

Book Review: Great help for novice GT researchers

Holton, J. A & Walsh, I. (2016). *Classic grounded theory. Applications with qualitative & quantitative data*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.

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The authors' main purpose of the book is to provide practical guidance for novice researchers using classic grounded theory (GT) while remaining as true as possible to Glaser's and Strauss' thoughts. In addition, they want to show that GT is much more than a qualitative research methodology; throughout the book, the authors provide examples of how qualitative and quantitative data can be used to develop substantive and formal grounded theory.

Holton and Walsh claim that GT is philosophically neutral, and that it can be seen as a meta-theory of inductive research design. However, they argue that there is a common understanding underlying grounded theory research; the social world is organized and there are patterns we can discover when doing GT research. In my interpretation of this statement of the social world, this view carries a philosophical stand about the world in which we live. Nevertheless, the authors argue that different researchers using GT can bring different philosophical stands, epistemological understandings, and apply diverse methodologies as they carry out their GT research. As researchers, we need to come to terms with what philosophical position we hold in our research and thus which ontological and epistemological understanding we bring to our research process. Holton and Walsh take a critical realist stand and outline what that means to them. At the same time, they acknowledge that others can do GT from another philosophical stand and how that has added to the discussion of remodeling GT.

In addition to arguing for openness of a philosophical stand in doing GT, the authors claim that different understandings of what researchers mean by using GT adds to the continued discussion of how one understands what GT is. Is GT a method, a technique, a methodology, a framework, a paradigm, a social process, a perspective, or rather a meta-theory of a research design? The authors argue that it is probably all of these things at the same time; when different researchers bring different perspectives into the discussion about classic GT, the reader understands that these arguments related to classic GT will continue long after this book!

The book has 10 chapters, and each chapter starts with the learning outcomes and ends with an informative summary and questions with multiple choice answers to test knowledge. The questions are well written as they require the reader to have knowledge and understanding to answer them. Each chapter also has suggestions for further reading and endnotes. There are multiple figures and tables in the book, which explain and exemplify the theme of each chapter. The text has many references to Glaser's and Strauss' publications and to other writers who discuss classic grounded theory. One great thing about this book is

that most of the references provide information about which pages to go to if we as readers want to study the different parts of the book in more detail.

The book is divided into three parts. Chapters 1–4 give an overview of classic GT from the beginning with Glaser and Strauss in the 1960s to today. The presentation of Glaser's and Strauss' background is well known from other books. However, the authors' presentation provides depth into the well-known saying in GT that "all is data;" they give background for why qualitative and quantitative data can be used in GT. In this book, a grounded theory, the result of a GT study, is a generation of probability statements about the relationships between concepts, and a set of conceptual propositions developed from empirical data. GT offers a transcending view of a main concern in a substantive area and a social behavior that explains how concern is processed, managed, or resolved.

The end purpose of a GT research is to develop a theory, and different types of theories are discussed in Chapter 2. In GT, the researcher can either use existing concepts (incremental theorizing) or develop new concepts (rupture theorizing) in theory development. It could have been helpful for the novice researcher if rupture theorizing were to have been discussed in more detail with some examples of how new concepts could have been developed. I also miss more elaboration of how concepts and categories are developed and expressed in classic GT, such as using gerunds to build actions into the codes.

Chapter 3 elaborates on the foundational pillars of classic GT such as emergence, theoretical sampling, and constant comparison. Chapter 4 continues to present how a GT researcher thinks and works—such as leaving preconception behind and staying open for emergence, and leaving description and work for conceptualization.

The second part of the book is called Classic Grounded Theory in Practice and offers practical guidance in the application of classic GT framework using qualitative and quantitative data. Chapter 5 offers good discussions of the what, how, and when for data collection. Chapter 6 takes us through open, selective, and theoretical coding, and underlines the importance of constantly stopping to write memos. The difference between the main concern and the core category in a grounded theory is explained. Questions and experiences from students are presented in pockets of text to aid deeper understanding of the challenges novice researchers may experience in the analyzing process. Here and in some other chapters figures present examples of how data collection, coding, and sorting of memos can be done. Unfortunately, the text is too unclear and letters are too small; it is not possible to read the content.

Chapter 7 deals with how a researcher develops the emerging grounded theory. Theoretical sampling, theoretical saturation, and theoretical coding are explained and the importance of hand sorting memos in the write up process is underlined. This chapter also provides the reader with 11 analytic rules to aid in the integration of a grounded theory.

The last part, chapters 8–10, deals with writing up of the grounded theory, and how to write for publication. In Chapter 8, novice researchers can find lots of help to overcome writers' block that come from fear of writing, confusion, worrisome accuracy, or perceptual outgrowing. Chapter 9 can also be of great help for an inexperienced researcher in writing up the grounded theory and for writing, sending in, and rewriting the first publication. The

authors use their experience in writing peer reviewed articles and give wise and practical advises for PhD students who go through this process for the first time. The last chapter presents and discusses how a classic grounded theory is evaluated through fit, workability, relevance, and modifiability.

The book has five appendices that provide examples of different ways of doing classic grounded theory. The book also has five pages of glossary of the basic concepts used in classic grounded theory. These terms can be helpful when reading the book to aid a deeper understanding of the key concepts used in classic grounded theory.

After having read this book my conclusion is that it is an important book for novice and also for more experienced GT researchers as it provides an overview of the fundamentals of classic GT. It also introduces the reader to methodological and practical issues discussed amongst GT researchers. The book is easy to read and aids those researchers new to GT to gain a better understanding of the methodological books written by Glaser.