WEBINAR

The Joy of Doing Grounded Theory Online

14th November

12 PM EST

NVIVO

CATHY URQUHART

Professor, Lund University and Manchester Metropolitan University

Moderator

Stacy has combined her educational and research experience with her work in the software industry and is delighted to be supporting and building a wider research community. Stacy earned a doctorate in education using NVivo for both her literature review and qualitative research. She has worked at QSR International, now Lumivero for 10 years and is excited for the future of research.

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The Data Landscape

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Presenter

Cathy Urquhart is a visiting Professor at the Department of Informatics at Lund University and Professor Emeritus of Digital Business at Manchester Metropolitan University Business School, UK. Before returning to the UK in 2009, she worked at the Universities of Tasmania, Melbourne and the Sunshine Coast in Australia, and the University of Auckland in New Zealand. She also worked as a systems analyst for eight years in public sector computing in the U.K. She is a subject expert for the Association of Business Schools Scientific Journal Ranking Committee in the UK

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The Joy of Doing Grounded Theory Online

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My journey with grounded theory

- Started using it in 1995 – a revelation!
- Been teaching it as part of qualitative research methods ever since
- Some key advantages from my point of view

- It is a method where you listen to what the data is telling you
- It provides an excellent chain of evidence
- It invariably provides new concepts through new theory and is a good way of making sure that the research makes a contribution

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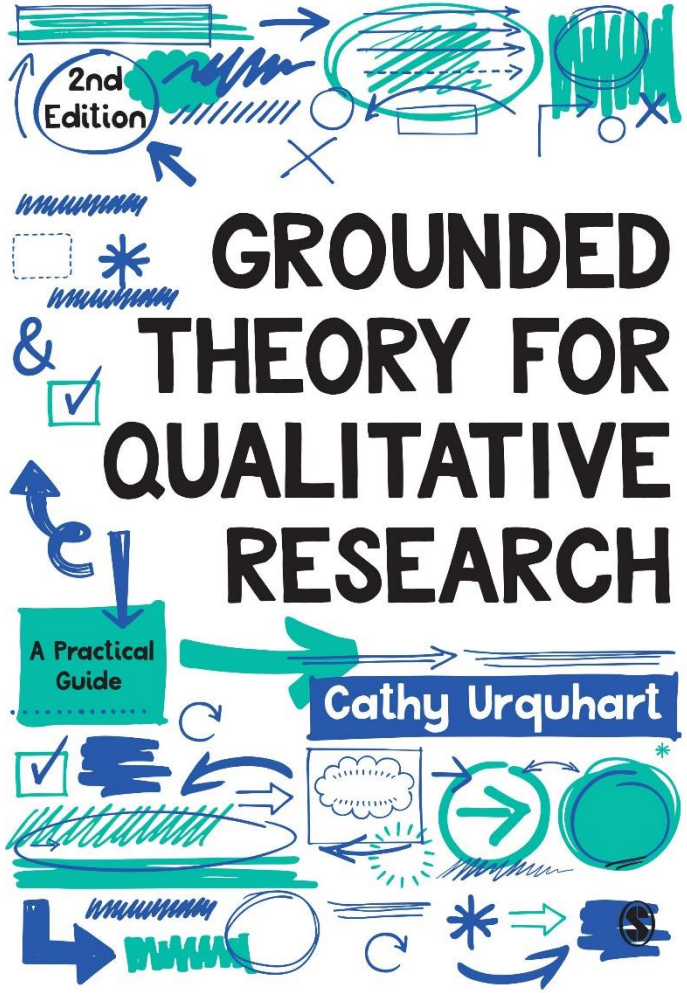
Grounded Theory for Qualitative Research: A Practical Guide (Second Edition)



- The book I've always wanted to give to my PhD students
- Aims to be a simple guide, but not definitive
- Contains not only advice on using GTM for data analysis but also designing your study and writing up.
- Provides exercises, web resources, further reading and frequently asked questions for each chapter
- You can find it here:
- https://uk.sagepub.com/en-gb/eur/grounded-theory-for-qualitative-research/

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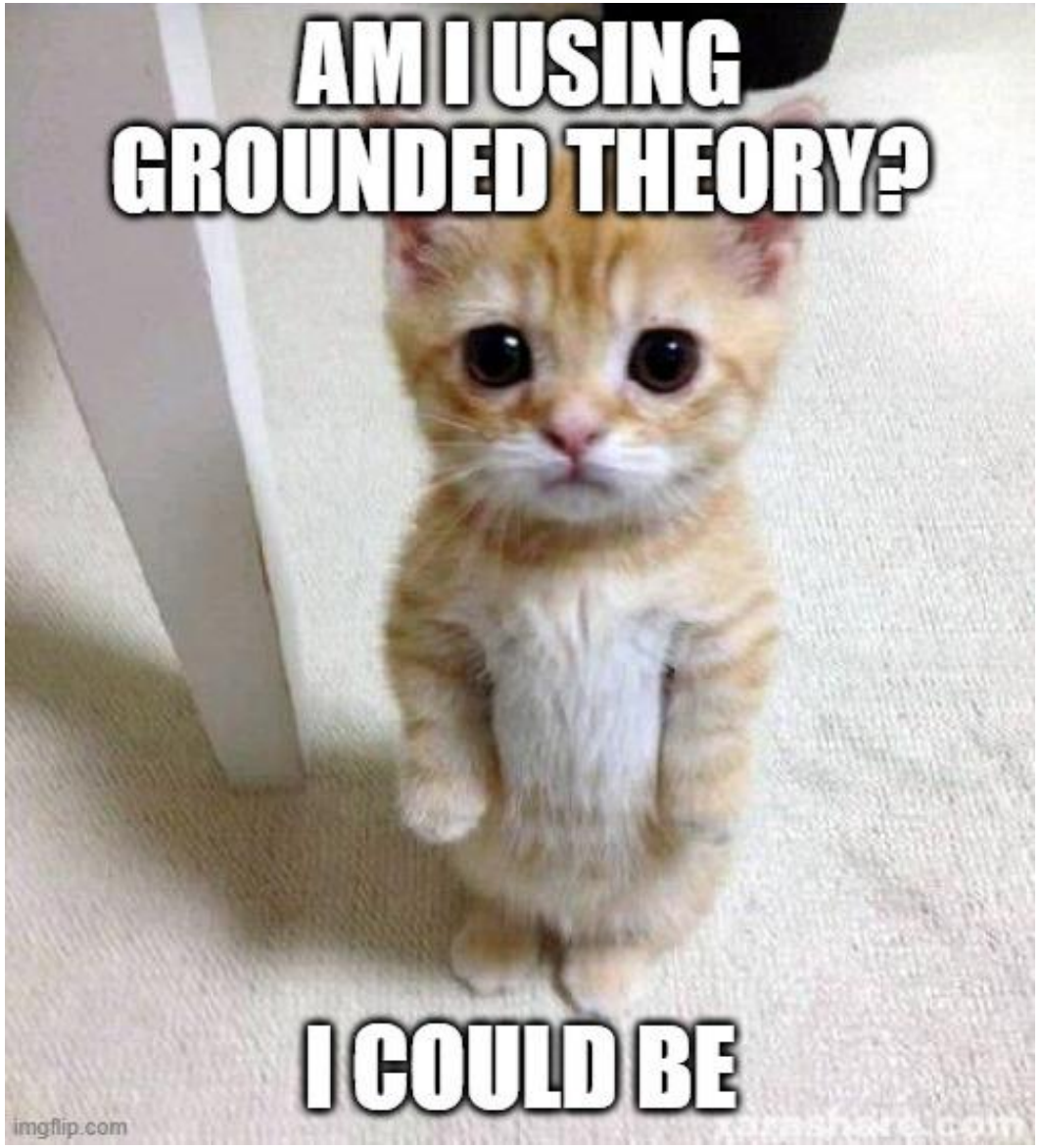
Quick poll – How many of you have tried coding or grounded theory already?



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Webinar Objectives

By the end of the session, participants will:

- Have an understanding of the history and evolution of grounded theory, and the three strands of grounded theory in use today
- Have an understanding of the range of online data sources available to them that can be used for an online grounded theory study
- Have an understanding of the research design challenges that exist for an online study
- Have an understanding of how coding and theoretical sampling might work in an online grounded theory study
- Be able to design their own online grounded theory study
- Based on this piece from Sage Research Methods: https://methods.sagepub.com/how-to-guide/how-to-do-a-grounded-theory-study-online

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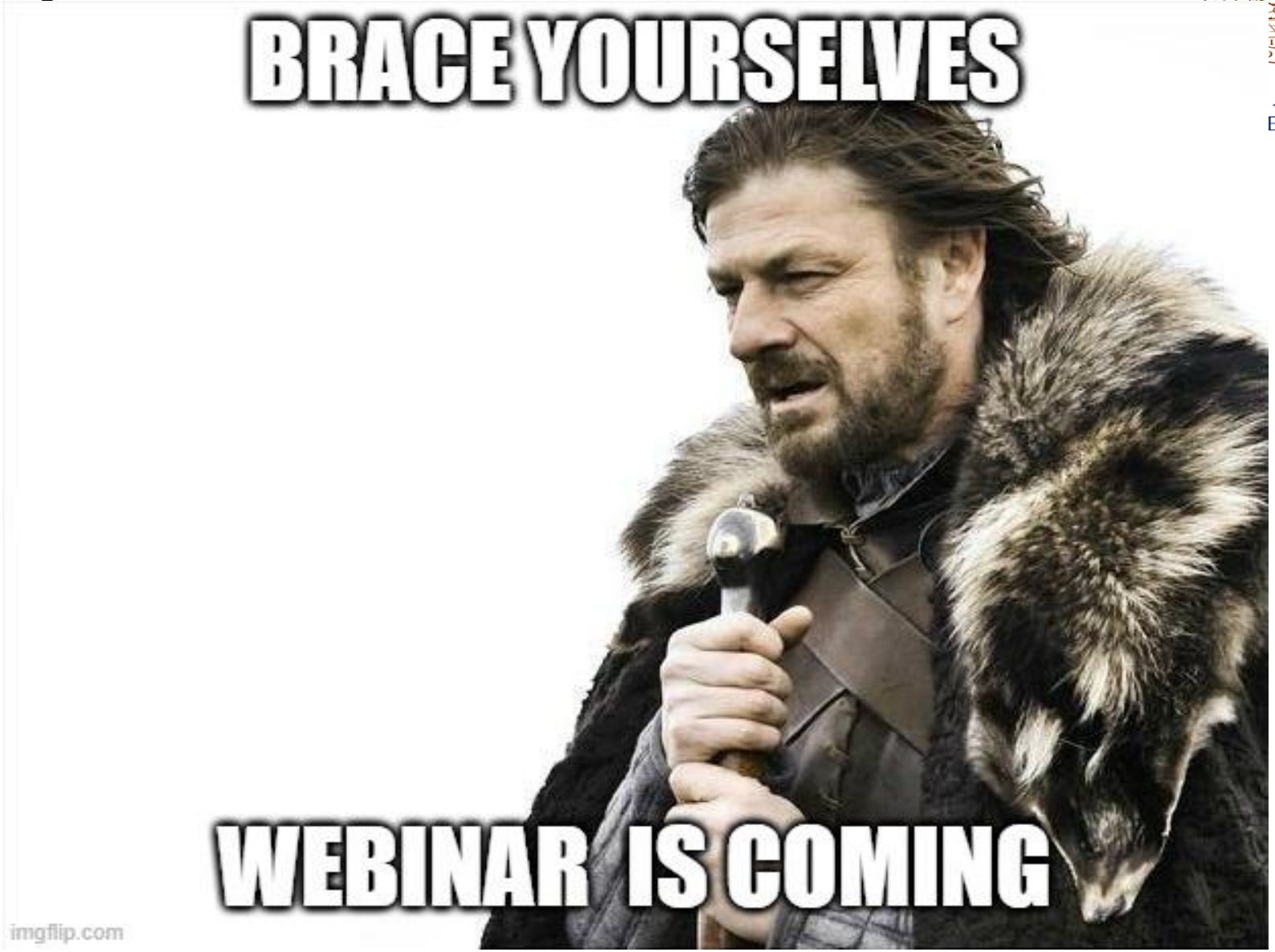

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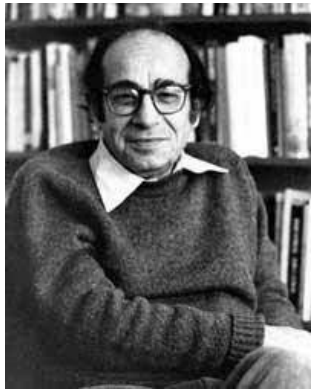
What is Grounded Theory Method?

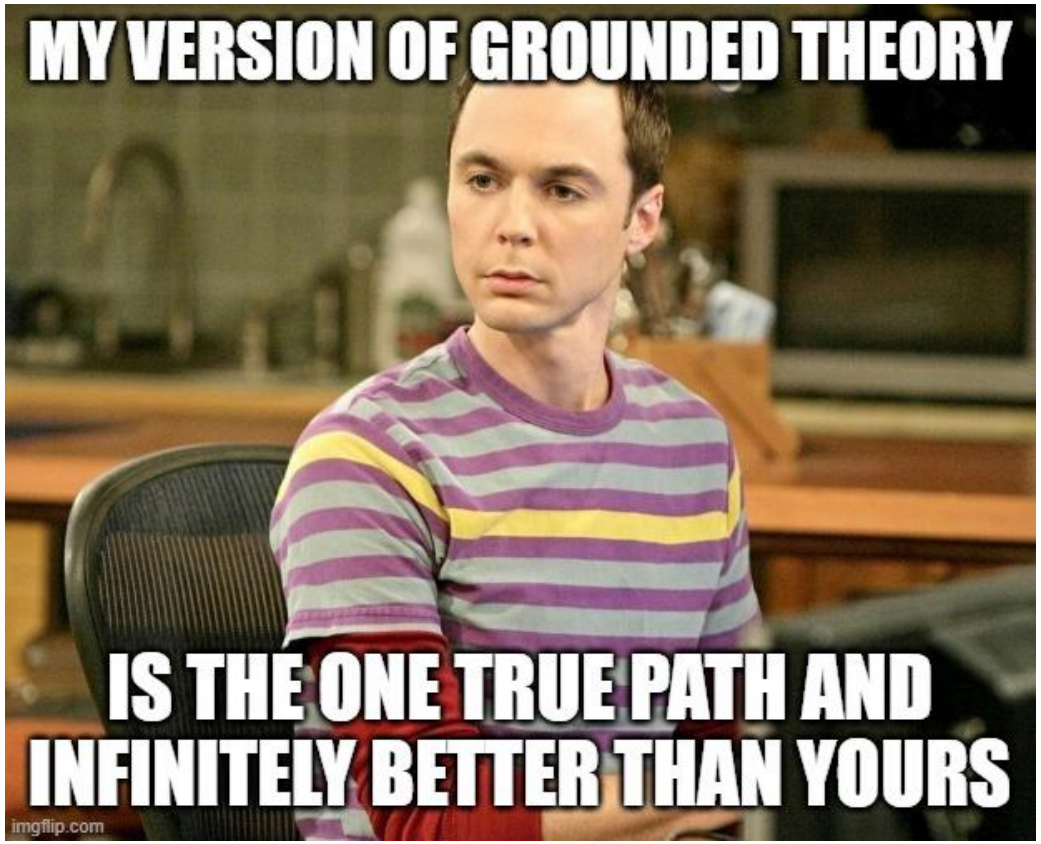


- A qualitative research method.
- Co-originators sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in their book *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1967).
- They defined it as *"the discovery of theory from data – systematically obtained and analysed in social research"*.

- The key point here is that the theory produced is *grounded* in the data. In other words, *the focus is on what the data has to tell us*, as opposed to fitting a theory to the data.
- This is the most inspiring and joyous feature of grounded theory, and online data sources are no less qualified than other data sources to tell us their story.

Three strands of grounded theory

- GT has a complicated intellectual history spanning over 50 years..
- Plenty to trip up the unwary PhD student – need to be clear about what version you are using.
- Three strands of grounded theory – Glaserian, Straussian, and Constructivist (Charmaz 2006, 2014)
- **Essential reading** – Strauss and Corbin (1998), Glaser (1992, 2005) and Charmaz (2014). Also Glaser and Strauss (1967)



The split between Glaser and Strauss

- Most people think that Strauss and Corbin (1990) is the definitive book on grounded theory
- In fact, it was the cause of a major split between Glaser and Strauss, and Glaser wrote a rejoinder in 1992 (Anselm Strauss died in 1996 and the dispute was never solved)
- The two originators evolved two different versions
- Dispute was about use of coding paradigms to help analyse the data – Strauss proposed just one, as opposed to Glaser's 18 coding families proposed in 1978.
- In the most recent book, Corbin and Strauss 2008, the coding paradigm has been de emphasised
- There is a thriving CGT community built around Barney Glaser (who died in 2022) at http://www.groundedtheory.com/.
- A definitive and helpful history of grounded theory is by Anthony Bryant (2019) *Varieties of Grounded Theory,* published by Sage

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Glaserian (Classic) Grounded Theory

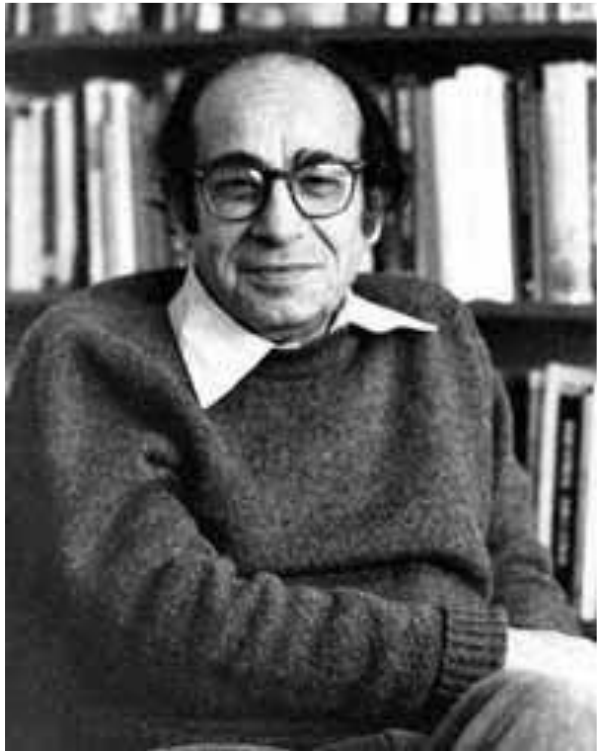
- Focus on discovering the concerns of the participant – no broad research problem – the core category will emerge if participants are allowed to divulge the main concern

- No transcripts, just notes of interviews

- No draft literature review, but theoretical sensitivity. The write up has the literature for theoretical integration in the discussion section.

Straussian Grounded Theory

- Strauss first introduced the coding paradigm in 1987 in his book *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists.* This was followed by *Basics of Qualitative Research* in 1990, with his student Juliet Corbin.
- In this book the coding paradigm was mandatory, and in 1998. The 2008 book by Corbin and Strauss said the paradigm was optional.
- Straussian GT still well practiced in Germany as Strauss taught there. Jörg Strubing is a well known German academic who writes on GT.
- Use of paradigm does tend to lead to similar theories – see Seidel and Urquhart (2013)



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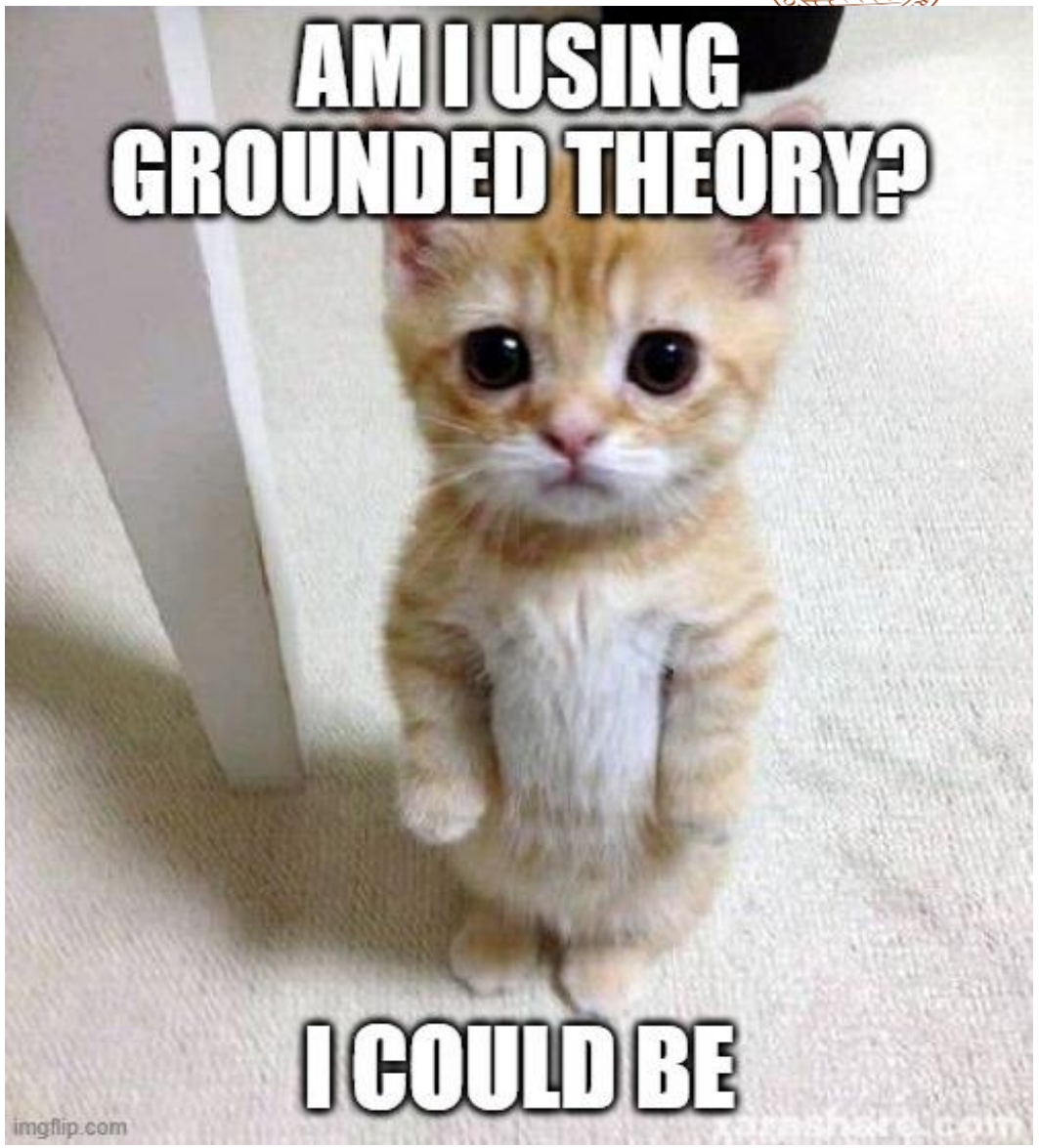
Charmazian (Constructivist) Grounded Theory

- *Constructing Grounded Theory* published in 2006. The second edition came out in 2014. Charmaz was a student of both Strauss and Glasers's (she died in 2020)
- *Researchers can use grounded theory strategies without endorsing mid-century assumptions of an objective external reality, a passive, neutral observer, or a detached, narrow empiricism. If, instead, we start with the assumption that social reality is multiple, processual, and constructed, then we must take the researcher's position, privileges, perspective, and interactions into account as an inherent part of the research reality. It, too, is a construction*. (p. 12, 2014)
- Also a different view of theory and the need for abstraction – Charmaz's view is that the definition of theory is slippery at best and depends very much on epistemology.
- Says axial coding is 'optional'

Quick poll – Which strand grounded of grounded theory appeals to you the most?



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Online Sources

Type	Examples
Social media data	Twitter, blogs, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Reddit, YouTube,
Asynchronous messaging	Messenger, WhatsApp, Skype
Synchronous Video	Messenger, FaceTime, WhatsApp, Skype
Internet Sites	Public and private sector organisation websites, Organisational Intranets, Government Archives, Voluntary Organisation websites
Group mailing lists	List serv, Google Groups (Forums)
Gaming environments	Virtual worlds, chats within gaming environments eg Discord

Table 1 A range of online data sources and distinctions (inspired by Hewson 2017)

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Things to consider when designing an online GT study -1

- Consider is if your data sources are essentially ‘nonreactive’, ie secondary sources from the Internet – context is harder to establish
- The other category of data sources are the ones you collect for the purpose of the project, for instance, online interviews, and these are called sources mediated by technology.

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Things to consider when designing an online GT study - 2

- Social media sources have shifting boundaries, but you need to establish a boundary.
- Consider that your core data sources could be those you collect online yourself, and the surrounding sources could be those that exist online regardless.
- Online sources have very little context. Context is essential for qualitative research – how can you establish the social, historical or political context?

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Things to consider when designing an online GT study - 3

- Think about the total analytic load – how much data will you analyse, and in how much depth? Grounded theory generally demands a close engagement with the data
- Grounded theory gives an opportunity for *theoretical sampling* – deciding on analytic grounds where to sample from next. Online sources give us the opportunity to follow theoretical storyline through the data
- An example would be researching how the image of a celebrity has evolved by looking at various online sources.

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Things to consider when designing an online GT study - 4

- It is important to consider ethical issues around your data collection in good time. For a postgraduate student or member of staff of a university, this generally means engaging with institutional ethics processes.
- Even if we think that all of our data is nonreactive and in the public domain, an institutional ethics process allows us to get early feedback on the research design.
- This in my view is crucial, because a flawed research design is difficult to fix subsequently, whereas issues of analysis or literature can be fixed after the fact.

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Things to consider when designing an online GT study - 5

- Online data sources give us the same practical problem of storage as other data sources, with the added challenge of ephemerality.

- The major qualitative data analysis packages, NVivo and AtlasTi, have features that allow us to capture social media sources from Twitter, Facebook and YouTube.

- There are also some free plugins from software such as Google Sheets that allow downloading tweets using particular search terms.

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How Grounded Theory Approaches Coding

1. Open coding - the data is examined and coded at a word or sentence level.
2. Selective coding – coding around emergent categories.
3. Theoretical coding - coding for one or two 'core' categories and considering the relationships

Note: Glaser version.

Strauss and Corbin – open, axial, selective stages

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Extracted Tweets

2	Tweet Text	Tweet ID	Link(s	Media	Lo	Retv	Favorit	App	ollowe	ollows	iste	erfie	er Sir	Location	Bio	Website	Timezone	Profile Image
7	Antimaskers should: Give up their right to covid treatments when/if they catch it. Refuse to have surgeons mask during any surgeries they have. If masks don't work, and covid is a hoax, why would they care? #covidiots	1516595783742722051				0	1	Twitte	16	30	0		10/2(		2/17/21 🎉 🎉 What's an Israel?			View
8	#COVIDisAirborne ? NO Covid is a hoax!	1516466957536669701				0	0	Twitte	286	522	1		01/2(	7776 Tor	Ἰησοῦς died for your sins and was			View
9	So, I know a guy that thinks COVID is a hoax (even though he caught it) but swears he's seen several Bigfoot.	1516417390682202121				0	0	Twitte	96	953	0		11/2(	Pennsyl\	I'm in it for the jokes!			View
10	COVID IS A HOAX ALWAYS HAS AND ALWAYS WILL BE CAN'T EVER FEAR ME INTO SUBMISSION SUCK YA MUMS	1516398490322374657				0	0	Twitte	461	362	12		02/2(	cosmic	♀ Don't run fast just to stand still			View
11	No worries. Those instant-scientific-EXPERTS who assure us Covid is a hoax & masks wouldn't help anyway...would be willing & ABLE to fill in for the pilots & crew who might be out sick with Covid. How hard could it be? RT @Hoosy: @jeremyfaust @united Will the folks cheering the end of the mask mandate be cheering when flights are canceled because crew & staff are home	15162972	https://twitter.co			0	0	Twitte	833	866	0		07/2(	Santa M	Love: the Obamas; JFK (volunteer			View

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Open Coding of Tweets

Tweet	Open codes
My Mom. Died ALONE with no family at the hospital on 4-23-20. COVID 19,, I said goodbye to her on Face Time. To ANTI vaxers and ANTI maskers and those who think Covid is a hoax,,, 🖕	Covid death, family, unable to say goodbye, angry at anti vaxers, angry at anti maskers
Antimaskers should: Give up their right to covid treatments when/if they catch it. Refuse to have surgeons mask during any surgeries they have. If masks don't work, and covid is a hoax, why would they care? #covidiots	Deny Anti maskers Covid treatment. Their surgery should be without masks, anger at anti maskers, slogan (covidiots)
No worries. Those instant-scientific-EXPERTS who assure us Covid is a hoax & masks wouldn't help anyway...would be willing & ABLE to fill in for the pilots & crew who might be out sick with Covid. How hard could it be? RT @Hoosy: @jeremyfaust @united Will the folks cheering the end of the mask mandate be cheering when flights are canceled because crew & staff are home with Covid?	Sarcasm, instant experts, fill in for pilots and crew who have Covid, end of mask mandate, cancelled flights as consequence
#KayBurley worlds biggest hypocrite after her own 6 month suspension for partying as they all know covid is a hoax. #swindon #wiltshire #wiltshiretogether #oxford #londonprotest #colchester #salisbury #portsmouth #plymouth #lincoln #york #shropshire #lancashire #cheshire #crewe	TV celebrity hypocrisy, elite knowledge, London protest, anger
Top tip, Covid is a hoax. Covid cases in Scotland fall for third week in a row	Covid is a hoax, case numbers falling
18,000 drs saying covid is a hoax Check out susanmcnair3's video! #TikTok	Covid is a hoax, 18K doctors say so, video link

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Selective Coding of Tweets

Open codes	Selective Codes
Covid death, family, unable to say goodbye, angry at anti vaxers, angry at anti maskers	Anger, personal experience
Deny Anti maskers Covid treatment. Their surgery should be without masks, anger at anti maskers	Anti mask hypocrisy, anger, slogans
Sarcasm, instant experts, fill in for pilots and crew who have Covid, end of mask mandate, cancelled flights as consequence	Sarcasm, anger
Tv celebrity hypocrisy, elite knowledge, London protest, anger	Hypocrisy, Anti-Covid Protest, Anger
Covid is a hoax, case numbers falling	Facts to support case
Covid is a hoax, 18K doctors say so, video link	Facts to support case

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Theoretical Coding Stage

EMOTIONAL LANGUAGE

- Anger
- Personal Experience
- Hypocrisy
- Sarcasm

Influence

'FACTS'

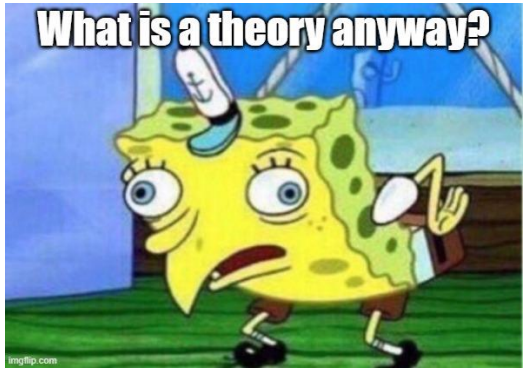
- 18K Doctors
- Links

Fuel

Are used to contest

CONTESTED SPACE

- Slogans eg Covid is a Hoax, Covidiots



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Some points about the Theoretical Coding Stage

- The selective codes have been further grouped and renamed, and this is quite normal for grounded theory. So Anger and Hypocrisy became Emotional Language.
- Facts, one of the selective codes, becomes a key selective code - 'Facts' – the apostrophes are important!
- A Third Selective Code has been added – Contested Space
- I then suggest relationships between these three concepts – this is a nascent theory
- I looked in the literature at this stage, I might find some formal concepts of contestation in politics or linguistics.
- It is completely permissible, in my view, at the theoretical coding stage, to borrow patterns and ideas from existing theories – but not before!

Concluding Remarks - 1

- Grounded theory uses concepts from the data – it allows the data to speak for itself
- The beauty of grounded theory coding is that it allows you to build relationships between concepts
- These nascent theories or models or mechanisms of what is happening in the data can be related to larger theories

Concluding Remarks -2

- It is permissible to use patterns from existing theories at a theoretical coding stage, but please let the data breathe – don't impose concepts at an early stage!
- Try analysing using paper and pen (or Word) before using a package such as Nvivo
- Why? Because learning two new things at once is challenging.

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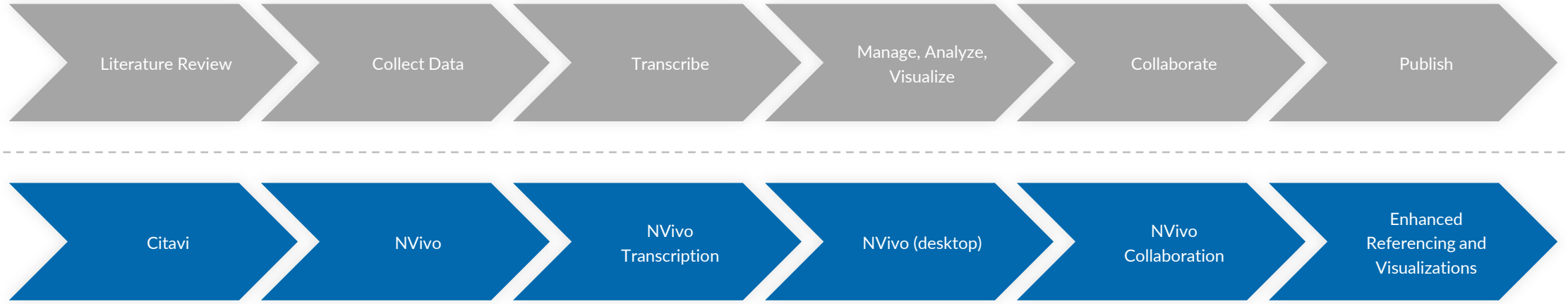
The Research Process



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