

**BOOK REVIEW**

Janice M. Morse, Phyllis Noerager Stern, Juliet Corbin, Barbara Bowers, Kathy Charmaz, Adele E. Clarke. *Developing grounded theory. The second generation* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2009), 279 pp. ISBN 1-59874-192-6, Hardcover.

*Developing grounded theory. The second generation* is a very useful and clarifying book arisen from a one-day symposium on advances in qualitative methods in Alberta, 2007. The conference was sponsored by the International Institute for Qualitative Methodology (IIQM). For the first time, the students of Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, “the second generation” of grounded theory researchers, met to discuss grounded theory and its developments. With the exception of Janice Morse, the authors of this book worked directly with Anselm Strauss and Barney Glaser. In this volume they provide a description of the history, principles and practice of the grounded theory methods.

The authors of this review paper have all used the grounded theory method in their doctoral theses in medicine and public health. We all know that there is more than one version of the grounded theory, which might be slightly confusing, at least for “beginners”. However, we also assume that Barney Glaser’s and Anselm Strauss’ contrasting philosophical and methodological traditions in the 1960s might have placed grounded theory on a rather wonky ground, which later on has contributed to the development of two directions of the grounded theory: objectivist and constructivist grounded theory. As we have understood the history of grounded theory, the motive for Glaser and Strauss to cooperate in research was mainly their attempt to close the embarrassing gap between theory and empirical data. This book, *Developing grounded theory. The second generation* from 2009, offers an interesting view of the development of grounded theory and stresses some of the differences between different directions of grounded theory methodology. Our aim with this review paper is to give the readers of the *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being (QHW)* a brief summary of the content of the book, chapter by chapter. The chapters cover the work of Anselm Strauss, Barney Glaser, Leonard Schatzman, the postmodern and constructivistic schools. Several case studies reprinted here show the method in action.

**Chapter 1: Tussles, Tensions, and Resolution. Janice M. Morse**

In this chapter, Janice Morse introduces the readers to the original grounded theory method developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Grounded theory may now be the most popular qualitative research method used extensively in North America and internationally. According to Morse, grounded theory, when used with a symbolic interactionist lens, enables not only the documentation of change within social groups, but also understanding of the core process central to that change. Grounded theory is a way of thinking about data—a process of conceptualisation—and a process of theorising from data, so that the result is a theory that the scientist produces from data collected by interviewing and observing everyday life. It allows the researcher to explicate what “is going on” within a setting or around a particular event. 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” and “Straussian” grounded theory, respectively.

**Chapter 2: In the beginning Glaser and Strauss Created Grounded Theory. Phyllis Noerager Stern**

In this chapter, Stern gives a review over Glaser and Strauss as individuals. Anselm Strauss was born in New York City to Jewish immigrants. He earned a degree in sociology from the University of Virginia, and Master and doctoral degrees from the University of Chicago. After graduation, Strauss taught at Lawrence College, Indiana University and the University of Chicago. Later Strauss completed a PhD degree in sociology, which admitted its first student in 1968 including Phyllis Stern herself, Juliet Corbin, Barbara Bowers, Kathy Charmaz and Adele Clarke—all graduated from the PhD program in sociology.

Barney Glaser was born in San Francisco, CA. He earned his undergraduate degree in sociology at Stanford University in 1952 and then he decided to spend a couple of years abroad. He earned his PhD in 1961 and then moved back to California where he met Strauss. Strauss invited Glaser to join a study on the dying, which Glaser accepted. The

grant for the study lasted for four years and generated several publications, the first of which, *Awareness of Dying* (Glaser & Strauss, 1965), had a major impact on the medical community and how dying patients and their families are treated. Towards the end of the grant, Glaser and Strauss realised that they were using different research methods. Strauss contributed his experience in theory generation and symbolic interactionism, whereas Glaser worked with constant comparison of the data. Together they published *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In 1978, Glaser published *Theoretical Sensitivity*, his first major book via his own publishing company, to explain the method more clearly. In publishing his own work, he skips that most important of academic steps—peer review. Nevertheless, he has become his own industry, publishing a book a year and giving workshops all over the world. In 1998, he received an honorary PhD from Stockholm University, Sweden, the highest of academic honours.

According to Stern, it was clear that Glaser and Strauss respected each other, but a rift occurred between them when Strauss, together with Juliet Corbin, in 1990 published *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques* (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Glaser criticised the book chapter by chapter, but the wounds healed and Glaser continues to dedicate his books to Strauss. Strauss died in 1996, but his and Glaser's gift to research, grounded theory, still lives on.

### **Chapter 3: Taking an Analytic Journey. Juliet Corbin**

In the third chapter, Corbin gives us her reflection of Strauss' version of grounded theory by illustrating how it is done using an example from *Basics of Qualitative Research*, third edition (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). In writing the third edition of the book, she has chosen parts of both past and present, and rejected others. She has retained what was best about Strauss' approach to doing analysis. According to Corbin, the first edition of *Basics* was written mostly as a text to use together with their students—as guidelines for doing grounded theory research. Because the book retained its popularity over the years, they were asked to write a second edition. Unfortunately, Strauss died before that edition was completed. In keeping with Strauss' memory and the popular nature of the book, she felt it best not to make too many changes at the time.

When Juliet Corbin worked on the third edition of *Basics*, she struggled with how to put together the best of the past with what she believes about research in the present. How she has written about the

method in the third edition of *Basics* is thus a combination of the best aspects of Strauss' book, combined with what she derived from contemporary thoughts, all seen through the perspective of the person she has become over the years. Therefore, rather than going into an entire philosophical or methodological discussion about "Straussian" grounded theory she presents an example of how she would go about doing research today. She wants to emphasise 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 emphasises the need for researchers to take the time to think, observe, talk to diverse groups, compare, ask questions, follow the leads in the data and to write memos. According to Corbin, 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—develop useful theory that is grounded in data.

### **Chapter 4: Glaserian grounded theory. Phyllis Noerager Stern**

In the fourth chapter, Phyllis Noerager Stern gives her view on the classical or Glaserian grounded theory developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). According to Glaser, grounded theory is a method that can be used in different types of data, including statistics. However, Noerager Stern does not provide any examples of how that can be done. Doing a grounded theory study is a creative process and a particular study cannot be exactly redone by another researcher. The results are contextual regarding researcher, including the perspective of the researcher, the perspective of the informants and the time the data were collected and analysed. The most important part of the analysis is the constant comparisons according to Noerager Stern's way of interpreting Glaser. Further, she argues that interviews should not be tape-recorded in classical or Glaserian grounded theory, instead extensive field notes should be written down directly after the interview. In this chapter, Noerager Stern also mentions that the critics rose against Glaser's version of grounded theory and commented on how Glaser ran a vanity press where he published his own work. Glaser was also criticised for being positivist, but Noerager Stern argues that he is not; instead he was

interpreting grounded theory for positivists in a way they could recognise.

Noerager Stern gives an example of a grounded theory study she has conducted with June Kerry with the aim of deepening the knowledge of how victims process losing their homes to fire. Finally, the chapter consists of a dialogue concerning ethics in interviewing where one of the most important ethical considerations, according to Noerager, is to never leave an informant without being sure that she or he feels well after going through with the interview.

### **Chapter 5: Dimensional Analysis. Barbara Bowers and Leonard Schatzman**

In this chapter, Barbara Bowers and Leonard Schatzman describe *dimensional analysis*, an approach developed by Schatzman. Schatzman was a former student and later colleague of Strauss. He began to wonder what happened during the time between data collection and the final manuscript. He asked “how do researchers *do* analysis?” Schatzman wanted to find a way of doing analysis that could suit all types of qualitative research. He talked about natural analysis, the kind of analysis all people do in their everyday life such as get an overview over a specific situation and then decide what is most important to do or how to act in this or that specific situation. His conclusion was that research analysis is similar in kind to natural analysis. Finally, he developed the oral tradition of dimensional analysis including the ability for the researcher to see what was really going on in data. According to dimensional analysis, the researcher sees data from his/her dimension, e.g., a sociologist looks for social patterns in data, that is, what emerges from data is dependent on both the perspective of the informants and of the researcher; the researcher can only see patterns that he or she is aware of. Schatzman saw that research analysis involves a range of analytical processes which only one is comparative analysis. One process involved is, according to Schatzman, conjuring, where the researcher looks for characteristics in the data. The next step is to assign different values to the dimensions considered and the last step, inferring, where the researcher assumes relationships between dimensions and assuming relevance or irrelevance of these dimensions.

### **Chapter 6: Shifting the grounds: Constructivistic Grounded Theory Methods. Kathy Charmaz**

Charmaz states that all versions of grounded theory are fruitful because they offer helpful strategies in collecting, managing and analysing qualitative data.

She argues that a method should have two characteristic: firstly, the method has to be applicable in different disciplines and secondly, it should offer a way of thinking about and conceptualising data, including a chance to invent new analytical procedures. Charmaz writes further that she regards grounded theory as an umbrella covering several different ways of thinking about the data. To date, the constructivist grounded theory is the last of the different described versions of the method and it is a contemporary revision of classical grounded theory. The epistemology behind this latest version is relativistic; knowledge is socially produced and constructed, and it acknowledges both the participants as well as the researcher’s ways of interpreting phenomenon. We all see things from different perspectives. Charmaz means that conducting and analysing data is not a neutral act; both the participant and the researcher interpret the world and what is said about it. For example, we construct our interpretations of the world and the aim is to come as close as possible to the meaning and action of the participants to really understand what it is all about. That is, constructivist grounded theorists view data as constructed rather than as discovered. This way of looking at data separates constructivist grounded theory from the other versions of grounded theory. Charmaz acknowledges that data is both the interpretation and construction of the participant’s views of their lifeworld *and* the researcher’s interpretation and construction of the participant’s interpretations and constructions. This is different from social constructivism that only acknowledges the participant’s interpretations and constructions.

### **Chapter 7: From Grounded Theory to Situational Analysis. Adele E. Clarke**

This chapter focuses on three kinds of maps that can be used as innovative analytic devices for grounded theorists. The author gives a number of examples of how the researcher can analyse data, especially “helping silences speak.” The chapter also contains examples of how the mapping of situations can be constructed, based on a study of mentoring that Clark has conducted. The description helps the researcher to see the phenomenon in a wider perspective. Two fundamental research questions—what is happening and in which context—are used as a point of departure to analyse situations. The whole surrounding context is thus included in the research field, both at an individual level and at a contextual level, as well as varying aspects that may have consequences for data analysis. The author deals with several aspects that have an impact on how the

research question is perceived and the way theory is constructed from the data. Clarke provides a particularly insightful discussion of the collective aspect of systems theory within grounded theory. To conclude, Clarke would in the future like to see more studies using *Situational Analysis* to generate “increased awareness of how outside actors influenced participants’ constructions” of the phenomenon.

**Chapter 8: Grounded Theories: on Solid Ground. Janice M. Morse, Adele E. Clarke, Barbara Bowers, Kathy Charmaz, Juliet Corbin and Phyllis Noerager Stern**

The last chapter presents a conversation the authors of this book were engaged in at the conclusion of a conference and workshop they attended. It allows us to follow their reasoning and learn more about how the method has developed over time. We also see how different schools of thought have emerged, in the development from the first version of grounded theory, presented by Glaser and Strauss, to the second generation of grounded theory methodology. Morse and co-workers, who contributed to this final chapter, address some of the criticism that has been voiced against the method, and certain objections to the effect that grounded theory may have. Among their conclusions, the authors stress the very diverse nature of research that goes by the name of grounded theory: “We know that grounded theory

is not easy—it is very difficult—and poor grounded theory is simply obvious rubbish”; but “Good grounded theory surprises and delights”. This discussion is concluded with the observation that, although the method is rapidly developing and undergoing a remarkable number of changes, the original idea remains at the core, forming the basis for all such developments.

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