

Grounded Theory

In standard methodology training, you learn how to deduce hypotheses from theory and how to test them, based on more or less representative samples and on statistical models fitting the level of measurement of the collected data. This is fine.

But how can we construct theories ourselves, and most notably such theories that are not derived from other theories, but are grounded in data like observations, interviews, and records of real events?

Such a theory is a “grounded theory”. In this course, participants will learn how grounded theories are developed, and why it is very useful to be able to do so.

The topics of the course include: the logic of “doing grounded theory”; open coding & developing categories; “axial coding” and giving density to an emerging theory; the art of memo writing; the skills of “enhancing theoretical sensitivity”; theoretical sampling & “empirical saturation”; theory-building proper.

Here is a preliminary list of readings:

1. Overview

Kathy Charmaz, 2000: Grounded Theory. Objectivist and Constructivist Methods, in: Norman K. Denzin / Yvonne S. Lincoln, eds., Handbook of Qualitative Research, Thousand Oaks: Sage, pp. 509-535 (chapter 19)

2. Data collection and sampling

Kathy Charmaz, 2006: Constructing Grounded Theory. A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis, Los Angeles et al.: Sage, chapter 2: “Gathering rich data”, pp. 13-41 (out of 208 pages; if necessary for copyright reasons, skip pp. 13-17, 31, 41)

Janice M. Morse, 2007: Sampling in Grounded Theory, in: Antony Bryant / Kathy Charmaz, eds., The SAGE handbook of Grounded Theory, London et al.: Sage, pp. 229-244 (chapter 11, out of out of 623)

3. Coding and Memo Writing

Judith A. Holton, 2007: The Coding Process and its Challenges, in: Antony Bryant / Kathy Charmaz, eds., The SAGE handbook of Grounded Theory, London et al.: Sage, pp. 265-289 (chapter 13, out of 623 pages)

Lora Bex Lempert, 2007: Asking Questions of the Data: Memo Writing in the Grounded Theory Tradition, in: Antony Bryant / Kathy Charmaz, eds., The SAGE handbook of Grounded Theory, London et al.: Sage, pp. 245-263 (chapter 12, out of 623 pages)

4. Theory Construction

Barney G. Glaser, 1978: Theoretical Sensitivity, Mill Valley: The Sociology Press, chapter 7: “Theoretical Sorting”, pp. 116-127

Anselm Strauss / Juliet Corbin, 1990: Basics of Qualitative Research. Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques, Newbury Park et al.: Sage, chapter 8: “Selective Coding”, pp. 116-142 (out of 270 pages)

5. Discursive Glossary of Terms (copy only if possible by stretching the limits)

in: Antony Bryant / Kathy Charmaz, eds., The SAGE handbook of Grounded Theory, London et al.: Sage, pp. 603-611 (out of 623 pages)