
VARYING PERSPECTIVES OF GROUNDED THEORY APPROACH: A CRITICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

ELINESA E. ABAMONGA

ABSTRACT

This research work was conducted to explore the divergent perspective of notable proponents and authors who had employed Grounded Theory in their respective research endeavors. Discriminating the varying viewpoints of grounded theory is essential in strengthening the degree of understanding on the extent grounded theory can be utilized in a given social concerns and issues under qualitative design. In immersing into the context, situation and the personal interests of the proponents gave the researcher an opportunity to explore Grounded Theory according to their level of perspective without putting the researcher's personal bias. Having traced the progression of grounded theory through rigorous critical review on literature and comparative analysis on the unique features and application as employed by relevant authors, resulted to the idea that grounded theory revolved with time. This meant that in using grounded theory in their research it resulted to a new variant of grounded theory. This implied that grounded theory is consistent with its principle which is theory generation. That following the tenets of grounded theory approach and its methodology, it resulted to finding a relevant theory that was a by-product of grounded theory itself.

KEYWORDS: *Qualitative Research, Grounded theory, Critical Literature Review, Comparative Matrix Analysis*

INTRODUCTION

Employing grounded theory in my dissertation paper has open numerous questions and apprehensions whether it was done properly despite the fact that the paper went through a series of presentations and subjected to academic queries. The decision to use grounded theory in the research endeavor was imposed by the circumstances, according to the nature of the study. The minimal literature on innovation on the framework of the special education transition program in the locale of the study (Abamonga, 2018) and the need to determine the needs of the participants according to what the participants wanted to improve on led to the utilization of classical grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) in the research endeavor. The varying perceptions of grounded theory based on different authors come to mind and resulted to ambiguous understanding and doubts with regards to the trustworthiness of Grounded theory.

There are varying thoughts on grounded theory which led to an impression that it is inconsistent and unreliable. This was reinforced by Cutcliffe, J. R. (2000) in his research work that in his examination of the qualitative methodological literature, it showed that there appear to be conflicting opinions and unresolved issues regarding the nature and process of grounded theory. This can be attributed to different point of views of authors and researchers themselves. According to Melanie Birks & Jane Mills (2015), the deciding factor of becoming a grounded theorist is based on how you position yourself philosophically. Further, these authors also believed, that history and how people perceived the world is influenced by their context in which they find themselves (Birks & Mills, 2015). Thus, the intention of this research is to analyze the varying perceptions of the different researchers and authors who one way or another, utilized grounded theory in writing their research study. The data that were gathered from this research engagement provided a deeper understanding on the nature and processes of Grounded theory as a scientific method.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The principle of Grounded theory was introduced by Anselm Strauss and Barney Glaser (1967) after having conducted their study on the concept of dying in hospitals (Markey, Kathleen; Tilki, Mary; Taylor, Georgina, 2014). Following the classical Grounded theory it is described as consistent set of data collection and analytic procedures aimed to develop theory. It is most applicable in research engagement when data and information of a given concern or issue is very limited. Relatively, this was also reinforced by Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2011)

and Creswel, (2007) that Grounded theory is also appropriate for societal concerns where the participants of the study wanted to resolve existing phenomena according to how such would be most applicable in their respective areas of concerns.

As applied by Glaser & Strauss (1967) in their study, Grounded theory methods consist of established inductive strategies in analyzing data. These involved with individual cases, incidents or experiences and develop gradually into more abstract conceptual categories to synthesize, to expound and to understand the data and to identify patterned relationships within it (Charmaz, K. 1996). Further, some authors observed that Grounded theory is very dynamic because it involved diverse societal interaction like daily engagement either with people, environment and common practices as everyone continuously interact in the society (Ralph, Birks & Chapman, 2015). Since people are affected by societal interaction it becomes responsive to social concerns such as health, medical, economy, military and penal institutions, the Internet, education, social capital, and the role of social activity in the development of scientific knowledge (Giddens & Duneler, 2014). Following the method, it begins with an area to study. After which data analysis and coding follows. As data saturation is reached it resulted into theoretical analysis based on what comes out relevant to the study within a given concern.

Grounded theory has established a reputation in a range of disciplines. Since its creation (Glaser and Strauss 1967), it has evolved and has been reinvented in various ways, resulting in diversifications to Glaser and Strauss's original approach (Buckley and Waring 2009, Ong 2011). There are now different approaches to grounded theory, which can cause many dilemmas for researchers attempting to choose approaches that best suit their proposed studies and personal research beliefs (Markey, Kathleen; Tilki, Mary; Taylor, Georgina, 2014).

Grounded theory methods can be both implemented by beginners and experts alike to conduct qualitative research efficiently and effectively because these methods help in structuring and organizing data-gathering and analysis. The following are distinguishing characteristics of grounded theory methods as observed by the various authors (Charmaz, 1983, 1990; Glaser, 1978, 1992; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Strauss and Corbin, 1993) since these were used in their respective researches: (1) simultaneous involvement in data collection and analysis phases of research; (2) creation of analytic codes and categories developed from data, not from preconceived hypotheses; (3) the development of middle-range theories to explain behaviour and processes; (4) memo-making, that is, writing analytic notes to explicate and fill out categories, the crucial intermediate step between coding data and writing first drafts of papers; (5) theoretical sampling, that is, sampling for theory construction, not for representativeness of a given population, to check and refine the analyst's emerging conceptual categories; and (6) delay of the literature review.

However, given the different backgrounds and line of interests of the authors, the utilization of Grounded theory is brought to different perspectives. Thus, it would be very interesting to trace the evolution of Grounded theory based on how these notable authors used it in their respective studies.

Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss Classic Grounded Theory (1967)

Grounded theory was first introduced in 1967 when Glaser & Strauss (1965) published their book "The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research". According to Glaser more than a framework for inquiry, grounded theory refers to a specific methodology that moves from the systematic of data collection to the development of multivariate conceptual theory. It is known as an effective way of discovering the participants' primary concern, the core category or core concern/problem; and how the participants handle their life circumstances, the core process. It is problem-focused because this approach involves investigating how people experiences and resolve their everyday problems. Thus the theory emerged through this method is focused on explaining how those problems were resolved. In doing so it generates a theoretical conceptualization derived from living phenomena. By developing theory, researchers seek to understand the problem situation as experienced by a group of participants and how they deal with this problem (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

When Glaser and Strauss first introduced Grounded Theory Method or GTM, they advised "literally to ignore the literature of theory and fact on the area under study, in order to assure that the emergence of categories will not be contaminated" (1967, p.45). Without the literature review it would allow the theory to emerge from the data, rather than being imposed to it from the existing literature. Glaser and Strauss later diverged on their stances about conducting a literature review before data collection. That in order to produce a grounded theory it was key to

allow such theory to emerge or to be discovered by means of avoiding the researcher's "contamination" of the research product.

According to Morse (2009), even then, the grounded theory strategies conducted by Glaser and Strauss were different because of their different career paths. Two distinct versions of grounded theory were described by Stern (1995) and called "Glaserian" the epistemological assumptions, logic and systematic approach of grounded theory methods reflect Glaser's rigorous quantitative training at Columbia University (Charmaz, 1996), and "Straussian" grounded theory where the intimate link to symbolic interaction (cf. Denzin, 1995) stems from Strauss's training at the University of Chicago with Herbert Blumer and Robert Park. Through their influence, Strauss adopted both the pragmatic philosophical tradition with its emphasis on studying process, action and meaning and the Chicago legacy of ethnographic research (see especially Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1932, 1934, 1936, 1938; Park, 1950; Park and Burgess, 1921), respectively.

Basics of Qualitative Research, (Corbin & Strauss, 1990)

In 1990, Anselm Strauss, together with Juliet Corbin, published *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques* (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). They recognized that a researcher brings to the research not only his/her personal and professional experience, but also knowledge acquired from literature that may include the area of inquiry (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). On this subject, they stated that literature—which they divided into technical and nontechnical—read before data collection could not necessarily hinder the emergence of the theory. Furthermore, Strauss and Corbin (1990, p.56) did not recommend dissociating from the literature, but rather to engage with it and use it in "all phases of the research". They claimed that beyond interfering with the emergence of the theory, engaging with the existing literature could further foster the process by helping the researcher to identify what is important to the developing theory (Hickey, 1997). That is, as long as the researcher "maintain[s] an attitude of skepticism" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p.45) and do not allow it to impose itself on the theory.

According to Corbin (1990), the first edition of *Basics* was written mostly as a text to use together with their students as guidelines for doing grounded theory research following the original ideas of Classical Grounded Theory. Because the book retained its popularity over the years, they (Corbin and Strauss) were asked to write a second edition. Corbin wants to emphasize the interaction that occurs between the researcher and the data, and to demonstrate how it is a combination of the data and the researcher's interpretation of them that guides and stimulates the ongoing research process. Most of all, she emphasizes the need for researchers take time to think, observe, talk to diverse groups, compare, ask questions, follow the leads in the data and to write memos.

The adoption of Classical Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) in the book of Corbin and Strauss (1990) on *Basics of Qualitative Research* has made some emphases on developing a literature review in contrast to one of the most important tenets of the Classical Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). While under the Classical Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), exclusion of the literature review was imposed because accordingly it will contaminate the data. Thus, in refraining from a literature review would allow the theory to emerge from the data, rather than being imposed to it from the existing literature. Corbin (1990) believed that inclusion of the literature review will deepen understanding on the developing theory which is the by-product of Grounded Theory. According to Corbin (Corbin & Strauss, 1990), the importance of the method is not whose approach one chooses, but the "quality" of the research findings produced by any approach. Though each of the contemporary and descendant methodologies are somewhat different, all have the capacity, if carried out properly, to do just what was intended to develop a useful theory that is grounded in data.

Constructivist Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2000)

Kathy Charmaz (2000) introduced the third approach, which she labeled as the "constructivist" GTM. Regardless of the fact that all three GTM approaches share the goal of developing a theory grounded in data rather than testing a hypothesis, they differ in other aspects. The role of a literature review conducted before data collection and analysis is one of them (Dunne, 2011; Giles, King & De Lacey, 2013; McGhee, Marland & Atkinson, 2007).

The constructivist GTM, following a long tradition within qualitative research methodology, differs by suggesting that to avoid the researcher's influential role in the research process is an unattainable task. The

researcher cannot be purged from data collection and analysis as both are "created from shared experiences and relationships with participants and other sources of data" (Charmaz, 2014, p.239). In a constructivist GTM, the resulting theory "depends on the researcher's view; it does not and cannot stand outside of it" (ibid.). Therefore, its groundedness is not the result of a somehow removed researcher, but instead, it "results from these researchers' commitment to analyze what they actually observe in the field or in their data" (Charmaz, 1990, p.1162). The core idea is that a theory cannot be grounded in the data by an active passivity that allows its emergence, but rather by a proactive focus on the data, acknowledging that it is not the research methodology that aims to discover a theory despite the researcher, but it is the researcher who aims to construct a theory through the methodology.

Constructivist Grounded Theory of Charmaz (2000) while following the original principles of Classical Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) had its own point of contention which was the active participation of the researcher giving emphasis on the researcher's capacity to construct a theory using the outlined methodology. This view while has its own unique features still prescribed the trustworthiness of the Classical Grounded Theory of Glaser and Strauss (1967).

Postmodern Situational Analysis Grounded Theory (Adele Clarke, 2005)

The development of qualitative research methodologies in particular led Adele Clarke to a new approach to grounded theory in the postmodern turn: Situational Analysis. Situational analysis arose in and through Adele Clarke's own work since she entered the University of California, San Francisco as a graduate student in sociology in 1980, especially through her teaching of grounded theory and other qualitative research methods at UCSF since 1989.

Situational Analysis offers three main cartographic approaches as maps which are intended as supplemental approaches to traditional grounded theory analyses that focus on the action-centred 'basic social process'. The situation becomes the ultimate unit of analysis and understanding its elements and their relations are the primary goals. Situational analysis allows researchers to draw together studies of discourse and agency, action and structure, image, text and context, history and the present moment to analyze complex situations of inquiry. Thus it can situate research projects individually, collectively, organizationally, institutionally, temporally, geographically, materially, discursively, culturally, symbolically, visually, and historically and can support researchers from heterogeneous backgrounds pursuing a wide array of projects. Situational Analysis builds upon Anselm Strauss's social worlds / arenas / negotiations / discourse framework to offer these maps which are described as follows:

1. **Situational maps:** that lay out the major human, nonhuman, discursive, historical, symbolic, cultural, political and other elements in the research situation of inquiry and provoke analysis of relations among them; these maps are intended to capture and discuss the messy complexities of the situation in their dense relations and permutations. They intentionally work against the usual simplifications so characteristic of scientific work in particularly postmodern ways.

2. **Social worlds/arenas maps:** that lay out the collective actors, key nonhuman elements, and the arena(s) of commitment and discourse within which they are engaged in ongoing discourse and negotiations. Such maps offer meso-level interpretations of the situation, explicitly taking up its social, organizational, institutional, and discursive dimensions. They are postmodern in their assumptions: do not assume directionalities of influence; boundaries are open and porous; negotiations are fluid; discourses are multiple and potentially contradictory. Negotiations construct and constantly destabilize the social world/arena maps. They are open to the possibility of things always being otherwise—not only individually but also collectively/organizationally/ institutionally/discursively—and these maps portray such postmodern possibilities; and

3. **Positional maps:** that lay out the major positions taken, and not taken, in the data vis-à-vis particular axes of difference, concern, and controversy around issues in the situation of inquiry. Positional maps are not articulated with persons or groups, but rather seek to represent the full range of discursive positions on particular issues fully allowing multiple positions and even contradictions within both individuals and collectivities to be articulated. Complexities are themselves heterogeneous, and improved means of representing them are required.

The three maps are intended as analytic exercises. Situational analysis offers an alternative approach to both data gathering and analysis/interpretation as it guides the research design and the analysis of interview data,

ethnographic data, narrative, visual, and historical discourse materials taking into account all the elements in a situation and their interrelationships. The proposition is instead to supplement basic grounded theory with a situation-centred approach that in addition to studying action also explicitly includes the analysis of the full situation, including discourses - narrative, visual, and historical. Such work can enrich research by addressing and engaging the important complexities of postmodern theoretical and methodological concerns. Adele Clarke argues on this basis that grounded theory was already in many ways around the postmodern turn while in other ways it was not particularly so, and/or not clearly so. Situational maps are proposed to make it so.

The inspiration and rationale for developing the method to regenerate grounded theory as part of the need to shift from action-based processes to the situation of inquiry as the key unit of analysis in the postmodern turn. Clarke seeks to contribute to the development of innovative methodologies that can specify the ‘complexities of situatedness’ and take into account the ecologies of actions, hoping to support research efforts toward greater social justice and more democratic participation.

Adele Clarke (2005) has her own brand of Grounded Theory. While her study resulted to situation as the unit of analysis to support social justice and democratic processes, still in exploring her works underneath is the influenced of Classical Grounded Theory. Using Situational Analysis provided a specific response to a specific social concerns thus clarifying issues and problems that were present in a particular individual, organizations and collective groups.

Dimensional Analysis: An Alternative Approach to Grounded Theory (Leonard Schatzman (1991))

The advent of Grounded Theory of Glaser and Strauss (1967) provided a model for Schatzman to think and work on, to follow, to critique and draw from which significantly formed a ground for his ideas in doing his own research work. In the context of his teaching that the current perspective of grounded theory and ideas leading to a new approach took shape. Due to shared experiences of his students in their research works using grounded theory which resulted to varying results and disappointments, he made an observation from lengthy discussions and came up with major perspective relative to grounded theory, that Grounded Theory was perceived by most students as providing no overarching paradigm-substantive or methodological – to serve as a guide to the theorizing process.

Schatzman observed that students’ were not so much into analysis, as they were accommodating a received method that were taught to them. Thus Schatzman taught them exclusively in terms leading towards the concept of dimensionality. Dimensionality was constructed to provide a theoretical underpinning for a definition of analysis in whatever context it is performed. Dimensionality was conceived as a property and variety of human thinking that turns language towards interrogative and analytic processes in the face of cognitive problem with phenomena, that is when recognition and recall fail to provide situationally sufficient understanding. Under this condition, dimensionality afford an understanding-learned and grounded on past problematic experience - that any phenomenon is more complex than any single name or meaning for it. Thus dimensionality calls for an inquiry into its parts, attributes, interconnections, contexts, processes and implications. And that dimensional analysis brings the substance of analysis to the forefront of thinking as structure for analysis.

This form of Grounded Theory Approach is an option due to the limitations of the students to meet the expected demand of the Grounded Theory which is the analytical skills to work on with the data. That in analyzing problematic experiences this shall be broken down into small pieces to make it simple and easily understood. By introducing dimensionality in their research endeavor developed the students’ capacity to use language as significant tool in inquiry and analytical processes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table on Comparative Matrix of Varying Perspectives of Grounded Theory

Proponents	Unique Features in using GT
Classical GT (Glaser & Strauss, 1967)	That refraining from literature review would allow the theory to emerge from the data, rather than being imposed to it from the existing literature (1967,p.45). This resulted to “Glaserian” grounded theory which reflects rigorous quantitative training, while “Straussian” adopted both the pragmatic philosophical tradition with its emphasis on studying process, action and meaning (Charmaz, 1996) .

Basics of Qualitative Research (Corbin & Strauss, 1990)	Engage with literature and use it in "all phases of the research". That each of the contemporary and descendant methodologies are somewhat different, yet all have the capacity, if carried out properly, to do just what was intended to develop useful theory that is grounded in data.
Constructivist Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2000)	The resulting theory "depends on the researcher's view; it does not and cannot stand outside of it" (ibid.). Therefore, its groundedness is not the result of a somehow removed researcher, but instead, it "results from these researchers' commitment to analyze what they actually observe in the field or in their data" (Charmaz, 1990, p.1162).
Postmodern Situational Analysis Grounded Theory (Adele Clarke, 2005)	That situation becomes the ultimate unit of analysis and understanding its elements and their relations are the primary goals.
Dimensional Analysis: An Alternative Approach to Grounded Theory (Leonard Schatzman (1991)	That dimensionality afford an understanding-learned and grounded on past problematic experience - that any phenomenon is more complex than any single name or meaning for it. Thus dimensionality calls for an inquiry into its parts, attributes, interconnections, contexts, processes and implications.

After analyzing the varying perspectives of different approaches, these were summarized to highlight the unique features of each approach as presented in the comparative matrix . The comparative analysis showed that Grounded Theory has its unique features as each authors used it in their respective studies. All the authors have used the Classical Grounded Theory as point of reference in terms of approach. However, most of them have some modifications made in the utilization of the methods in the implementation of their studies. These modifications occurred in response to certain needs that came out in the continuous data analysis, thus each proponent has coined a type of Grounded theory approach after their respective studies were conducted like Basics of Qualitative Research (Corbin & Strauss, 1990), Constructivist Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2000), Postmodern Situational Analysis Grounded Theory (Adele Clarke, 2005), Dimensional Analysis: An Alternative Approach to Grounded Theory (Leonard Schatzman (1991). Consistent to Grounded Theory approach, the various perspectives were the by-product of Grounded Theory, these were theories that came out as they conducted their studies using Grounded Theory Approach.

CONCLUSION

Exploring the unique features of each type of Grounded Theory led to the common understanding that strengthen the main goal of grounded theory which is to develop useful theory that is grounded in data. The varying perspectives of each contemporary and descendant methodologies were not an intent to divert from the original perspective but rather an adjustment on the demands of the utilization of grounded theory in a given study in different times. Thus this study reinforced the many facets of Grounded Theory, that given the uniqueness of each study and the perspective of the researchers, variations may occur, but as long as it is done properly following its methodology and core features it will still continuously provide a trustworthy result.

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