Grounded Theory & Narrative Analysis

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Grounded Theory

- Began as an effort to make qualitative research more "scientific"
  - In the sense of specifying how theories were "grounded" in phenomena
  - Inferred closely from data, and
  - Defining how theories about the social world might be inductively generated, and
  - Then (deductively?) tested.

Grounded Theory

- By 1998, the popularity of the method was such that Corbin calls GT both an approach and a method
  - parallel to Ethnography.
- The original authors - Glaser & Strauss - had a professional falling out, leading to some very different ideas about what does, and does not, constitute GT.
- Some worry it has become a "cook book approach" - unlike original creative intentions.

Grounded Theory

- Use of the GT method is widely cited in qualitative social work articles (n=85)
  - Even when it application is difficult to detect!
  - And when only parts of the process are applied.
- Wells (1995) notes most application of GT in social work don't fit the original method well
  - describing events and/or processes but
  - lacking a theory to explain variability

Theoretical Sensitivity

- In quantitative methods the researcher must make appropriate selection of a design, sample, instruments and analytic methods prior to data collection (fixed method).
- In GT, the theoretical sensitivity [TS] of the researcher plays a continuous and ongoing role throughout the research.

Theoretical Sensitivity

- TS is a "personal quality of the researcher,"
- "An awareness to subtleties of meaning of data." (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p.41).
- TS "refers to the attribute of having insight, the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand and the capability to separate the pertinent [from the not pertinent]..."
- It is a conceptual ability." (p. 42)
Theoretical Sensitivity

- TS draws upon
  - The researcher's knowledge of the literature
  - Personal experience(s)
  - Professional experience(s) and
  - The GT analytic process.
- TS includes an ability to balance creativity and skepticism
  - to step back, to review macro & micro issues,
  - to remain tentative and skeptical,
  - to follow the research procedures.

Theoretical Sensitivity

- TS centers on the researcher's ability to ask:
  "What is going on here"
  - in different ways and
  - from different angles,
- Holding preliminary ideas and concepts loosely but
- Testing them against the data and
- Looking for exceptions and incongruities.

Grounded Theory

- Due to emphasis on TS, GT research methods are difficult to fully specify before the research is underway.
- Researchers can improve their TS over time from others' good teaching, doing apprenticeships and by devising relevant ongoing supports and reviews.
- Superficial results, however, demonstrate the researcher's lack of TS (or sometimes lack of time, knowledge and support).

Sample Selection & Sampling

- In contrast to quantitative sampling, qualitative sampling is generally 1) purposive (theoretical) and 2) iterative.
- It is purposive to obtain those informants or sources that can best illuminate the topic and allow development of dimensionalized theory about the topic – as available theory indicates.
- It is iterative to gain an adequate sample to develop, refine and test theory.

Sample Selection & Sampling

- It is iterative in that the initial sample selection criteria is cyclically elaborated and tested as new information is obtained during data collection and data analysis.
- LeCompte & Priessle (1992) distinguish sample selection done prior to data collection from
- Sampling which is done during data collection and analysis to refine, re-target and elaborate the sample.

Sample Selection & Sampling

- Glaser and Strauss' (1967) open sample selection is sometimes cited as a fixed form of qualitative sampling (Coyle, 1997), like convenience sample selection.
- This use appears to be inaccurate:
- Glaser and Strauss (1967) describe open sample selection as the first step in a cyclical process of theoretical sampling which is iterative in nature.
Sample Selection & Sampling

- Drisko (2003, under review) notes that no social work texts portray qualitative sampling as iterative and,
- No social work texts (and not all in other fields!) draw a distinction between initial sample selection and later sampling.
- This misrepresents key aspects of qualitative research and,
- Omits attention to seeking out potentially disconfirming evidence.

Grounded Theory Sampling

- GT employs theoretical sampling as an iterative sampling process.
- It begins with open sample selection, guided by the researcher’s preliminary theory and knowledge.
- Breadth is sought rather than specificity.
- Open sample selection may be systematic and planned or it may be fortuitous (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Grounded Theory Sampling

- Open sample selection is purposefully/theoretically directed to informants or events known to have theoretical importance, or are repeatedly present, or conspicuous by their rarity or absence.
- Following open sample selection, alterations are intentionally made in the sampling plan based on the information and theoretical yield of the collected data:
- These are the iterations or cycles.

Grounded Theory Sampling

- The third phase is called discriminate sampling.
- Cases are sought to offer maximal variation of concepts, categories and relationships.
- The distinction between relational sampling and discriminate sampling is based largely on the level of development of the grounded theory and the goal of testing an existing, if tentative, theory or its component concepts.

Grounded Theory Sampling

- Next follows relational or variational sampling.
- As concepts emerge from the data, cases are sought to explore the dimensionality of the concepts, increasing variation.
- Extreme examples, exceptions and constant co-occurrences elaborate the concepts, their dimensions and their variations.
- The density of evidence and the clarity of conceptual development is emphasized.

Grounded Theory Sampling

- Relational/variational sampling is used to further develop and refine components of the theory, while
- Discriminate sampling is used to test them.
- Note that such both forms of sampling simultaneously confirm the appropriateness of the initial sample selection and seek to insure the adequacy and thoroughness of the final sample.
GT Data Collection

- Ideas about data collection in GT are not well developed.
- "A range of tools can be used"
  - Participant observation,
  - Interviews
  - Written documents,
  - Stories, and perhaps,
  - Artifacts
- Are all used as relevant.
- GT presumes you have access to data adequate to develop a grounded theory!

GT Data Analysis

- Centers on asking theoretical questions about each case and
- Comparatively across cases,
- Constantly comparing evidence to concepts and theory while
- Testing theoretical constructs against a range of evidence.

GT Data Analysis

- Is an iterative process co-occurring with data collection.
- It first begins with description of the phenomenon from an emic perspective,
- Moves to conceptual ordering of both properties of the phenomenon and their dimensions on a relevant continuum or matrix,
- Ending with theory = a connected set of concepts whose relationships are specified.

GT Data Analysis

- Open Coding is the first step, in which
  - concepts are identified and
  - their properties and dimensions are discovered in/from the phenomenon as reported.
- Note: Data, as reported to us or observed, is interpreted in this step.
- Concepts related to the phenomena are not (usually) literal reports of data but meaningful interpretations of it.

GT Data Analysis

- Central to open coding is to identify "What is going on here?"
  - Requiring interpretation by the researcher
  - Of the phenomenon as a whole AND
  - Its component parts.
  - Data may be treated as literal, but more often
  - Is interpreted within and across cases to identify concepts

GT Data Analysis

G&S identified numerous open codes in their studies "Awareness of Dying" (1966) and "Time for Dying" (1968). Some are:
- The awareness of the dying patient,
- Access to family or supporters,
- Support of the family or supporters.

Drisko (2001) applied 223 open codes in a study of how clinical social workers evaluate practice. Some are:
- Attention to unspoken (latent) content,
- Inconsistencies between what is stated and the related affect.
GT Data Analysis

- Glaser's later work finds Strauss and Corbin to make the phases of analysis sound more distinct and sequential than did G&S in 1967.
- Glaser emphasizes finding meaning, and
- Decrees formulaic approaches.

GT Data Analysis

Axial Coding begins once a set of core concepts have been identified that help us understand the phenomenon under study.
- As the name implies, cases are understood as reflecting a continuum of the concept;
- Creating dimensions
- Helping to identify cases in which the concept does not apply as well,
- Allowing revision of the coding structure and sampling revisions.

GT Data Analysis

G&S identified dimensions of patient awareness among the terminally ill:
- Ranging from "closed awareness" (comatose, unconscious) to "open awareness" (conscious and minimally medicated),
- Coupled with direct communication (to the patient) or indirect to the patient's family.
- Drisko identified dimensions of problem formulation by clinical social workers:
  - Ranging from CSW only to cooperative (with client) to client only,
  - Coupled with theoretical orientation.

GT Data Analysis

Axial coding also entails data reduction—
selection of key concepts that define dimensions, and
- Determination of primary and secondary concepts that
- May differ along with changes in the central focus of the research report:
  - Primary and secondary changing places.
- A report on problem formulation may include elements that are subsidiary or secondary in a report on outcome eval.

GT Data Analysis

Selective Coding concludes the coding process:
- All categories are unified around the "core category" and
- Poorly elaborated categories that need further explication are "filled-in".
- Cases and situations that challenge the developing theory:
  - Cases/Situations/Conditions that don't fit the model—requiring revision—And/Or
  - Cases in which events always co-occur—supporting the model's fit with events

How are such cases identified?
- Through creative review of the sampling plan (what criteria constituted prior iterations),
- Drawing on the researcher's theoretical sensitivity,
- Feedback from respondents
- Yet may be augmented by logical tools (box charts identifying possible conditions of pairs or groups of key dimensions).
GT Data Analysis

- Selective coding is emphasized by Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) but was
- Never emphasized by Glaser.
- Glaser believes this process, and similar efforts, aimed at verifying concepts and
  grounded theory, are not central to GT.
- However, selective coding centers on
  seeking out potentially disconfirming
  evidence, and thus may
- Enhance the credibility of GT research.

GT Data Analysis

Drisko selectively tested some hypothesized
 differences and found:
- Little difference in assessment and evaluation
  approach by CSW gender,
- More comfort with measurement based approaches
  among CSWs with fewer years experience and more
  managed care exposure,
- Differences in content considered and emphasis on
  client autonomy by theoretical orientation.
- All to be considered useful but tentative
  and potentially varying in new settings.

Evaluating Grounded Theory

- GT must be clear and compelling to
  readers
  - “Can almost literally see and hear it’s people”
    (G&S, 1967, p. 228).
- GT must fully fit the phenomenon under
  study meaningfully, is
  - Applicable to a range of situations and
    settings
  - Yet not overly abstract; lack situational
    relevance.
- Provides some understanding and
  direction to those in the situation.

Strengthening Grounded Theory

- Be sure the question fits the method!
  - Establishing the variability in a specific social
    process
- Know and apply the method
  - Identifying concepts that explain variability
  - Understand prior theories thoroughly
- Seek out potentially disconfirming
  evidence and cases actively, and
- Use one or more peer reviewers, and

Strengthening Grounded Theory

- Use member checks,
- Allow plenty of time (you can’t rush!).
- Be sure the report explains
  "What is going on here!"

Critiques of Grounded Theory

- Too traditional, too positivist.
  - Charmaz (2006) suggests GT can be done
    using a constructivist epistemology,
  - Glaser (2003) angrily disagrees! (All is data!).
- Method too loose, unclear.
  - Too dependent on researcher ability and skill.
- Method too prescriptive (Glaser, Charmaz).
  - Allows for too little creativity,
- Takes too long.
- Too few knowledgeable teachers,
  committee members & consulting editors.
- It’s not experimental research. (Hmm?)
Narrative Analysis

Narrative analysis refers to number of approaches that examine scripts and stories:
- A particular way in which research informants and others convey meaningful experiences.
- Narratives assume a listener to whom the story is told
  - Are relational
  - Interactive.

Narrative Analysis

- Narratives encourage others to listen,
- To (perhaps) be empathic, and
- To share (or not) in response.
- Narrative analysts vary in the degree to which they "share in response"
  - Some extensively and without demarcation
  - Others with clear demarcation
  - And a range in between.

Narrative Analysis

- Labov (1977) notes that "narrative analysis "rarely allows us to prove anything... it is essentially a hermeneutic study, [where] continual engagement... gains entrance to the perspective of the speaker and the audience... in a way that deepens our own understandings of what language and social life are all about."

Narrative Analysis

- Narrative analysis is found in social work
  - 8 social work citations in SW Abstracts
- But rarely as research in juried publications in social work!
  - Most are clinical narratives and illustrations linked to theoretical statements.
- Most address issues of human diversity (by race, gender and sexual orientation) and illness.

Narrative Analysis

- Narrative analysis explores one of three types of narratives:
  - Life stories - the creation of portraits of people that [often] merge the researcher's interpretation with the informant's story,
  - Long texts and interviews (Mishler, Riesman); extended and interactive accounts,
  - Personal narratives based on short, discrete narratives (Labov, Mishler, Riesman).
Narrative Analysis

- Narrative analysis (Labov, Mishler, Riesman) generally explores personal narratives, not
  - Stories of the researcher,
  - Stories of events in the field,
  - Media depictions of events,
  - Meta-narratives
    - How a culture views an identity or role, i.e.,
    - What it is to be a woman, or gay, or a "good person."

Narrative Analysis

- Not all talk is narrative:
- Narratives are defined by order and sequence (at least a beginning and end),
- Actions are consequent (i.e.) to each other,
- With a plot or story line that unifies events
  - Generally structured in time or space
    (Western) but also
  - By theme or episode.

Narrative Analysis

- Narratives employ particular linguistic devices, such as:
  - Use of emotive words or sentences,
  - Repetitive elements,
  - Placement in time,
  - Pauses;
- Retrospectively creating drama and
- Illuminating:
  - Identity/Character of the characters
  - Development of the action/purpose.

Narrative Analysis

- The format of the text (transcript) is central to narrative analysis.
- Preparation of the narrative often involves use of transcription conventions:
  - Labov’s (Labov & Waletsky, 1967; 1997) is most elaborate and structured notation system,
    - and the most widely employed,
  - With a structural focus on purposes of clauses;
- Gee’s (1986) “part to whole” approach examines components first, then the whole
  - Prosody, then line, stanza, strophe, para.

Some Transcription Conventions

- ( ) interruption/overlap
  - 'I said (I: 'yeah') go away'
- [ ] explanation – not stated
  - 'I said to her [Mary] [sneeze] get up'
- = interruption or "turn" to new speaker
  - Z: 'As I told you'
  - B: ' = who was speaking?'

Some Transcription Conventions

- (...) OR (p) a pause (short - under 3 seconds)
  - 'I tried very (...) hard'
- (time) OR (P) a longer pause – time specified OR over 3 seconds
  - 'She was (8 sec.) sneaky'
- :: extension of vowel sound
  - 'So bi::g' [i.e., 'so billion!']
Narrative Analysis

- Analysis can focus on researcher's interpretations of content and process (Mishler, Riessman) or,
- On the structure of the telling (Labov).
- Though both what is being emphasized and how it is "performed" to achieve this effect are typically addressed in the research report.
  - Think of Goffman's "actor on a stage."

Narrative Analytic Strategies

Labov & Waletzky's (1967) model identifies 6 structural types of narrative clauses:
- Abstract (an initial summary of the narrative)
- Orientation (location about re: time, place, participants)
- Complication (what next happened)
- Evaluation (interpretation of consequences)
- Resolution (result of these actions)
- Coda (brings narrator up to present)
  - Which is not a part of the story.

Narrative Analytic Strategies

Labov & Waletzky's (1967) model also identifies several temporal types of narrative clauses that:
- Allow or disallow forms of temporal ordering and that
- Restrict and shape subsequent clauses
  - Free, restricted, and bound.
  - These are of greater interest to linguists.

Narrative Analytic Strategies

Labov (1997) added emphasis regarding how the narrator conveys the experience to the listener(s), including:
- The relevant biography of the narrator,
- The circumstances of telling,
- Features which enhance/degrade credibility,
- The narrator's ideas of cause & attribution of praise or blame, and
- The narrator's cultural viewpoint (that shapes the narrative, i.e., meta-narrative information).

Labov's Classic Example

I: (What happened in South America?)
R: Oh, I w's settin' at a table drinkin' And this Norwegian sailor come over an' kep' givin' me a bunch o' junk about I was sittin' with his woman. An' everybody sittin' at the table with me were my shipmates. So I jus' turn aroun' an' shoved 'im, an' told 'im, I said, "Go away, I don't even wanna fool with ya." An' nex' thing I know I'm layin' on the floor, blood all over me, An' a guy told me, says, "Don't move your head. Your throat's cut."
Labov’s Classic Example

I: (What happened in South America?)
R: Oh, I w’s settin’ at a table drinkin’ OR res
And-this Norwegian sailor come over CA r
an’ kep’ givin’ me a bunch o’ junk CA b
about I was settin’ with his woman.
An’ everybody settin’ at the table with me
were my shipmates. OR free
So I jus’ turn aroun’ CA bound
an’ shoved `im, CA bound

Labov’s Classic Example

an’ told `im, I said, "Go away, CA bound
I don’t even wanna fool with ya." EV b
An’ nex’ thing I know
I’m layin’ on the floor, blood all over me,
CA restricted
An’ a guy told me, says,
"Don’t move your head. EV restricted
Your throat’s cut." CA bound

Narrative Analytic Strategies

- Labov and Waletzky’s (1967) structural interest draws attention to:
  - Scripts = the cultural “referential core” through which a story is understood,
  - Stories that evaluate a given script as good or bad, effective or ineffective, innovative, etc.
  - Patterns of “patter” = recurring speech forms within the narrative and
  - Themes = sets of patterns, though there is no standard procedure through which themes are determined.

Narrative Analytic Strategies

- Labov’s structural interest also leads to:
  - Having others retell parts of a narrative to determine omissions and improvisations
    - In varied contexts
  - Use of focus groups to examine the reactiology of audiences to narratives
    - Such as an audible gasp when the final line of his classic example is told.

Narrative Analytic Strategies

- Riessman (1989, 1993) employs a simpler transcription method,
- Essentially removing (appearing to remove?) the researcher from the transcript (deletions marked as ==), and
- Allows great interpretative latitude to the researcher (based in phenomenology).
- Interpretation, derived from the researcher’s experience and imagination, is applied to both content and process.

Narrative Analytic Strategies

- Emphasis remains clear on the telling of the story,
- Though the researcher’s interpretation of its yield is added as surrounding text:
  - “I analyze the narrative of a divorcing woman to show how, in the context of an interview...she reconstructs and reinterprets her husband’s sexual abuse of her.
  - “Narrative retelling enables her to transform her consciousness, to name the abuse, to interpret its oppression, to re-experience her anger and to make the transition from victim to survivor.” (1994, p. 114).
Narrative Analytic Strategies

- The "transparency" of the linkage between reported text and interpretation varies:
  - From nearly literal,
  - To abstractions that convey the "sense" of the whole, or of parts, of the transcribed episode,
  - To interpretations of the roles and impact of "props" (the tv and the couch as symbols of refuge from her husband's demands), that may, or may not, compel the reader.
  - "I stay close to the text as she constructed it, and suggested some aspects of the assumptive world that was contained in it." (1994, p. 139).

Narrative Analytic Strategies

- Interpretations of the text may be compared to theories from the literature.
  - Riessman (1994, p. 119), for example, points out how one story includes content consistent with a theory of victimization, though not in the order the theory proscribes.

Strengthening Narrative Analysis

- Be sure the question fits the method!
  - Using exposition of a story to demonstrate how the telling is accomplished (structurally) and illuminates the experience.
- Know the method.
  - Understand the transcription process.
- Use peer reviewers.

Critiques of Narrative Analysis

- Drisko (2003 - new with this presentation) notes:
  - Epistemological foundations unclear, variable
  - Phenomenology to Implicit Realism/Empiricism
  - No information on sample selection
  - No regular effort to identify and seek out potentially disconfirming evidence.
  - Interpretations may move far from the textual evidence

Qualitative Methods

Overall, Drisko (1997) argues that:

- Qualitative studies should be tied to a stated epistemological foundation, that is
- Consistent with the research purpose and intended audience, with
- Clearly defined methods
  - Explicitly seeking out potentially disconfirming evidence (if any form of transferability is claimed) with
- Attention to social work ethics, with

Qualitative Methods

- Explicit attention to social work ethics, and
- Carefully reporting of results
  - With maximum data made available to the reader
- Insuring internal consistency among epistemology, question, purposes, audience, methods and reported results.