



UNC
SCHOOL OF INFORMATION
AND LIBRARY SCIENCE



UCL

Getting to Grips with Grounded Theory

AERI 2012

12th July 2012

Jenny Bunn and Sarah Ramdeen



The plan for today

1.30pm-2.15pm	Introduction to Grounded Theory
2.15pm-3.00pm	Data collection exercise
3.00pm-3.30pm	Break
3.30pm-4.45pm	Coding exercise
4.45pm-5.00pm	Closing remarks



Introductions

- Arrange yourselves in a line across the room. Create a continuum with experts on one end and novices on the other.
- Left end point – experts, for example someone who has conducted grounded theory before.
- Right end point – novices, for example someone who has either never heard of grounded theory or is not sure what it is (but is interested in learning).



Health Warning

Undertaking grounded theory
involves dealing with
'divergence, confusion and difficulty'

Idrees, Inaam, Ana Cristina Vasconcelos and Andrew Cox. "The use of Grounded Theory in PhD research in knowledge management A model four-stage research design" *Aslib Proceedings: New Information Perspectives* 63:2/3 (2011): 188-203.



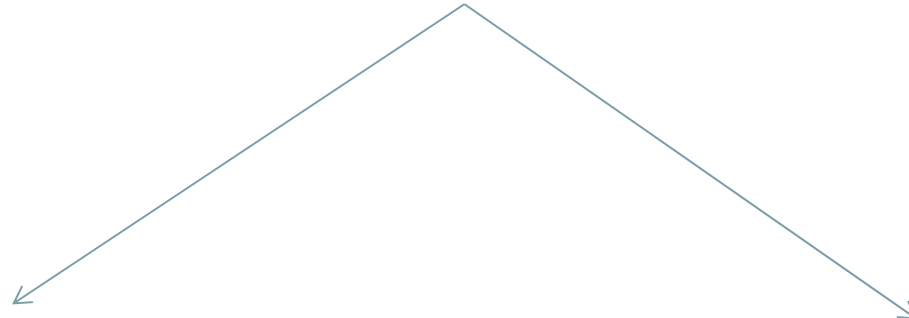
Introduction to Grounded Theory

- Origins and development of Grounded Theory
- Doing Grounded Theory
- Your perspective (pre-readings)
- Grounded Theory in Archival Science



Origins and Divergence

Glaser, B.G. & Strauss, A.L. (1967). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. Mill Valley CA: Sociology Press



Strauss A., Corbin J. *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*. Sage, 1990.

Glaser B. G. *Basics of Grounded Theory Analysis: Emergence vs Forcing*. Sociology Press, 1992.



Development of Grounded Theory

Charmaz, K. 2000. Grounded Theory Methodology: Objectivist and Constructivist Qualitative Methods. In Handbook of Qualitative Research, 2nd Edition, edited by N.K. Denzin and Y.E. Lincoln. Los Angeles: Sage.

Charmaz, K. 2006. Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis. London: Sage.

<http://www.groundedtheory.com/> - The official site of Dr Barney Glaser and Classic Grounded Theory

<http://www.groundedtheoryonline.com/>



Doing Theory

The aim is to generate/create theory. According to Torraco, it is of particular value;

- When the authenticity of the theory generated is paramount to the researcher
- When the type of theoretical knowledge needed is free from the need for empirical confirmation (or disconfirmation) of pre-existing conceptions) – truly novel findings about the phenomenon are likely

Torraco, Richard. "Research Methods for Theory Building in Applied Disciplines: A Comparative Analysis." *Advances in Developing Human Resources* 4.3 (2002): 355-376.



Doing Grounded Theory

Open-ness

Theoretical sensitivity, All is data

Emergence

Trust in emergence, Do not force the data

Integration

Don't cope out



“Steps” to Grounded Theory

Warning

Grounded Theory does not have a logical flow!

- Starting the research process
- Data Collection
- Initial sample selection
- Theoretical sampling
- Coding and analysis
- Memo writing
- Theory development



Starting the research process

Developing research questions

- Broad
- Often no pre-identified concepts

Corbin & Strauss, 2008

Remember, you will “collect and analyze data simultaneously from the beginning” (Darkenwald, 1980, p. 70).



Data Collection

- According to Glaser (1978) any set of data such as surveys, observations and case studies Interviews and observations can be used as data in Grounded Theory.
- Example: Interviews and Observations may:
 - Be unstructured
 - Have topics may change or evolve
 - Need to explore new ideas/areas as progress
 - Need to follow up/verification as progress



Initial sample selection

- Sample is based on the researcher's local concepts of the structure and processes in the situation they will be studying (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).
- Don't be afraid of getting everything and everyone in your initial sample.
- Small samples and limited data do not pose problems – it is about the richness .



Theoretical sampling

- During theoretical sampling, you may need to target specific participant types or re-interview previous participants.
- Sampling continues until the researcher has reached theoretical saturation

Theoretical saturation means the researcher has collected enough data that similarities are seen over and over again, and any new data does not bring with it the need to develop new categories.

(Glaser & Strauss, 1967).



Coding and Analysis

- Begins as soon as data is collected (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).
- When coding, data is put in to categories (or themes) which is followed by determining the properties about these categories that make the data related (Darkenwald, 1980; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).



Coding and Analysis cont.

- Glaser (1978) has 5 rules for open coding:
 - What is the data, what is happening with the data, and what category does this indicate
 - Data should be analyzed line by line
 - The analyst must do their own coding
 - The researcher should stay within the substantive area and the field of study
 - The research should not assume the analytical relevance of any face sheet variables until it emerges from the data



Coding and Analysis cont.

- Do **not** dismiss or explain away non-fitting data, or forcing the data to fit codes (Wasserman, Clair, & Wilson 2009; Glaser, 1992).
- Coding involves '**constant comparison**', an ongoing process of continually comparing new data and old and reassessing codes and focused concepts derived from these codes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).



Memo Writing

- It will spark fresh ideas
- Illuminate gaps in earlier interviews or data collection
- Allows the researcher to explore and flesh out connections and details between concepts and categories that are emerging in the coded data

(Charmaz, 2002; Wasserman et al., 2009)



Theory Development

1. The theory must *fit* the substantive area for which it will be used
2. It must be readily understood by laymen in this area
3. It must be general enough to work in the diversity of the substantive area and not just in specific situations
4. It must provide control over the structure and process of the situations as they change over time

(Glaser & Strauss, 1967)



What do you think of it so far?

- Grounded Theory online website:
<http://www.groundedtheoryonline.com/>
- Charmaz, K. (2006). An invitation to grounded theory. In *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis*. London: Sage Publications, 1-12.
- Dey, I. (1999). Introduction. In *Grounding Grounded Theory: Guidelines for Qualitative Inquiry*. San Diego: Academic Press, 1-24.
- Glaser, Barney. "Remodeling Grounded Theory." *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 3.3 (2002): n. pag. <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/825>



Grounded Theory in Archival Science (1)

Conway, Paul. “Modes of Seeing: Digitized Photographic Archives and the Experienced User” *American Archivist* 73:2 (2010). 425-463.

Research by Paul Conway into the use of digitized photographic archives at the Library of Congress involved ‘the qualitative analysis of interview transcripts using the *grounded theory* method’ (436).

References – Charmaz.



Grounded Theory in Archival Science (2)

Gilliland-Swetland, Anne. "Testing Our Truths: Delineating the Parameters of the Authentic Archival Electronic Record." *American Archivist* 65:2 (2002): 196-215.

The InterPARES 1 research project in part 'adopted a grounded theory approach in which case studies of electronic systems were examined in order to identify and describe phenomena associated with the records and their contexts' (Gilliland-Swetland, 202).

References – Glaser and Strauss 1967.



Grounded Theory in Archival Science (3)

Lemieux, Victoria. "Let the Ghosts Speak: An Empirical Exploration of the "Nature" of the Record." *Archivaria* 51 (2001): 81-111.

Victoria Lemieux's study into the recordkeeping practices of failed Jamaican banks was based on data which was 'coded and analysed using an approach informed by the Grounded Theory methodology with the assistance of qualitative data analysis software' (83).

References – Glaser 1992.



Grounded Theory in Archival Science (4)

Gracy, Karen. “Documenting communities of practice: Making the case for archival ethnography.” *Archival Science* 4.3 (2004): 335-65.

Karen Gracy’s report of her ‘research on competing definitions of value in the world of film preservation’, whilst seeking to make the case for archival ethnography, also discussed grounded theory in sections headed ‘Analysis’, ‘Coding’ and ‘Memo writing’ (336, 352-355).

References – Strauss and Corbin, Charmaz.



Data Collection Exercise

- Divide in to groups of three and review the instructions.
- One group member will act as interviewer, one as interviewee and the final member will be an observer. Use the prompt given and follow the instructions for each role. (10 mins)
- After completing the interview process discuss the process as a group. (10 mins)
- Finally, groups will report back to the class and we will discuss the experience. (15 mins)



Break



Coding Exercise

- Read the interview and individually ‘open code’ it. (40 mins)
- Get into your allocated group and discuss both the codes you have generated (have you come up with similar ones or are they wildly different) and how you found the process. (20 mins)
- Take part in the final discussion which will compare the experiences and codes of the groups. (15 mins)



Coding Experiment

To explore the principle of ‘openness’ within grounded theory, half of the class will undertake coding with considerably less information about the substance of the study than the other.

Questions:

- Will the codes generated be substantially different depending upon the amount of prior knowledge?
- What does it feel like to work a) in the dark and b) within an established framework?



Coding Exercise

Cohen, K., *Photographs Leave Home: a Study of the Impacts of Personal Photography Online, 2004-2005* [computer file].

Colchester, Essex: UK Data Archive [distributor], March 2007. SN: 5593, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-5593-1>.

<http://www.data-archive.ac.uk/>



Coding Exercise - About the Study

Study involved interviews with 50 people who put their own photographs online (25 of whom publish their photographs on personal weblogs, and 25 who publish their photographs on a popular photosharing service called Flickr.com). Interviews were conducted either face-to-face or via instant messaging or email. Project participants ranged widely in age, were evenly distributed in terms of gender, and represent a wide spectrum of photographic expertise.



Coding Exercise – About the Interview

Female Photoblogger. Started two blogs 5 years ago when ill in bed to talk over the rare medical condition; created another photo-blog. Semi-structured interview.



Coding Exercise

- Read the interview and individually ‘open code’ it. (40 mins)
- Get into your allocated group and discuss both the codes you have generated (have you come up with similar ones or are they wildly different) and how you found the process. (20 mins)
- Take part in the final discussion which will compare the experiences and codes of the groups. (15 mins)



Closing remarks – Method or Madness

Plus side

Liberating
Interdisciplinary
Creative
Empowering

Minus side

Terrifying
Infuriating
Boring
Time consuming



Questions?

Contact information:

Jenny Bunn

j.bunn@ucl.ac.uk

Sarah Ramdeen

ramdeen@email.unc.edu