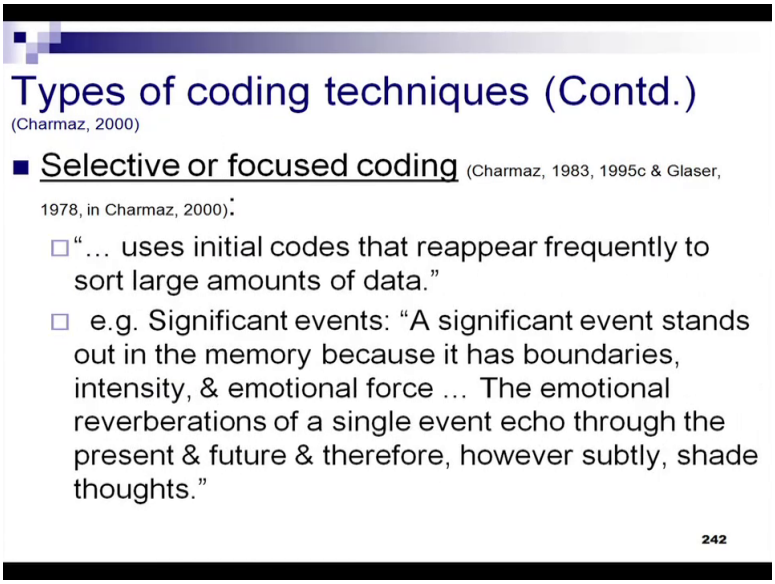

Selective or focused coding “uses initial codes that reappear frequently to sort large amounts of data.” So we start with initial codes, the codes don't come out of the data, we start with some initial codes and then those codes help other future codes evolve and when we go to large amounts of data, some initial codes appear and we say okay, this is the direction is going in.

So using that direction then we filter out things that don't fit into that direction or that are not even remotely connected to that direction and we get the direction involved as it goes a long because this volume of data is so large. For example significant events, that could be a category, that could be focused code, so in the earthquake that happened in Indonesia few days ago, what were the significant events, “A significant stands out in the memory because it already has boundaries.

The code already has boundaries, the earth shook and this time so we are restricting our collection of data to that time, what happened? The building fell down, so many people were buried under the rubble, people felt pain, you know its not the entire feeling, physical injury, emotional hurt, feeling of being lost. So significant events what happened around that event and it stands out in the memory because it has boundaries, it has intensity, and it has emotional force.

The emotional reverberations of a single event echo through the present and future and therefore however subtly, shade our thoughts.” We were talking about an earthquake and we are talking about the time at which the earthquake took place and events that followed after it. So significant events, what were you doing, when the earth shook? I was standing under the tree.

What happened? because I am standing under tree I was saved, but I saw building fall down in front of me, I did not get hurt, but I saw other people getting hurt, that kind of thing, so its significant event. So you're going to the tree would also become, Why were you standing under the tree? That would also become a significant because it has saved.

You were going to go into that building, but before you enter that building, that fell down during the earthquake, you were saved, because you were standing under a tree, so even that becomes a significant event. So these kinds of things you know these are these are this is

selective focus coding, so we are picking significant events not the entire earthquake experience, what happened before during and after the earthquake.

And events things that people experienced, people got hurt experience, things that people who did not get hurt experienced, things that people who saw others get hurt experienced etcetera.

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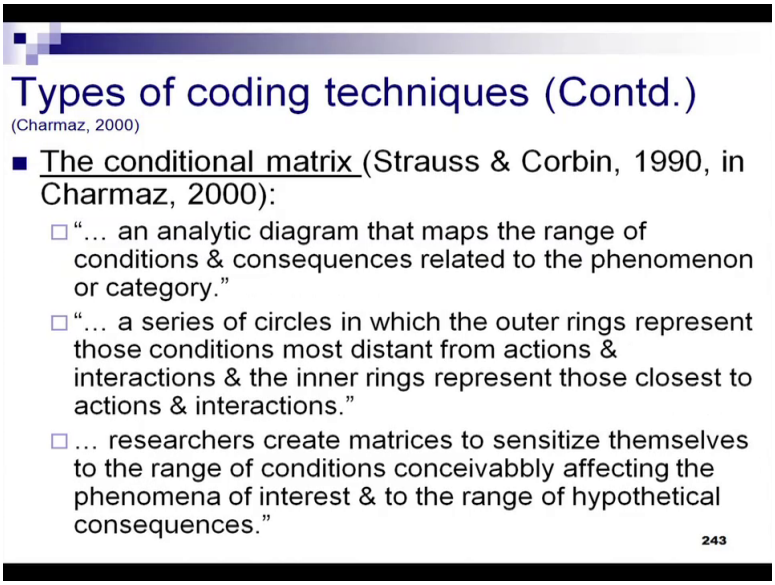

The conditional matrix is "an analytic diagram that maps range of conditions and consequences related to the phenomenon or category." It's "a series of circles in which we outer ring represent doors conditions most distant from actions and interactions and the inner rings represent those closest to the actions and interactions." I have requested for permission for showing you what a conditional Matrix looks like, if I get the permission I will put it up in the notes along with slides, so you see it physically what it looks like.

"Researchers create matrices to sensitize themselves to the range of conditions conceivably affecting the phenomenon of interest and to the range of hypothetical consequences." So this is a physical visual representation of the phenomena and everything affecting it and everything connected to it.

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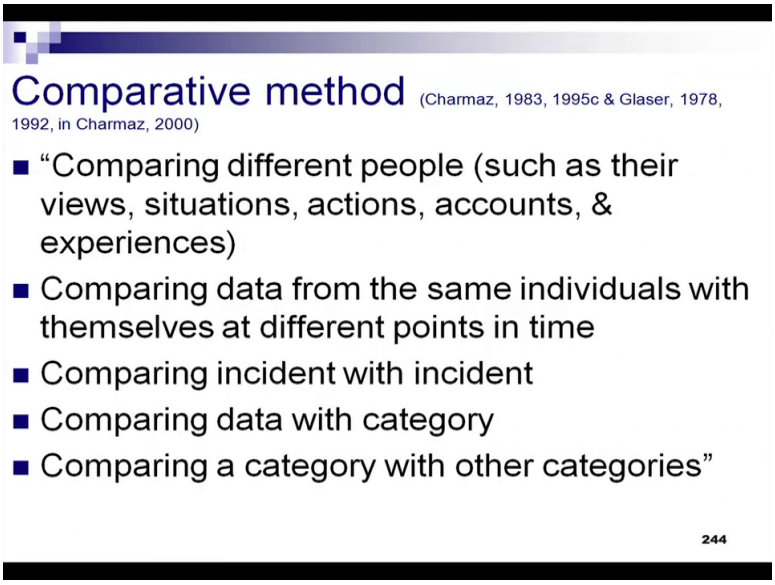

So after coding then we come to the comparative method, once we have created these codes and categories and we have drawn boundaries around data, then we take these categories and we compare them with each other. So the comparative method is then used, comparative method could include "comparing different people, comparing data from the same individuals with themselves are different points in time.

Sometimes comparing incident with incident, comparing data with category, comparing a category with other categories, etcetera. So that is the next stage we take categories and we compare them.

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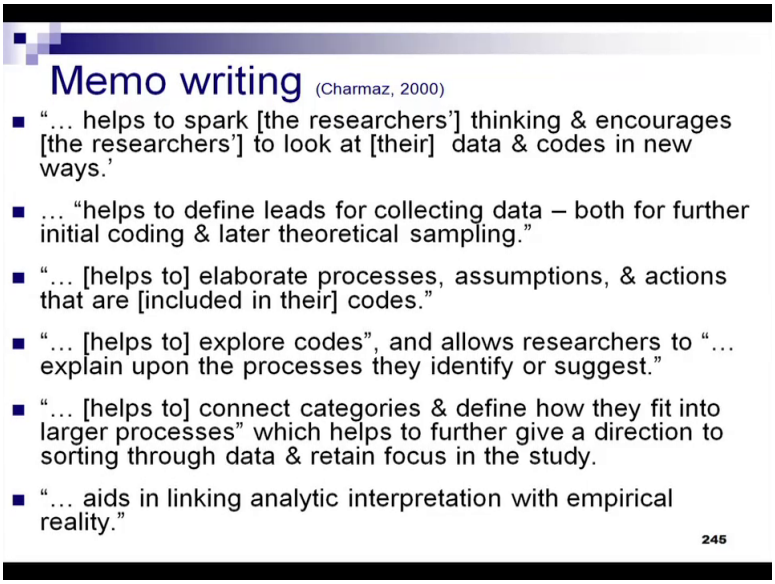

Then what do we do, then we start writing memos, we write down what is saw, what we observed, data we collected, the categories we made and what we have understood, what does

this took this “helps to spark the researchers thinking and encourages the researchers to look at their data and codes in new ways.”

So just writing about something will stimulate our thinking and will help us question things, that we are not so clear about, we may think that we know something very clearly, but once we write it down, reproduction representation always helps you get feedback. Listening to oneself, writing things down, reading what one has written, sparks of another round of thinking.

It also “helps to define leaves for collecting data - both for further initial coding and later theoretical sampling.” So memo writing helps to define leads, it gives us directions, it gives a link, you know we are writing about something whatever we tend to focus on more, becomes the point of interest. Then it helps to elaborate processes, assumptions, and actions that are included in their codes.”

It also “helps to explore codes” and allows researchers to “explain the processes they identify or suggest.” So we go through, we understand codes and then we expand upon the processes that these codes explain or the records identify or suggest. Then it also “helps to connect categories and define how they fit into larger processes” which helps to further give directions to sorting through data and retain focus in the study.

So we write, we think about it, it its reflection writing about something, its reflection, refinement and for the evolution of whatever it is that we are dealing with. It also “aids in linking analytic interpretation with empirical reality.” So that is what memo writing does and after that we move on to theoretical sampling, so we have written about our experiences, we have somehow come to a tentative definition of what kind of theory is emerging.

What do we do next we do theoretical sampling, let's go and check whether it is really appropriate or not, and what do we do.

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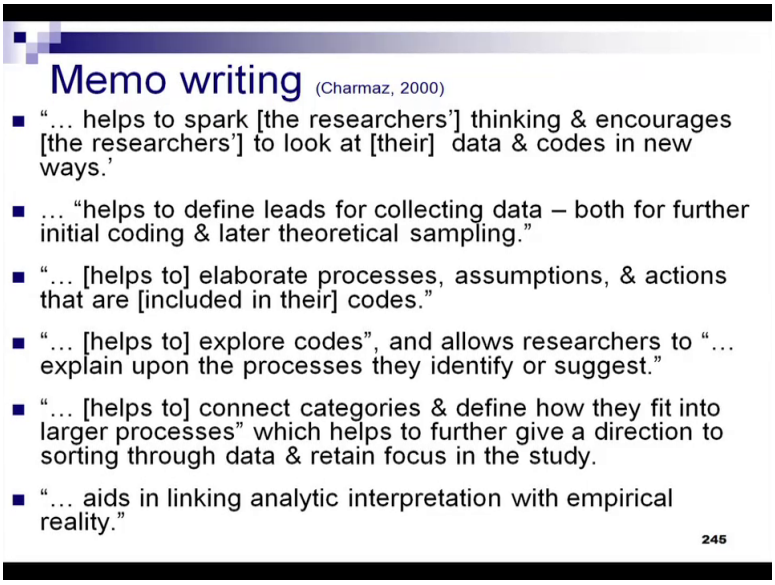

The aim of theoretical sampling is "to refine ideas not to increase the size of the original sample." So we have collected as much as needed to, now we have to go and verify, whether what we would, whether the theory with think is emerging is really emerging or not, how do we do this, as categories emerge and evolve into "theoretical constructs", researchers "likely find gaps in their data and holes in their theories."

So we find gaps we say okay, this theory is emerging but hold on something is missing here, I need to maybe explore more along this aspect, maybe I need to give this a little bit more shape, in order to connect these two parts or whatever it is that I am talking about. "Then they go back to the field and collect delimited data to fill those conceptual gaps and holes and researchers then conduct theoretical sampling.

So we take some information, we check and then we say okay something is missing, you go back, we collect the information and then we conduct theoretical sampling. Then we "choose to sample specific issues after that we don't go in and sample the hole theory, we samples specific issues only and researchers look for precise information to share the light on the emerging theory."

So what is it that I'm talking about, why am I talking about it and that's when we actually go and find the information that can support whatever it is, that we are talking about and explain it further, but that comes at the very end. Initially we go back and forth and check whether we are going in the right direction or not, have I understood this correctly, yes or no and then towards very end and we say okay.

This theory is emerging let me go and get some more evidence for it or let me go and find something that can help me explain this much better, so we going with a specific aim of finding these samples, that helps us make whatever it is that you are saying more robust, more acceptable to the research community.

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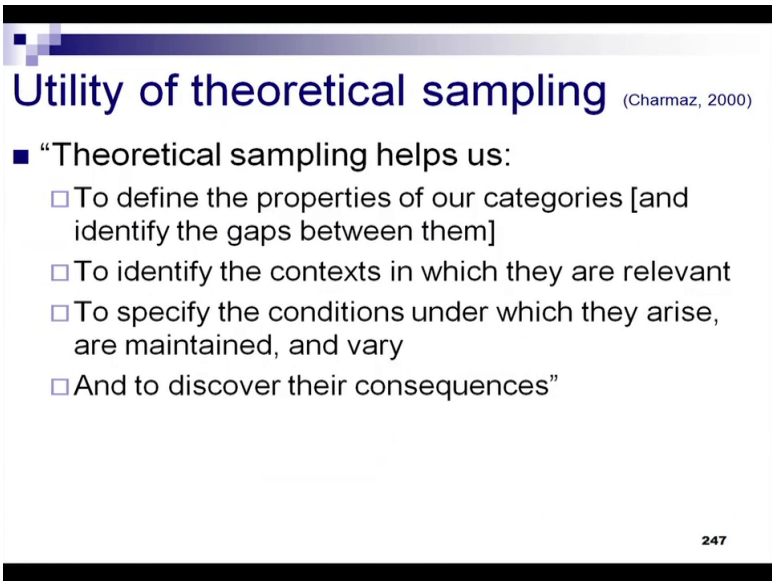

The utility of theoretical sampling, "theoretical sampling helps us to define the properties of our categories and identify the gaps between them, so when we do theoretical sampling we are able to understand what it is that are categories are really like and we are also able to find gaps and them to identify the context in which they are relevant. So theoretical sampling also helps us understand the situatedness of the categories.

It also helps to specify the conditions under which they arise are maintained and very and who discover how these categories then eventually explain the phenomenon of it into the phenomenon, what they do to the existing phenomenon once they are created. So they also help to discover the, theoretical sampling helps to discover the consequences of the categories that have emerged.

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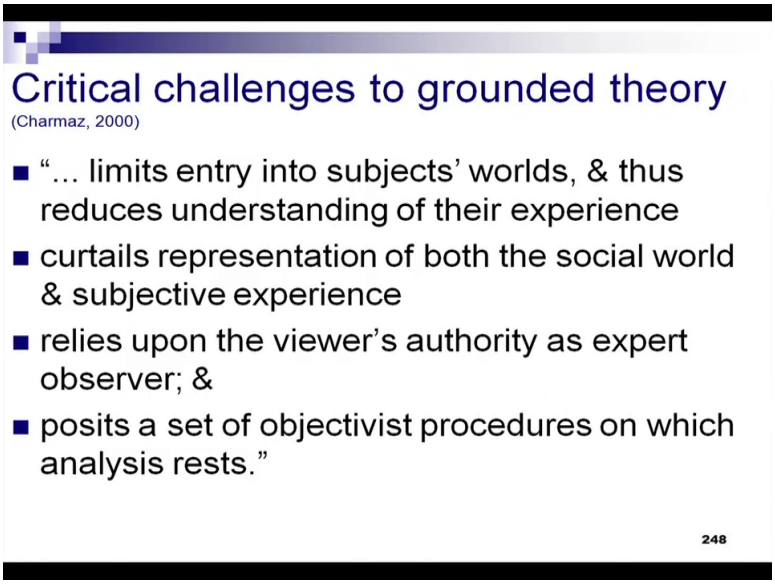

Some critical challenges to grounded theory are, the first challenges that grounded theory "limits entry into the worlds of all subjects and that reduces understanding of their experience, people say that you doing too much by categorizing, you are drawing a boundary around an experience, you are reducing an experience, so the entry into the worlds of the subject seems to be limited and because the entry is limited.

The understanding that could have come about as a result of not drawing categories being open minded and not drawing categories and drawing boundaries around the experience will not come. Then the second critical challenge to grounded theory is, that it curtails representation of both the social world and the subjective experience and it relies upon the viewers authority as an expert observer.

This is one big criticism, this is one big limitation, one big challenge that grounded theory researchers face and we assume that we know what we are saying that you are expert observers, that we it relies upon the authority of the person, it relies upon the expertise of the person, viewing the phenomenon, observing the phenomenon, to observe the phenomenon in its entirety.

And it was its a set of objectives procedures on which the analysis rests." So it's not really as open that is what critics say, that it's not open an exploratory as it claims to be, but then these are some of the challenges that critical theories sorry that grounded theory researchers deal with and that is all we have time for in this lecture, that sums up our discussion on grounded theory.

Now this is just a very, very brief overview of grounded theory but people who do grounded theory will tell you that a lot more is included in this concept of grounded theory. But the purpose of this class, the purpose of this course is not to give you details about every strategies, is to introduce you to the existence of these strategies and then let you take, plants the seeds in your minds about knowing more about these strategies.

So that's where we land our discussion, in the next class will talk about summer strategies of qualitative research, and thank you very much for listening.