

An Approach to Legacies and Drifts of Grounded Theory

Una mirada en torno a herencias y derivas de la Teoría Fundamentada

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Abstract

Our main goal with this article is to carry out a reflective exercise regarding the theoretical-methodological strategy known as Grounded Theory (GT), with no exhaustiveness or generalization intended. The writing is schematically divided in two sections. The first section describes GT's characteristics as presented in social sciences' introductory books on qualitative research methodology. In the next section, we will come back to the Argentinian, Spanish and Chilean texts where the specific uses and applications of this research strategy tools are disclosed. We firmly believe this reflexive-comparative exercise contributes to the GT's various returns, uses and appropriations

Keywords: Grounded Theory - qualitative research - returns - uses - appropriations

Resumen

Nos proponemos con el artículo realizar un ejercicio reflexivo, sin pretensión de exhaustividad ni generalización, sobre la estrategia teórico-metodológica conocida como Teoría Fundamentada (TF). Esquemáticamente, el escrito posee dos apartados. En el primero, describimos características de la TF tal como son presentadas en libros introductorios de Metodología de investigación cualitativa en Ciencias Sociales. En el segundo, retomaremos textos -de Argentina, España y Chile- donde se explicitan usos y aplicaciones concretas de las herramientas de esta estrategia de investigación. Consideramos que este ejercicio reflexivo-comparativo contribuye en la indagación acerca de los diversos retornos, usos y apropiaciones de la TF.

Palabras clave: Teoría Fundamentada - investigación cualitativa - retornos - usos - apropiaciones

Introduction

Since the pioneering formulations by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, the procedures and guidelines regarding Grounded Theory have been and continue to be the subject of reflection and debate in the theo-retical-methodological level. Similarly, some of the core components of this research strategy - such as the constant comparison method, theoretical sampling, among others - have recently been put into practice in the application to different domains and objects of study, supported by a diversity of empirical materials, particularly in the field of qualitative research. In the light of this overall panorama, this article aims to describe some of the ways in which the formulations presented in "The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research" (1967) were revisited by other authors in more recent times, specifically, in the last twenty-five years¹. For this purpose, the idea is to establish a connection among different texts, examined through a journey composed of various questions: How do they define Grounded Theory? What aspects do they take from Glaser and Strauss' formulations?

What specific use do they make of the tools provided by Grounded Theory? What type of data do they apply these tools to? How do they present this application? Do they strictly adhere to what Glaser and Strauss stated or do they go beyond, incorporating later formulations, alternatives, and/or new content? What criticisms do they make?

The article is schematically divided into two sections. In the first section, there is a description of characteristics of Grounded Theory as they are presented in various manuals or introductory books on qualitative research methodology, specifically oriented towards the Social Sciences. These hold a prominent place in the teaching-learning process of Social Research Methodology. Secondly, the purpose of this book is to revisit texts produced from different geographic locations - Argentina, Spain, Chile, etc. - in which the specific uses and applications of the tools of this research strategy on various objects of study are explicitly stated.

Overall, this reflective-comparative exercise, through which we seek to relate the different returns, uses, and appropriations of Glaser and Strauss's foundational proposals, will allow us to reflect on their application in other areas or fields of social research. Finally, the aim of this book is not to conduct an exhaustive analysis that encompasses the entire historical tradition of the theoretical-methodological framework under examination. Instead, the intention is to trace some of the most significant works repeatedly revisited in different educational instances in social research in our country and subject them to the questions outlined earlier.

Characteristics of Grounded Theory in introductory manuals or books on qualitative research

Qualitative Techniques of Social Research: Methodological Reflection and Professional Practice (Miguel S. Valles)

The journey begins with the book that gives title to this subsection. Originally published in 1997 and presented by the author himself as a didactic manual, the focus will be exclusively on the ninth chapter, entitled "Introduction to the methodology of qualitative analysis: an overview of procedures and techniques." The synthesis that Valles proposes of Grounded Theory (hereinafter, GT) centrally takes from the fifth chapter of "The Discovery of Grounded Theory: strategies for qualitative research" (1967) by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss. In fact, the starting point is the same, namely, the presentation of different approaches to qualitative analysis: classic content analysis, ethnographic description, analytic induction, and the constant comparison method. Drawing on what the pioneering authors of GT stated, Valles focuses on distinguishing between these approaches, particularly on those aspects that allow him to characterize the constant comparison method, the comparative method specific to this research strategy: the combination of coding and analysis procedures for theory generation, which is systematized based on the production of data. For the author, this initial definition could be further elaborated by differentiating GT from another approach to qualitative analysis: analytic induction. In this direction, he proposes the following points.

Firstly, the constant comparison method does not primarily aim to provisionally test the theory but rather to generate, concerning the problems being researched, conceptual categories, properties, and

¹ Partial advances of this exercise were presented as papers at the 5th Latin American Encounter of Methodology of the Social Sciences-ELMeCS (Mendoza, Argentina, November 2016) and at the 31st Congress of the Latin American Sociology Association-ALAS (Montevideo, Uruguay, December 2017).

hypotheses. These elements are precisely the components of a theory, as referred to by Glaser and Strauss in the second chapter of "The Discovery of Grounded Theory."

Secondly, the properties of theoretical categories are not only causes, as in the analytic induction, but they can also be conditions, consequences, dimensions, types, processes, etc.

Thirdly, the constant comparison method does not aim to verify universality or to test suggested causes or other hypotheses. Instead, as it seeks to generate theory, the criterion is not that of testing but that of theoretical saturation.

Fourthly and finally, the constant comparison method is considered more applicable to any type of qualitative information within the same study (observations, interviews, documents, articles, books, among others). Hence, it is attributed with a broader analytical comparison than that which corresponds to the analytic induction. Of all of the mentioned characteristics, perhaps this is one of the main ones, as it enables scientists to compare different records or empirical domains, bringing similarities and differences together. An interesting example of how the application of the constant comparison method could be enriched with a variety of data is the seventh chapter of "The Discovery of Grounded Theory" (entitled "New Sources for Qualitative Data") where Glaser and Strauss discuss, among other aspects, the potentials and limitations of library research in theory generation.

Having presented this overview, Valles acknowledges that to complete the characterization of the constant comparison method and to approach its functioning in practice, it is necessary to highlight its phases or stages. When indicating them, he once again refers to what was stated by Glaser and Strauss: 1) comparison of incidents (observations, interview fragments, documents, etc.); 2) Integration of categories and their properties; 3) Delimitation of the theory and 4) Writing of the theory. Valles's references to each of them can be explored in more detail below.

The first consists of comparing the information obtained, trying to give a common denomination (a code) to a set of incidents that share the same idea. Incorporating later developments of Grounded Theory, especially those related to the types of coding defined by Strauss (1987) and Strauss and Corbin (1990), Valles points out that this first phase involves open coding: the active and systematic search for categories² and their properties.

The integration or articulation of these elements or components of the theory is the core of the next phase; as the researcher conducts an intense analysis around a category in terms of its properties, another mode of coding is defined, axial coding. The constant comparison method not only generates categories but also relationships between them. To express it in terms of the components of the theory, this method also generates hypotheses, in the sense that they constitute provisional answers about the relationships between the categories.

The third phase refers to the delimitation of the theory. While the first phase was oriented towards the development of conceptual categories and the second towards analytical integration operations, the delimitation of the theory focuses primarily on two criteria: parsimony and scope.

Regarding the first criterion, this equates to maximizing the explanation and comprehension of a phenomenon with the minimum of concepts and formulations. This criterion becomes operational in the constant comparison method through the deliberate and systematic search for core categories; here Valles introduces a third mode of coding, the selective coding. These operations of greater analytical refinement are combined, in this phase, with a process of reduction of categories, which can be carried out in various ways: by elimination, by merging, or transformation into other categories of a higher conceptual level.

As for the second criterion, that of the scope, it is linked to the possibility of extending the field of application of the theory without disconnecting from the empirical basis at hand. In the developments

² It is relevant to note that Valles (1997) refers to the existence of two types of categories: those taken or derived directly from the language used by the subjects studied (in vivo codes) and those produced by the researcher or taken from their disciplinary field.

of the Grounded Theory strategy, this translates into the possibilities of generalizing substantive theory to the higher level of abstraction, the formal theory³.

Finally, the fourth phase (the writing of the theory) is literally taken from the pioneering work of Glaser and Strauss, with the use of a concise quotation.

It is worth noting that Valles accompanies the aspects discussed above with illustrative excerpts taken from the authors in question regarding the development of theoretical categories through the search for their properties and the axial coding (Glaser and Strauss, 1967/2008), and the selective coding (Strauss, 1987).

As a conclusion to the section dedicated to the GT procedure, the author highlights various strengths and weaknesses. Among the strengths, he mentions the emphasis on theory generation, the interweaving of data production, coding, and analysis operations, and the key role of theoretical sampling and theoretical saturation in the procedure.

Regarding the weaknesses, Valles refers to criticisms made by various authors. Perhaps two of them particularly deserve attention as they have implications for the use we make of GT tools: difficulties in the practical implementation of the described operations and lack of clarity in defining the relationships between categories, properties, and dimensions.

An Introduction to Qualitative Theory (Uwe Flick)

Originally published in German in 2002, this book provides a broad overview of qualitative research, primarily oriented towards disciplinary fields such as sociology and psychology, considering the author's academic background and trajectory. Various topics are thus pinpointed, which were developed in greater depth with the successive re-editions of the book: features of qualitative research, research design, sampling strategies, methods and techniques of data production (verbal and visual), and ways of documenting, analyzing, and interpreting them. In the preface to the second edition, Flick points out, as one of the aspects of transformations in the field of qualitative research, the emergence of a broader internationalized debate. In this sense, introducing it in this section allows for the recovery of the elaborations and discussions around the previously mentioned topics from the German context; an aspect that equally gives scientists more ground to problematize the different modes of reception of GT procedures. Along these lines, the author specifies that this model of research process has attracted considerable attention in German debates during the 1970s and 1980s. Now, what are the characteristics that Flick highlights of GT? Particularly, we can highlight the following: the research process in GT, theoretical sampling, and theoretical coding.

The first one refers to the conceptualization of the process in qualitative research. In this regard, in the fourth chapter of the book, Flick makes a distinction between quantitative research, where a linear sequence of steps and stages predominates, and qualitative research, within which there is an interweaving and mutual interdependence among them. In this context, this second type of process (more circular than linear) has been clearly developed in the field of GT research, mentioning both Glaser and Strauss's classic version and Flick's more recent versions.

Going into more detail, these are the differences between the two types of research process: while the linear one uses theories and hypotheses as an a priori starting point (and their validation as ending points), the research approach of the GT prioritizes data and the field of empirical studies against theories, which gradually emerge from the constant comparative method. Flick agrees that Glaser and Strauss's model does justice to the concept of "discovery" in qualitative research. In presenting this method for social research, the author revisits one of the key aspects of the theoretical-methodological discussion found in "The Discovery of Grounded Theory": the opposition between verification and generation of theory.

³ For Glaser and Strauss (1967/2008), comparative analysis can be used to generate two types of theory: substantive and formal. While the former refers to a theory developed for an empirical area of sociological research (patient care, class relations, delinquency), the latter refers to the deployment of a theory applied to a conceptual area of such inquiry (stigma, deviant behavior, socialization, authority, and power).

The other previously mentioned strategies (theoretical sampling and theoretical coding) are described by Flick as aspects of Glaser and Strauss's model that have been gaining ground in methodological debates and in qualitative research. Following this, we will examine each of them.

Theoretical sampling is presented as a strategy that gradually sets up a structure of the sampling. Specifically, it is a process that involves decisions on the selection of empirical data, constantly swinging between collection and analysis of the data. The criteria guiding the process are the relevancy of the data to the generation of the theory⁴ (this is the case whether comparing groups or specific individuals). One crucial question is when to stop integrating new cases. With regard to this matter, Flick revisits the concept of theoretical saturation: sampling and integrating further material is finished when they cannot develop further properties of a certain category.

In the seventh chapter of Flick's book, entitled "Sampling", the aspects of theoretical sampling are retrieved faithfully from the book *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. In fact, the process is illustrated by the example studied by Glaser and Strauss in their research on the awareness of people dying in hospitals. Nevertheless, the focus of theoretical sampling goes beyond these pioneers in GT. After comparing different conceptions of qualitative research, Flick states that the basic principle of theoretical sampling, the gradual selection of cases, is the genuine and typical form of selecting empirical data in that method of social research. It would be important to develop this argument considering specific research work.

Concerning the other aspect, theoretical coding, it is defined as the instrument for analysis and interpretation of the material, which emerges from GT. Although the author indicates that it was introduced by Glaser and Strauss in 1967, he acknowledges that it was later created by Strauss (1987) and Strauss and Corbin (1990). Thus, in the reconstruction of the different steps or stages of theoretical coding, with reference to the different approaches to handling or dealing with a text (open, axial and selective coding), the most recent developments on GT have had a strong influence on the text. This aspect allows for the distinction between the approaches of Flick and Valles, bearing in mind that in the latter, there is a significant influence from the constant comparative method, and an identification of the different types of coding.

Further analyzing theoretical coding, it can be found that its procedure of analysis and interpretation of the data starts with open coding, which is the process whereby similar cases are labeled and grouped in order to create categories⁵. The next step is axial coding, by which the researcher elaborates relations between categories. Furthermore, they clarify or formulate the relations between categories and their contexts or properties. In order to describe the nature of such relations, Flick introduces the coding paradigm model, developed by Strauss and Corbin (1990). The third step is selective coding, which continues the axial coding at a higher level of conceptual abstraction. This step elaborates the core category so that the others can be grouped and integrated around it. Once these three steps have been introduced, Flick stresses two aspects that, in our view, are central, especially when considering the legacies and drifts of GT.

On the one hand, it acknowledges that Kathy Charmaz proposes an alternative view of the coding procedure, firstly specified in a line-by-line coding (a detailed example is provided), and then, in a second step, in a focused coding. We will get back to this author in the next section of this article.

On the other hand, there are some important limitations to the method: the distinction between method and art becomes blurry (this makes it in some places difficult to teach as a method). Another problem is the potential endlessness of comparisons and coding options. Discussing these limitations allows for reflections on how the methods of GT were applied on the different empirical fields of social research.

The Process of Qualitative Social Research (Adrián Scribano)

This section concludes with a summary of this book, which was published in 2008. In the introduction written by Alicia Palermo, she indicates that it is the first book on qualitative methodology published in

⁴ It should be noted that, in chapter 8 of the book, Flick also acknowledges the application of theoretical sampling, as it is a strategy of defining a sample step by step, in investigations that do not aim to develop a theory.

⁵ In line with Valles, the author states that the possible sources for the development of categories are concepts borrowed from social science publications (conceptual codes) or taken from interviewees' expressions (in vivo codes), which are preferred for being closer to the material under study.

Argentina and that, therefore, it fills a knowledge gap. Furthermore, she states that it is dedicated to methodology researchers and teachers. This is sufficient reason to include it in this section. Along the same lines, Scribano underscores the novel nature of the book, presenting it to pave the way for a three-fold approach to qualitative research: theoretical, epistemological and methodological.

In a similar manner to Valles, the proposed reconstruction of GT (in Spanish: Teoría Generativa) is related to qualitative analysis. More precisely, it is described, together with the analytic induction, as a general strategy of analysis. The following list provides further details of his approach and its features:

- I. Discovery of the theory from data
- II. Development of categories (based on the relation between the collection of data and the research problem) and analysis of their saturation
- III. Production of relations, connections and hypotheses among the categories
- IV. Re-exploration of the research context and analysis of the patterns created

As it can be observed, some of these traits, which are simultaneously basic and central, are taken from Glaser and Strauss, but without explicit reference to them. Here are some examples: the discovery of GT from data, the development and saturation of categories and the production of relations among them.

According to Scribano and the other authors mentioned in this section, coding is a key step of the process. In that regard, another aspect that must be highlighted is the distinction between codes, which provide a connection between data and conceptualization. In accordance with the author's view, in the generative method, open or initial codes can be distinguished from axial codes or axes. What do they consist of?

The first ones entail the gradual emergence of categories based on the combination of comparative processes and conceptualization of data. The second ones arise from a revisitation to data grounded in establishing connections between the data that are being produced and the open codes which were defined previously.

The last aspect that should be considered regarding the ways in which Scribano revisits GT pertains to systematizing the constant comparative method, which is described as synonymous to or another name for Scribano's version of Grounded Theory. Differing from Valles' approach, which was inspired by the stages of the constant comparative method proposed by Glaser and Strauss, Scribano introduces the framework developed by Donald Ratcliff in *Qualitative Research Resources* (2002), which we could summarize as follows:

1. Observing the document
2. Coding events or behaviors in the document
3. Comparing codes based on their consistencies and differences
4. Developing categories
5. Selecting and utilizing a processor for categorization
6. Examining the saturation of categories
7. Generating core categories, axial focus of the analysis

Although some of these activities can be found in *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, the framework from which they are handled by Scribano pertain to a more recent author and systematization.

Summary of the section

To summarize, a comparative table of the reviewed texts so far can be found below. This chart examines and relates the texts to each other based on some of the questions that were outlined in the introduction.

Table No. 1. *Comparison of the aspects of Grounded Theory in manuals and introductory books on qualitative research*

Book	An Introduction to Qualitative Research (Flick).	The Process of Qualitative Social Research (Scribano).
Geographical context of elaboration	Germany.	Argentina.
How do they define Grounded Theory?	Method or model of investigation	General strategy of data analysis.
What aspects do they take from the formulations of Glaser and Strauss?	(Circular) process of GT investigation: centered on generation of theory Theoretical sampling and its aspects (relevancy and theoretical saturation).	Basic and central features: GT is defined as generation of theory. from data, the production and saturation of categories and the development of relations between them.
Do they strictly follow the guidelines laid out by Glaser and Strauss or do they go beyond, incorporating subsequent formulations, alternatives and/or novel content?	When he refers to theoretical coding and the different processes for analyzing and interpreting a text, he stresses the more recent developments of GT (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). He introduces the coding method proposed by Charmaz as an alternative model.	Systematization of the constant comparative method performed by Donald Ratcliff in Qualitative Research Resources (2002). Differentiation between open, or initial coding and axial coding or axes (retrieved from Analyzing Qualitative Data by Bryman and Burgess (1995).

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Applying Grounded Theory in Empirical Investigations

Impact of a tutoring program on beliefs about learning and teaching in tutor students (Alejandra Nocetti de la Barca and Gladys Contreras Sanzana)

In this second section of the article -as it is mentioned in the introduction- the focus is made on revisiting texts that explicitly describe the specific uses and applications of GT strategies in specific research work on different subjects of study.

In order to fulfill this task, the following book is selected: “La teoría fundamentada: una metodología cualitativa” (Grounded Theory: a Qualitative Methodology) (Bénard, 2010). In the introduction, the editor of the book indicates that it is based on the Meeting for Discussing Grounded Theory in Social Sciences and Humanities, which was set in 2008 at the Autonomous University of Aguascalientes, Mexico. Additionally, she thanks Juliet Corbin for her important participation in the Meeting. Furthermore, she is the researcher who introduces the first chapter of the book by presenting the social research, which was conducted using GT. Finally, in the annexes of the book, Corbin provides a very interesting framework and dictionary on the fundamental concepts of GT. One of the chapters has been selected where the researchers make an explicit use of GT, applying it to their study situation while elucidating the application process. This serves as the final rationale for selecting this book, as its objective aligns closely with the purpose of this research work.

The chapter that will be discussed here seeks to present the development of a qualitative research process aimed to obtain information about the meaning and the changes in belief that players, students, and tutors give to their own practice after participating in a tutoring program in a Chilean university. This program consists of the development of a series of specific interventions based on tutorials designed for students with poor performance at school. These tutorials are delivered by advanced students with better performance at school. Their aim is to improve the students' performance and avoid dropout, a problem that has affected Chilean universities after a process of massification of higher education that has taken

place in recent decades in this Latin American country. The authors of this work claim that they chose the GT because it was an appropriate approach to obtain an inductive theory through the use of coding, in different stages, allowing for a detailed analysis of the information produced by way of interviews with the players involved in this program. As a case study, they take tutor students that are pursuing a degree in Pedagogy in High School Education and Natural Sciences, especially in 6 tutorials: three in the field of math and the remaining three in the field of chemistry.

After presenting the problem under study, the authors explain the research approach and design. They start from the qualitative paradigm, and specifically from the, so-defined, GT “perspective”. The research design is based on three fundamental stages: the identification of the object of study, the beginning of field work and the analysis of the transcriptions of the interviews conducted.

The first stage consists in defining the object of study in “general terms”. That is, identifying the object under examination through a prior problematization of the existing bibliography on the subject. It should be pointed out that “identifying” is substantially different from “defining”. The latter would go against the essential guidelines proposed by the GT pioneering authors since it would close all possibilities of building a substantive theory from the data because it would rely on the construction of empirical evidence from the previously defined theory. Therefore, with the notion of identification, the authors refer to being generally informed about previous research without linking it to their analysis categories or working hypotheses.

At this point, an interesting discussion and innovation is introduced regarding the foundational hypothesis of GT. The authors propose a dichotomy of obstacles – closely connected with the identification and definition above – that every researcher faces when they begin to codify the transcription of the interviews. On the one hand, there is an obstacle to mostly recognizing existing concepts in literature or other research in the transcriptions, obstructing in this way the possibility of building new concepts. On the other hand, the reverse obstacle arises, due to the lack of a defined and stable theoretical framework, the researcher has a partial view of what is being analyzed. According to the authors, the solution for both obstacles is the creation of an interdisciplinary work team that benefits the emergence of more elaborate and complex theoretical products, which, at the same time, avoids the closing and partial view that influences the creation of more homogeneous work teams that share the disciplinary matrix of origin. This is one of the innovations proposed by the authors that will allow GT to be optimized and the coding process to be enriched by contributions from different professional training (disciplinary, theoretical, research trajectories, etc.).

The second stage mentioned is the beginning of field work. Specifically, they refer to the information production process. They carry out this task through the semi-structured interview technique, at this point, they strictly adhere to what was stated by Glaser and Strauss. That means the produced data are fundamentally the transcription of the interviews. Semi-structured interviews are complemented by focus groups. Regarding the number of interviews to be carried out, the authors revisit the classic formulations of Glaser and Strauss on theoretical saturation. The authors argue that, through the interviews, the theoretical saturation that is “necessary” to develop GT correctly was “safeguarded.” They use this GT tool without further problematization of it.

The third stage is the analysis of the transcription of the interviews, undoubtedly the most important of the three stages and to which the entire chapter is dedicated. To carry out the analysis of the data obtained through the interviews, they use one of the most widespread and currently used GT tools, namely: coding. As the researchers' interest lay in producing a substantive inductive theory, they proceeded by making specific use of GT, that is, developing the basic coding stages as described by Strauss and Corbin. Specifically, they use open coding, axial coding and selective coding, seeking to establish a core or theoretical category that explains the change in the meanings and beliefs of the subjects under test. What is admirable about the researchers' work is the level of detail to explain and make explicit each decision made when coding the data. The authors are very orthodox with respect to the guidelines of Glaser and Strauss, that is, they do not propose any innovation or problematization of this tool. However, the greatest virtue of their work is the level of detail through which they account for the coding process in its entirety. That is, from a first open and exhaustive coding, through axial coding (where the construction of each code and family is shown), to the use of selective coding that allows to identify the core category that explains the phenomenon under study.

Finally, it should be noted that the researchers do not point out any relevant criticism of GT. Quite the contrary, they make a self-criticism regarding their use of GT. They highlight a recurring reflection that

is possible to hear from other initial “users” of GT, that is, the difficulties of using this methodological perspective when all its vocabulary, technicalities, and procedures are not known in depth.

Grounded theory: its application in research on daily life with HIV/AIDS and hepatitis C (Daniel Jones, Hernán Manzelli and Mario Pecheny)

In the book “Metodologías, cualitativas en Ciencias Sociales. Modelos y procedimientos de análisis” [Qualitative Methodologies in Social Sciences. Models and analysis procedures] (2004), Ana Lía Kornblit proposes bringing together several types of studies, written from the perspective of teams that belong to different areas of social research. In this way, the different chapters are a theoretical-methodological reflection on the use of various tools: life stories, focus groups, discourse analysis, among others. In relation to the objective we seek to discuss in this article, it is important to highlight the third chapter, written jointly by Daniel Jones, Hernán Manzelli, and Mario Pecheny.

In this text, the authors point out that their aim is to show how some of the GT procedures were applied in a specific research project, which addresses the daily life issues of people living with HIV/AIDS and/or with hepatitis C, serious chronic diseases with different social significance. In specific terms, GT is defined as a style of doing qualitative analysis, which can be applied to various problems, and, at the same time, as a research approach that requires an intimate approach to the area of study and that purpose of generating concepts and developing theory from material from case studies” (Jones, Manzelli and Pecheny, 2004, p. 48). It is interesting to highlight that the authors take as a starting point that each researcher, who adopts this approach, will probably develop their own variation of it. In this sense, they revisit some of the key elements of GT, as they were originally developed by Glaser and Strauss in the 1960s, and later expanded upon by Strauss, to illustrate how they were applied in the particular research they were conducting when writing the text.

After presenting a brief historical summary of the development of this approach and beyond recognizing the redefinition and refinement of its original formulations, Jones, Manzelli, and Pecheny emphasize that they are interested in simply pointing out the most general lines of the approach and showing that this style allows to productively address the qualitative study of a social problem. Thus, three key elements of GT are revisited: the constant comparison method, data coding, and theoretical sampling.

Regarding the first element, it is defined as the method by which the researcher simultaneously codes and analyzes the data that would allow them to develop theoretical concepts and ideas. The four stages involved (and the activities that each one of them includes) are presented, retrieving faithfully the procedures outlined in the fifth chapter of “The Discovery of Grounded Theory”: comparing incidents applicable to each category, integrating categories and their properties, defining the theory and writing the theory. Meanwhile, in the description of the first stage, the authors include a subsequent redefinition around the types of coding: open (to give a common denomination to a varied set of interview fragments and life stories, documents, etc.), axial (to conduct an intensive analysis around a category, in terms of its relationships with other categories or subcategories) and selective (to systematically and concertedly search and codify the core category). Regarding another of the key elements of GT, the theoretical sampling – which consists of the criterion by which the researcher selects new cases to study according to their potential to refine and expand the concepts already developed – is also taken up from the contributions of Glaser and Strauss.

After presenting these elements, the procedures carried out in the specific research on the daily life of people living with HIV/AIDS and/or hepatitis C are provided in detail. The application of GT procedures was based on in-depth interviews. Different aspects of field work are pointed out in this regard, which are connected to the application of different sampling criteria: theoretical saturation, purpose, and theoretical relevance. To code the interviews, the authors used the Ethnograph software, exemplifying in the text both the coding manual used and the data output from this computer program. The application of GT procedures is illustrated from the presentation of an axial coding around a category analyzed in the research – context of the diagnosis – and its different properties (the latter exposed as they were worked on from the analysis of interview fragments). This presentation is complemented with a conceptual synthesis in terms of the similarities and differences analyzed in the interviews.

The text concludes with a summary and reflection on the scope of GT in the empirical research carried out by the authors. At the beginning, they point out the following contributions of this approach or style of qualitative analysis: it allows to generate concepts and develop theory based on the material from the case study, it promotes an intimate approach to the area of study and it emphasizes the methodological

accuracy and strength, encouraging a high degree of systematization of the analytical procedures of qualitative research. Then, the authors emphasize that they are not interested in carrying out a review of the criticisms against GT, although they point out some of the limitations observed since its concrete application within the specific research domain. Firstly, they address the issue of the little space given to the theory and the conceptualization prior to the field work. Secondly, even though the authors mention that the definitions are quite clear, they acknowledge that difficulties arose when delimiting in their research what was a category and what was a property, in the sense of evaluating the level of addition of each one of them. A third and last limitation mentioned refers to the application of the concept of theoretical saturation; here they point out, as in the case of properties and categories, that perhaps precise terms are accounting for other aspects that are not so precise. Regarding these limitations, the text ends with the definition of GT as a great advance in the field of social qualitative research, especially, when it is highlighted due to its methodological strength and accuracy.

Glaser and Strauss's Grounded Theory in Data Analysis (Abelardo Jorge Soneira)

This is one of the chapters included in the book “Estrategias de Investigación Cualitativa” [Strategies for Qualitative Research] (2006) edited by Irene Vasilachis de Gialdino. This book presents several qualitative research components, approaches, tools, and techniques, among others, in social sciences. We specifically revisit the fourth chapter of this book, given that it analyzes key aspects of GT and illustrates its application in an empirical social research study on Evangelical movements.

As a starting point, the author presents a brief section where the historical origin and evolution of GT are traced from the pioneering formulations by Glaser and Strauss, reviewing separately the developments by Glaser (1978) and Strauss (1987), to Strauss's work with Juliet Corbin in 1990. Soneira points out that this latter book will lead to the definitive rupture between Strauss and Glaser, and the later publication of “BASICS of Grounded Theory ANALYSIS: Emergence vs. Forcing” (1992), in which Glaser refutes Strauss and Corbin's work.

Apart from this rupture, the author defines GT in data based on Strauss and Corbin's work as “a general methodology in order to develop theory that is grounded in systematically collected and analyzed information” (Soneira, 2006, p. 153). Then, he outlines that one of the major difficulties in delving into GT is its specific terminology. Therefore, he briefly provides some definitions of terms used that would be important not to confuse (e.g., concepts, categories, coding, properties, to name but a few.). The author revisits the constant comparison method and the theoretical sampling as the key aspects of the pioneering Glaser and Strauss's formulations, as detailed in “The Discovery of Grounded Theory.”

Through the constant comparison method, a social researcher can simultaneously code and analyze data with the ultimate aim of generating theory. This method involves two processes: adjustment, which requires that the categories must emerge from data and apply to it, and functionality, which means that the categories must be significantly appropriate and have the capacity to explain the phenomenon under study. In contrast, the theoretical sampling method refers to the type of sampling used in GT, where a researcher selects cases to study according to their potential to refine or expand concepts already developed. When adding new cases no longer provides new information, it implies that the category is saturated (theoretical saturation criterion).

Then the author describes with some degree of detail certain GT operations or procedures: the collection of data, the coding, the delimitation of theory, the role of literature, the coding paradigm, and the communication of results.

Among the different empirical sources from which GT can be generated, Soneira highlights that, together with the interview, other techniques such as observation, informal conversation, focus groups, and document analysis can be alternatively, or complementarity used.

An essential role will also be played by coding and delimitation of the theory. According to Soneira (2006, p.156), coding is defined as the comparison of “the information obtained [through the collection of data], trying to give a common denomination to a set of data that shares the same idea.” This involves reading and rereading the collected data in order to establish meaningful relationships among them. There are different types of coding. On the one hand, open coding is initially used, where codes can emerge from theoretical formulation and from readings conducted by the social researcher, known as pre-coding. Alternatively, codes can emerge from the language or expressions of the subjects under study. The latter, which are further attractive and significant, are referred to as *in vivo* codes. Through

constant comparison, the relationships between data and codes begin to deepen and become more complex until categories are created. Coding always requires breaking down or fracturing the data, which means identifying and gathering the data in a decontextualized manner and then, recontextualizing them to start to identify their properties and dimensions. This active and systematic search for the properties of the categories is defined as axial coding, which involves using memos to record ideas and relationships that are emerging throughout the research process. On the other hand, delimitation of theory refers to the process of comparing cases by establishing similarities and differences between them. According to the parsimony criterion, or scientific economy, a process of reduction of categories is operationalized, which means maximizing the explanation with the minimum of concepts and formulations possible. In GT, this process entails focusing on a core category and beginning to code the data related to it, as well as data connected to the core category, a process known as selective coding.

After presenting and explaining the components of GT, which have been briefly discussed so far, Soneira will apply these components to empirical research. His research topic is the study of “Evangelical movements”, that is, the analysis of the emergence and development of new forms of religious expression within the Evangelical field, focusing on the figure of charismatic preachers. In this second half of the text, the theoretical-methodological categories and concepts introduced at the beginning of it are revisited. Nonetheless, these categories and concepts are not presented in their abstract and static form but rather in a concretized and dynamic manner, which represents a significant advantage. In other words, these latter sections of the work present the author’s concrete use of the techniques and tools provided by GT.

To conclude this section, the limits, the potentials, and the criticisms mentioned by Soneira regarding GT will be outlined. In terms of potentials, he states that GT can be applied on the basis of several techniques of qualitative social research. In fact, he also points out that GT is the most cited qualitative methodology. In this context, it can be understood that this methodology will not be always used in an orthodox manner, which represents another potential advantage given that it is a flexible methodology that can be complemented with others. Its possible malleability is undoubtedly one of its greatest strengths or potentials. Furthermore, Soneira presents two additional advantages of GT. To a certain degree, he mentions that GT prioritizes “conceptual density” over “thick description”. In this sense, in contrast to other qualitative theoretical-methodological perspectives that focus on a deep description of a phenomenon or process, GT puts its emphasis on the generation of theory.

Soneira does not express any criticism of GT in this work, which can be explained by the fact that it is framed within a manual on qualitative research (introductory to these methodologies) rather than in a text primarily aimed at explicitly criticizing this research perspective. Apart from this, in terms of GT’s limitations, Soneira briefly introduces a controversy involving this methodology. As previously mentioned, one potential of GT is its malleability and its ability to combine effectively with other methodologies. In turn, this advantage is one of its major limitations. Therefore, by allowing the combination with other methodologies and expanding the spectrum of possible uses, it simultaneously permits an almost infinite range of heterodox uses and interpretations of the pioneering methodological formulation developed by Glaser and Strauss.

Grounded Theory in the 21st Century: Applications for Advancing Social Justice Studies (Katy Charmaz)

This text is one of the ten chapters in the third volume of the “Handbook of Qualitative Research” [Qualitative Research Strategies], compiled by Norman Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln and published in Spanish in 2013. While each chapter focuses on a specific thematic area, Katy Charmaz’s chapter aims to promote an intersection between GT and critical research on social justice, as suggested by the title, within the context of the 21st century. As a starting point, GT is defined as a specific mode of analysis; subsequently, the author describes it as a comparative method where the researcher compares data with data, data with categories, and category with category. Despite the fact that she outlines that both the steps and the logic of GT can promote social justice research, she acknowledges that there exist several deficits and shortcomings. In this regard, Charmaz argues that “we must move further into a constructionist social science and make the positivist roots of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2013, p. 274). This is undoubtedly one of the main aspects of the text, given that it does not only state some of the past critiques of GT but also suggests a possible path for moving it in new directions.

In relation to the criticisms, the main one aims at objectivist inclinations and assumptions founded in positivism, which are present in Strauss and Corbin's works, as well as Glaser's, according to the author. In this context, Charmaz suggests moving GT away from its original objectivist framework by building on its constructivist elements and reaffirming its Chicago school antecedents.

Regarding the need to review, renew, and revitalize ties to Chicago school, this is explained in more detail after Charmaz points out some premises of the concrete use of tools provided by GT in her research. In this regard, a series of interview accounts are presented, which provide the backdrop for introducing how GT guidelines can address social justice concerns. In turn, these accounts allow us to discern the comparisons made by the author regarding the cases of Christine Danforth and Marty Gordon and their experiences with chronic illnesses in their daily lives. By asking how the GT methods promote giving meaning to these stories or accounts, Charmaz highlights the process of coding, defined as the first step in taking an analytical stance toward data. In her own words, she outlines that the codes reflect standard GT practice. Even though a definition is not explicitly provided, the tables that illustrate such activity are titled "initial coding". In this context, perhaps one of the most essential aspects that Charmaz revisits from the classic guidelines of Glaser and Strauss is the usefulness of the comparisons, which permits investigation in both cases based on the similarities and differences among their personal, social, and material resources. The usefulness of the comparisons in social research is a present element throughout Glaser and Strauss's classic book, given that this book addresses criteria to maximize and minimize differences between the selected groups for comparison and various uses of the comparative method, among which they assess the value for the generation of theory.

These aspects or dimensions emerging from the comparison could be further analyzed if the Chicago school underpinnings in GT are revisited, conceiving that these underpinnings "will move GT more completely into constructionist social science" (Charmaz, 2013, p. 296). According to the author, there are several steps to reclaim the Chicago tradition, which are detailed individually in the text.

In one of the descriptions, Charmaz points out two critiques of GT in the 21st century that are strongly linked: on the one hand, they skate the surface rather than plumb the depths of the life under study, and, on the other hand, they have not taken into account the context in which the problem or process that is the object of study exists. The solution to this latter issue is described as follows: "Combining Chicago intellectual traditions with social justice sensitivities would correct tendencies toward decontextualized – and, by extension, objectified – Grounded Theory analyses" (Charmaz, 2013, p. 300).

Another criticism refers to the fact that limiting data collection to interviews, as common in GT research, delimits the theory that can be developed. In this sense, the author highlights the need to extend the empirical knowledge to the area of the use of silence, rather than only working with what participants say and report about themselves. However, perhaps, the most visible critique of Glaser and Strauss's pioneering formulations, in terms of moving beyond them, is related to the criteria for evaluating studies that use GT. Acknowledging that the criterion of saturation of categories cannot function as a satisfactory evaluation criterion, Charmaz proposes alternative criteria: credibility, originality, resonance, and usefulness. In summary, the GT guidelines proposed by the author in this text are more closely related to the developments of the Chicago school rather than the foundational schemes of Glaser and Strauss. In turn, the main critiques are directed either at works published by Glaser or at the later Strauss and Corbin's developments. It can be highlighted that, based on the aforementioned aspects, the author lays the foundation of new directions to develop GT, especially related to inquiry in a specific research field: social justice.

Summary of the section

To summarize, a comparative table of the reviewed texts in this second section can be found below. These texts are examined and related to each other based on the questions specified in the introduction.

Table No. 2. Comparison of the aspects of Grounded Theory based on the different applications in empirical research.

Questions	Nocetti de la Barra and Contreras Sanzana	Jones, Manzelli and Pecheny	Soneira	Charmaz
Geographical context of elaboration	Chile	Argentina	Argentina	United States
How do they define GT?	A perspective within the quantitative paradigm.	A style of conducting qualitative analysis. A research approach that requires an intimate approach to the area of study. A procedure of analysis to formulate concepts and develop theory based on the material that emerges from case studies.	A general methodology to develop the theory that is grounded in systematically collected and analyzed information.	A specific mode of analysis. A comparative method in which the researcher compares data with data, data with categories, and category with category.
What aspects do they take from Glaser and Strauss's formulations?	Theoretical saturation.	Elements that are components of the theory. Processes or stages of the constant comparison method. Theoretical sampling.	Constant comparison method. Theoretical sampling.	Advantages of comparative analysis.
What specific use do they make of the tools provided by GT?	Qualitative research is based on the meaning and the change of beliefs that tutors give to their own practice after participating in a tutoring program in a Chilean university.	Research project based on the daily life of people living with HIV/AIDS and/or hepatitis C.	The study on "Evangelical movements." The analysis of the emergence and development of new forms of religious expression in the Evangelical field, focusing on the figure of charismatic preachers.	Critical research on social justice; more precisely, he examines how GT guidelines can address issues related to social justice.
What type of data do they apply these tools to?	Semi-structured interviews. Focus Groups.	In-depth interviews.	Recorded interviews, informal conversations, participant observation, and documents provided by the pastors for dissemination.	Accounts are extracted from two interviews, cases of Christine Danforth and Marty Gordon.

How do they present this application?	Detailed presentation of the different types of coding (open, axial and selective) applied to the phenomenon under study.	Presentation of an axial coding around the category “context of the diagnosis” and its different properties.	Presentation through a table showing the coding paradigm for his research topic.	Tables that illustrate the activity of initial coding.
Do they strictly follow the guidelines laid out by Glaser and Strauss or do they go beyond, incorporating subsequent formulations, alternatives, and/or novel content?	They revisit the different types of coding formulated by Strauss.	Incorporate different types of coding in addition to what was previously stated by Glaser and Strauss.	Even though he broadens the different types of coding, he does it by integrating them with Glaser and Strauss’s foundational developments.	The emphasis is placed on several aspects of Chicago school sociology and the need to revitalize its ties to Grounded Theory.
What criticism do they make?	They do not refer to any specific criticism. Limitations or difficulties related to the acquisition of new vocabulary and the specific GT procedures are highlighted.	They state limitations rather than criticisms: The problem of the little space given to theory and conceptualization prior to field work. Difficulties arose when delimiting in their research what was a category and what was a property. Application to the constant comparison method (they highlight here that perhaps precise terms are accounting for other aspects that are not so precise).	He does not refer to any criticism. However, he highlights that one of the greatest potentials of GT is also one of its major limitations.	Objectivist inclinations and assumptions are founded in positivism.

Source: Prepared by authors.

Final comments

Based on this comparison of different works, we can distinguish three positions taken by the authors regarding the reception of Glaser and Strauss’s pioneering work: returns, uses, and appropriations. Despite the fact that these positions coexist, they materialized differently – according to each specific author – on a spectrum that ranges from a faithful approach to a creative deviation from “The Discovery of Grounded Theory: STRATEGIES FOR QUALITATIVE RESEARCH.”

Therefore, in a first dimension, all the works reviewed here are included in the GT strategy, and, in this sense, we can consider them as a return to their foundational proposals. However, they do not revisit the same aspects; rather, they make specific cuts and selections. Based on the comparison presented here, we can examine which aspects are revisited and which, on the contrary, are not taken into account.

Similarly, there is not a single definition to conceptualize GT. Therefore, each author interprets GT based on the approach specifically applied to a particular object of study. In the case of manuals or introductory books on qualitative methodology, GT is defined from its role in methodological design, in data analysis or as an approach that guides the various decisions involved in the research process.

Based on how the authors either present their most essential guidelines or highlight their potential and applicability for investigating various objects of study, we can reconstruct different uses of GT in the texts. Moreover, in line with the comparison presented here, it is possible to distinguish between orthodox uses – that strictly adhere to the principles formulated by Glaser and Strauss – and heterodox uses, in the sense that they deviate from those foundational proposals and incorporate later developments, such as in the area of coding.

In the latter case, when there is also a creative and an inventive component, we recognize that there is an appropriation; that is, a reformulation of GT that goes beyond what was previously written and, in this sense, promotes new lines of research.

This reading grid of the reception of Glaser and Strauss's proposals can be applied to texts that are different from those presented here. We believe that the ways of working with the GT tools can be enriched by highlighting other research works, as well as how these tools are conveyed and disseminated in the teaching-learning processes of Social Research Methodology. In any event, the field of legacies and drifts of “The Discovery of Grounded Theory” is a wide path to travel through, of which this article undoubtedly represents a kick-off.

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