



# **ABSTRACT**

Grounded theory has become one of the most utilized qualitative research methodologies across disciplines and subject areas. Building off our work merging key aspects of grounded theory with traditional ethnographic approaches, we argue that a new hybrid design—grounded theory ethnography—holds vast potential for the conduct of applied and community oriented anthropological research. Drawing on one of the co-authors use of this approach to study mental health practitioners working among the Aawando of Northern Namibia, we provide an overview of grounded theory ethnography bolstered by practical suggestions for its use in applied and community contexts.

# **PRESENTATION OUTLINE**

- Introduction and History of Grounded Theory
- Contemporary Grounded Theory Approaches
- Ethnography and Grounded Theory
- Grounded Theory Ethnography
- Grounded Theory Ethnographic Research  
Among the Aawambo of Northern Namibia
- Conclusions

*Grounded Theory Ethnography: Innovative Strategies for Conducting Community  
Oriented Anthropological Research*

## **Introduction and History of Grounded Theory**

**Grounded theory defined:** “An umbrella term denoting a family of interrelated approaches aimed at developing an inductively derived theory, explanation, or conceptual framework grounded in the data” (Guetterman, Babchuk, Howell Smith, and Stevens, 2019, p. 183)

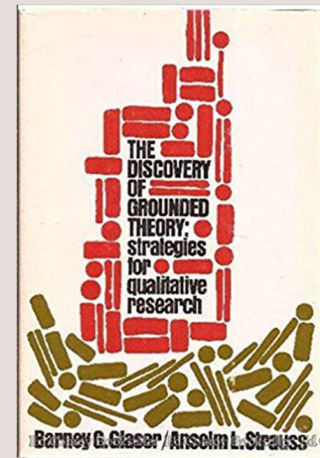
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## Introduction and History of Grounded Theory

- Grounded theory formulated in the mid-1960s by sociologists **Barney Glaser** and **Anselm Strauss** at the University of California San Francisco;
- Formalize this approach in *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1967) introducing their own brand of comparative methodology that juxtaposed elements of quantitative and qualitative designs to offer a new approach to social research designed to **generate theory from data collected in the field**;



Barney Glaser and  
Anselm Strauss

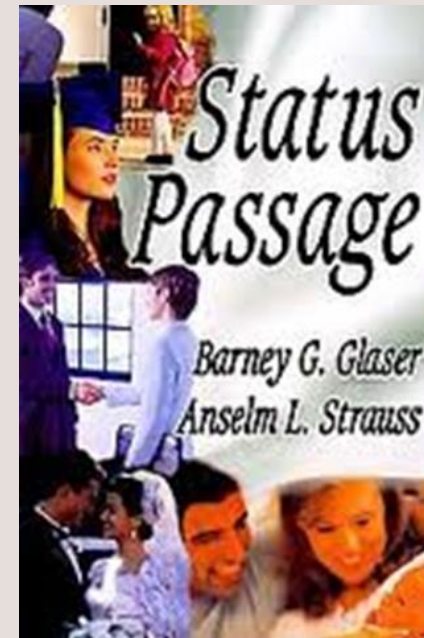
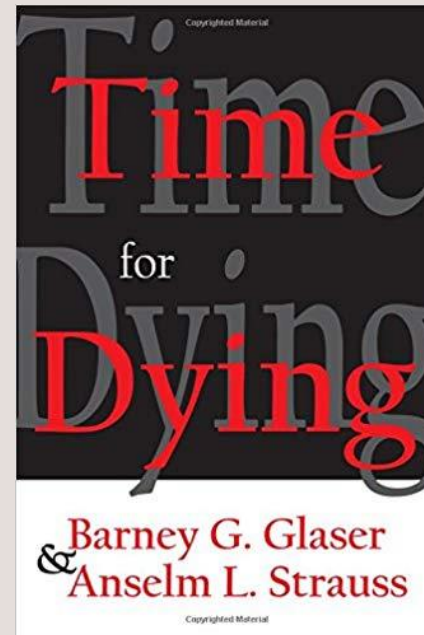
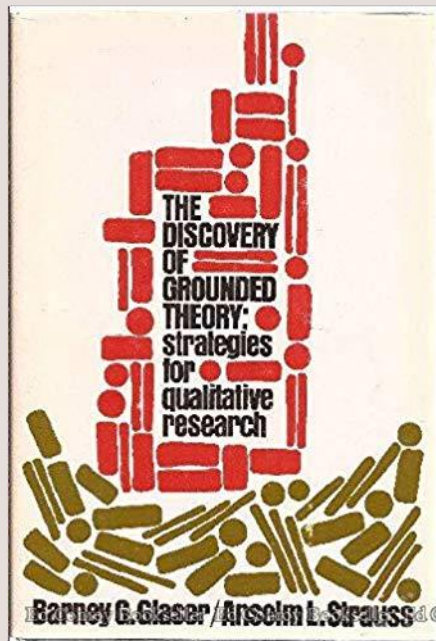
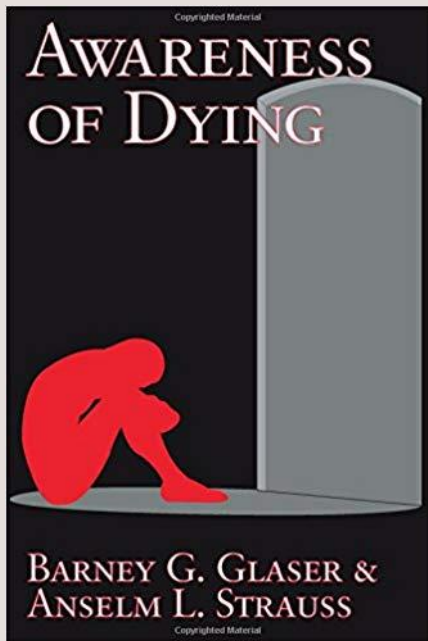


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## **Introduction and History of Grounded Theory**

### **Glaser & Strauss' (1967) *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*:**

- Reject Suffocating Positivist Tradition of Academy,  
Formalize New Approach to Scientific Inquiry  
Grounded in Data
- Devise Method of “Equivalent Status” to Prevailing  
Quantitative Methodologies
  - Outline “Core” Aspects of Grounded Theory  
(i.e., Constant Comparative Method, Theoretical  
Sampling, Coding, Memoing)



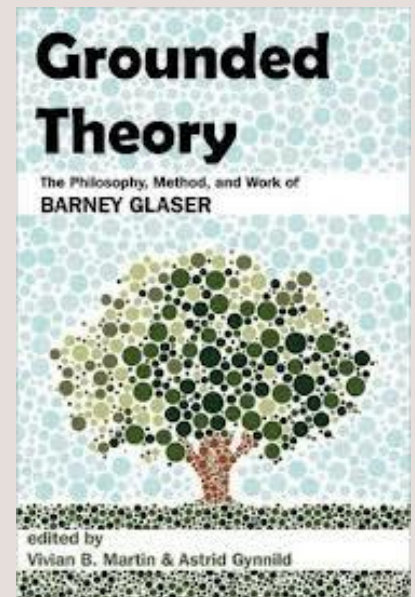
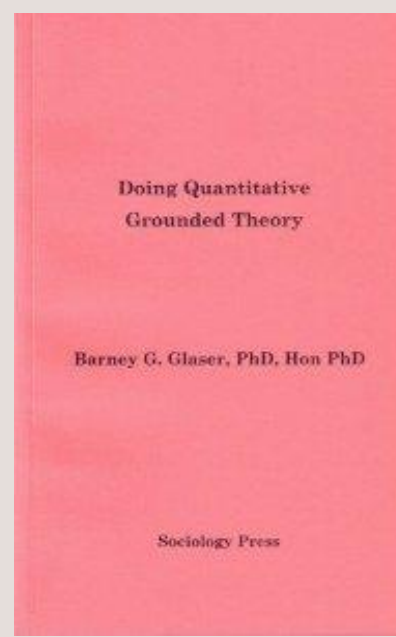
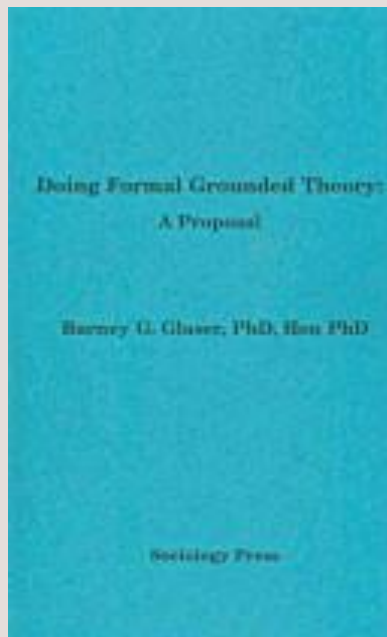
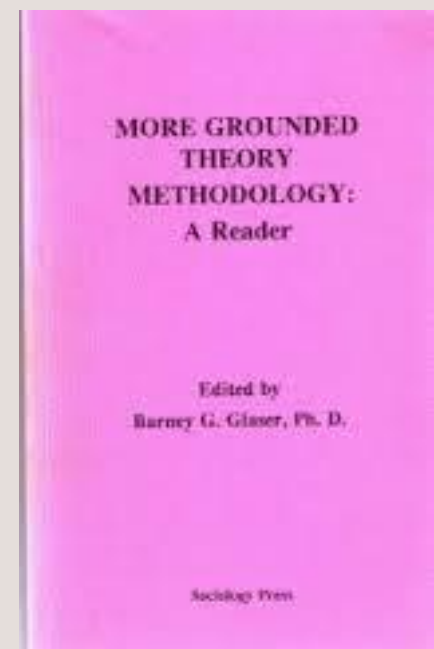
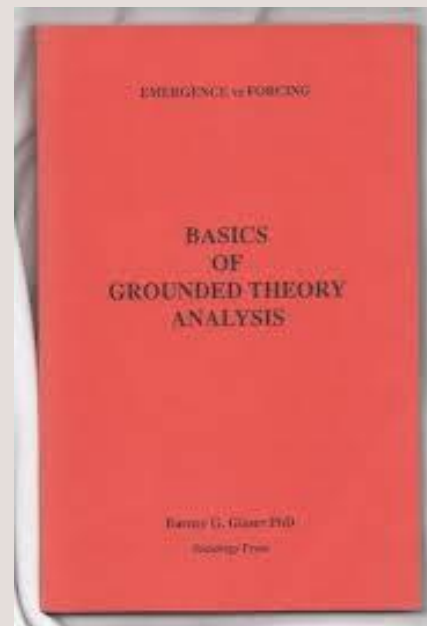
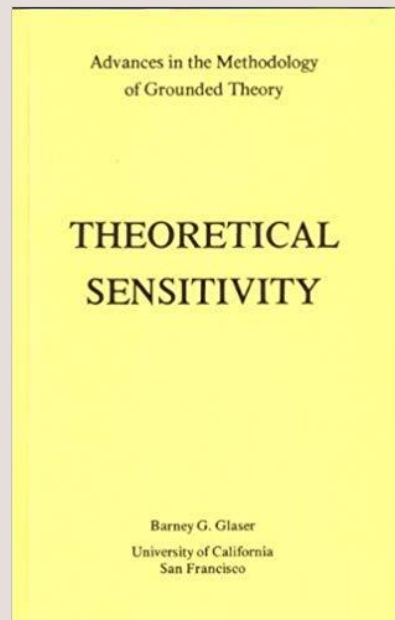
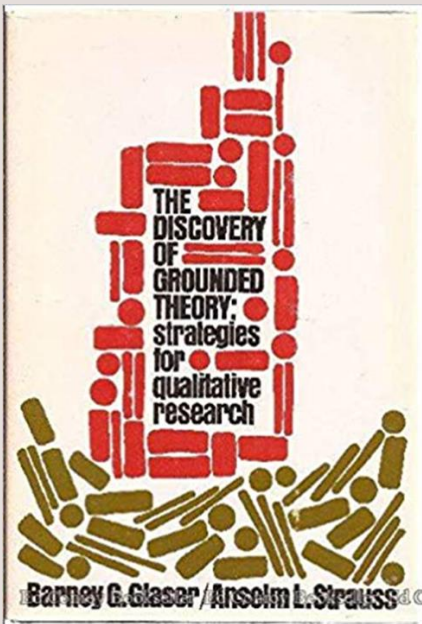
Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss early collaborative texts:  
*Awareness of Dying* (1965), *Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1967),  
*Time for Dying* (1968), and *Status Passage* (1971)

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## **Introduction and History of Grounded Theory**

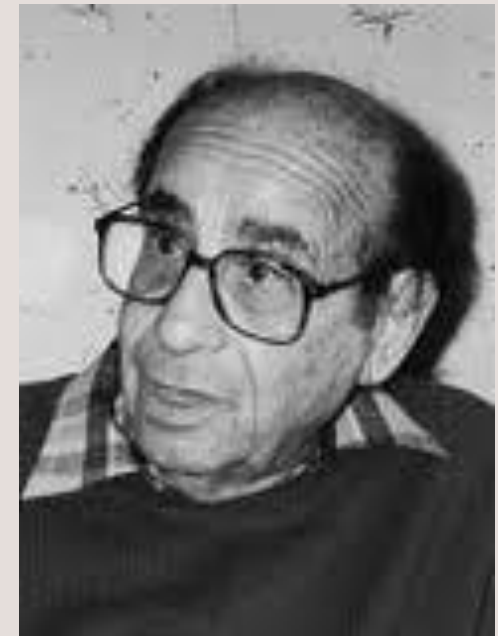
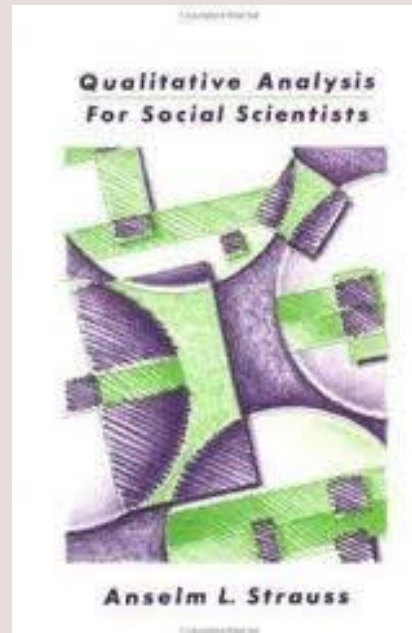
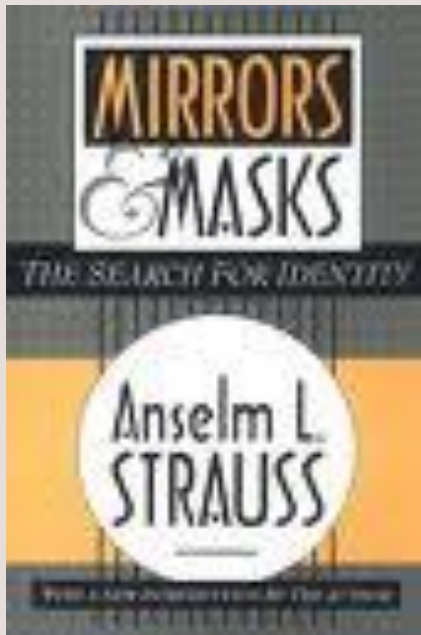
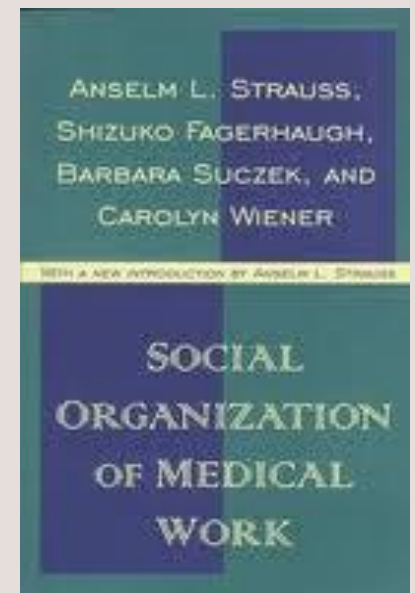
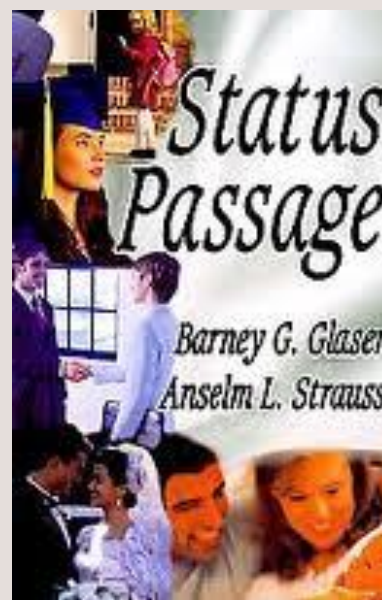
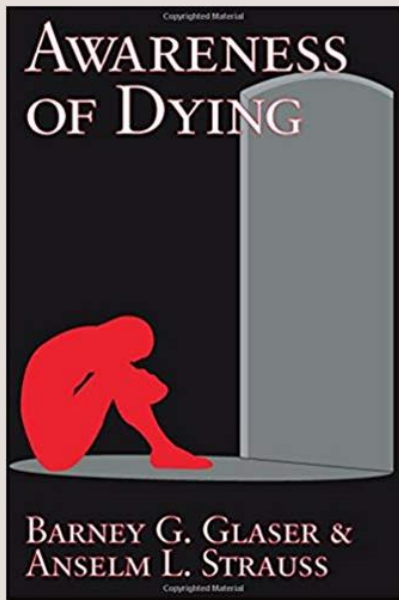
- Grounded theory is an inductive and systematic qualitative research strategy built upon the constant comparative method and simultaneous data collection and analysis sharing several key components;
- Glaser and Strauss take work in vastly different directions over the past forty years each championing their own version of GTM;
- Becomes hotly debated topic in the 1990s, early 2000s. Called “Glaserian” and “Straussian” grounded theory.





Some of Barney Glaser's Texts from *The Discovery* (1967) to *Doing Quantitative Grounded Theory* (2008). Most published through Sociology Press

<http://www.sociologypress.com>



Some of Anselm Strauss' (1987) early key texts

# Contemporary Versions of Grounded Theory

- Ultimately, others entered into the “**methodological fray**” (Charmaz, 2006) devising own interpretations with attendant epistemological underpinnings and implications for practice;
- Best viewed as a “**family of methods**” (Babchuk, 2011; Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Charmaz, 2014) sharing certain key characteristics which make it unique among qualitative methodologies.

# Contemporary Versions of Grounded Theory

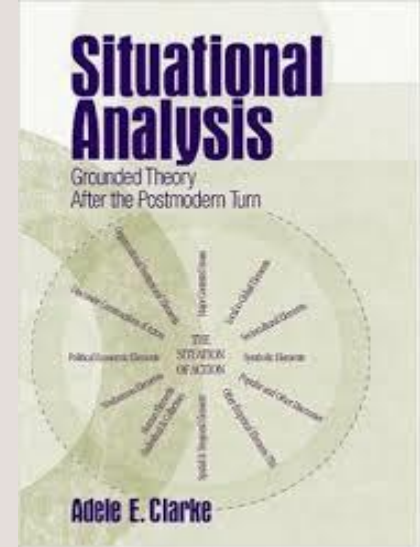
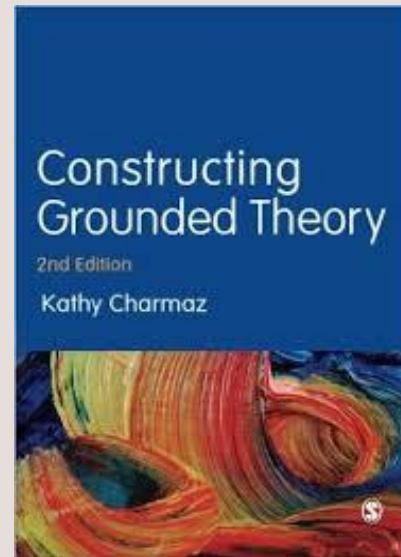
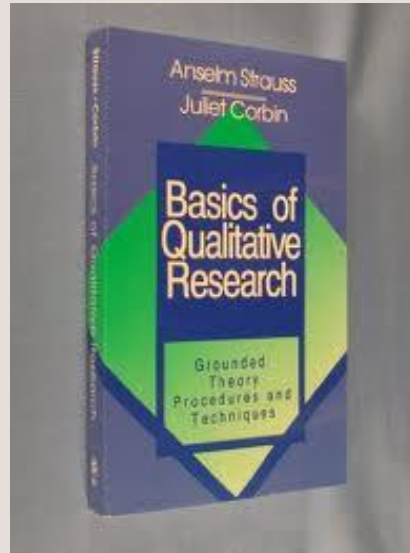
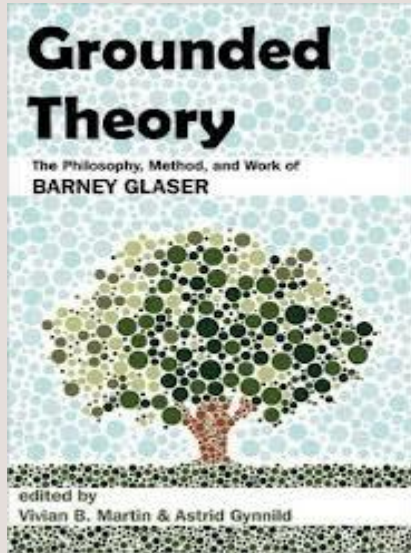
Four major versions emerge:

1. (Barney) **Glaserian/Emergent Grounded Theory** (also called Traditional or Classic Grounded Theory);
2. (Anselm) **Straussian/Systematic Grounded Theory**;
3. (Kathy) Charmaz's **Constructivist Grounded Theory**;
4. (Adele) Clarke's **Postmodern/Situational Analysis**

# Grounded Theory's Family of Methods

Researchers	Approach	Epistemology	Coding Strategies	Example
<b>Barney Glaser</b>	Classic, Traditional, Emergent or Glaserian	Objectivist/ Positivist	Open, Selective, Theoretical Coding, Use of theoretical coding families to drive analysis	Giske & Artinian (2007; 2008) employed a “classical grounded theory” (p. 22) design and theoretical coding to develop a grounded theory of coping by patients in a gastroenterology ward.
<b>Anselm Strauss Juliet Corbin</b>	Systematic or Straussian	Objectivist Interpretivist	Open, Axial, Selective Coding Use of the coding paradigm and conditional matrix	Lovell (2016) evoked systematic grounded theory coding techniques to develop a model to explain parental involvement in childhood health and nutrition of low-income Early Head Start families.
<b>Kathy Charmaz</b>	Constructivist	Interpretivist/ Constructivist	Initial and Focused Coding Gerunds-based emergent analytical techniques	Lynch, Babchuk, Dauer, Heng-Moss, & Golick (in preparation) utilized constructivist grounded theory to develop a substantive level theory of “transference” to explain the social process “by which educational and attitudinal impacts intended by program leaders for program participants are filtered by citizen scientists and transferred to others” (p. 1).
<b>Adele Clarke</b>	Postmodern/ Situational	Interpretive Postmodern	Cartographic mapping employing situational, world/arenas, and positional mapping techniques to study a situation rather than a process	Perez & Canella (2013) explore the use of situational analysis to explore a wide range of complex conditions to “provide examples of situational mapping from a study focusing on disaster capitalism and the privatization of the public education system in post-Katrina New Orleans” (p. 505)

# Contemporary Versions of Grounded Theory



## *Four Approaches:*

Barney Glaser, Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin, Kathy Charmaz, and Adele Clarke

Other hybrid approaches also gain momentum such as **Mixed Methods Grounded Theory (MM-GT)** and **Grounded Theory Ethnography**

# Contemporary Versions of Grounded Theory

## SHARED FEATURES

- Simultaneous Data Collection and Analysis
- Constant Comparative Method to Develop Concepts and Categories  
(used throughout all phases of analysis)
- Delaying Extensive Use of Literature Until Analysis is Under Way
  - Theoretical as a Form of Purposive Sampling for Theory Construction
  - Memoing to Help Guide the Elaboration of Categories and Relationships
    - Focus on Emergence of a Core Process
- Theoretical Saturation of Categories Signaling a Stopping Point in Data Collection
- Constructing Codes and Categories from Data Rather than from Preconceived Hypotheses

# Defining Characteristics/Terminology of Grounded Theory Research

<b>Term/Process</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Practical Considerations</b>
<b>Grounded Theory</b>	An overarching term denoting a rigorous methodology or design geared at developing a theory, explanation, or conceptual framework grounded in the data.	Grounded theorists strive to generate theory viewed as a substantive or formal explanation of a process or phenomenon emerging from data analysis. Most scholars of this methodology do not consider a work to be a legitimate grounded theory unless the study results in a theory, model, typology, or conceptual framework grounded in the data.
<b>Simultaneous Data Collection and Analysis</b>	The ongoing or “zig-zag” iterative process of data collection and analysis which is conducted simultaneously rather than in phases or stages.	A key component of grounded theory and other qualitative procedures that distances itself from quantitative forms of analysis by allowing flexibility in data collection and analysis that are emergent rather than relying on pre-determined constructs.
<b>Constant Comparison/Constant Comparative Method</b>	A process fundamental to grounded theory analysis by which the researcher continually compares emerging data in increasingly more abstract layers to develop categories, concepts, and theory.	Constant comparison is at the heart of the grounded theory approach and has been widely co-opted by other qualitative designs in practice. Ongoing comparisons of data at increasingly abstract levels allows the researcher to develop the emerging theory.
<b>Coding</b>	Data analysis process of assigning labels to organize data at increasingly higher levels moving from codes to categories or concepts to theory.	Grounded theorists employ different forms of coding from initial or open coding stages to increasingly analytic forms of theoretical, selective, and/or focused coding.



# Defining Characteristics/Terminology of Grounded Theory Research

<b>Term/Process</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Practical Considerations</b>
<b>Memo-Writing (Memoing)</b>	A critical component of grounded theory involving the researcher's ongoing process of reflection on the data to help guide the development of the analysis.	Memoing enables researchers to jot down potentially important notes to better clarify her/his thinking as the analysis progresses. This component should not be skipped in the conduct of grounded theory study as it is critical to theory development.
<b>Theoretical Sampling</b>	A unique form of purposive sampling involving the selection of sites, participants, and events strategically selected to assist the development of theoretical categories and concepts to enrich the emerging theory.	Theoretical sampling is a unique procedure associated with grounded theory designs. Often ignored in grounded theory studies reported in the literature, it is a defining aspect of this methodology contributing to the integrity of the approach.
<b>Theoretical Saturation</b>	Point signaling end of data collection when the researcher is confident that more data will not contribute any further insights to the development of the emerging theory.	Another unique procedure associated with grounded theory. Here saturation refers to an end point in gathering data to flush out the categories, concepts, and the emerging theory rather than the more generic use of the term saturation used in other qualitative designs. The researcher believes no further insights into the emerging theory are needed.
<b>Theoretical Sensitivity</b>	The ability for the researcher to be able to recognize important or relevant data and reflect upon it with the help of theoretical terms or concepts.	A process often attributed to the work of Barney Glaser and his text by the same name that has been widely adopted by grounded theorists referring to the need to better develop one's theory through comparison and consideration of pre-existing theoretical concepts.

## **Ethnography and Grounded Theory**

- Ethnography practices long-term face-to-face immersion within a culture-sharing group to describe and interpret patterns of behaviors and beliefs, relies heavily on participant observation as a key form of data collection to yield thick and rich description of a culture or elements of a culture, and often extends or tests a priori theory that is in place before the research begins.

## **Ethnography and Grounded Theory**

- In **anthropology**, ethnography (or participant observation), refers to the study of a culture-sharing group (or some aspect) and does not imply a specific methodological approach or data collection method;
- In **education and other fields**, often considered primarily a qualitative research methodology useful for studying some aspect of a culture-sharing group.

# Ethnography and Grounded Theory

- **Grounded theory** refers to both the **process and product of research** and attempts to move beyond description to generate, co-construct, or discover a (substantive) theory of a social or social-psychological process, action, or interaction. Grounded theory relies on the juxtaposition of several key methodological **components—constant comparison, theoretical sampling, and theoretical saturation** of categories (called the “**Troublesome Trinity**” by **Jane Hood, 2007**)—iterative, simultaneous data collection and analysis, memoing, and the study of a process or phenomenon rather than a description of the setting itself (Charmaz, 2014)

Note: as in ethnography, multiple forms of data collection and analysis can and should be used, grounded theory has historically employed interviews and ethnography participant observation (and interview) as their primary modus operandi.

# **Ethnography and Grounded Theory**

Grounded theory and ethnography share a number of (qualitative) features that distinguish them from more traditional quantitative approaches. These include:

- Research often conducted in naturalistic settings;
- Inductive data analysis;
- The researcher as the primary data collection instrument;
- Emergent sample selection;
- Flexible research design;
- Potential to generate theory from data collected in the field.

# **Ethnography and Grounded Theory**

- Nonrandom, purposeful sample selection;
- A focus on rich description and understanding of the participants' emic points of view;
- A holistic understanding achieved through collection of multiple sources of data (triangulation);
- Can employ quantitative approaches;
- The use of some form of memoing, journaling, or fieldnotes.

Please see Aldiabat and Le Navenec (2011) who provide a detailed overview of differences and similarities between grounded theory and ethnography and provide suggestions for how students can make informed choices to ensure their research design best matches their research questions.

# **Ethnography and Grounded Theory**

In *The Discovery*, Glaser and Strauss (1967) also made explicit ties between constant comparison, grounded theory, and ethnographic research that would ultimately lead to a *merging by some scholars of two time-honored and popular qualitative approaches—ethnography and grounded theory—thereby suggesting the possibility of a “happy marriage” between the two.*

## **Grounded Theory Ethnography**

Labeled “**grounded ethnography**” (Battersby, 1981) or “**grounded theory ethnography**” (Babchuk & Hitchcock, 2013; Babchuk & Guetterman, 2016; Charmaz, 2006; 2014; Bartholomew, 2018) or “**grounded theory in ethnography**”. Some argue that this hybridization of approaches can facilitate a clearer understanding of process, explanation, and theory development across disciplines and community settings.



# Grounded Theory Ethnography

Over time, several scholars laud its potential:

- Babchuk (1997); Babchuk & Hitchcock (2013); Babchuk & Guetterman (2016);
- Pettigrew (2000);
- Charmaz (2006; 2014); Charmaz & Mitchell (2001);
- Gales (2003);
- Timmermans & Tavory (2007);
- Sheridan & Storch (2009);
- Phelps and Horman (2010);
- Bartholomew (2017; 2018); Bartholomew & Gentz (2019)

## **Advantages of Grounded Theory Ethnography**

- Formalize and **extend the limited theoretical component of ethnography**;
- Hybrid approach **shifts focus from description to explanation and from theory verification to theory generation**;
- GT's constant comparative method, theoretical sampling, etc., coding techniques, **provide systematic and rigorous guidelines for conducting ethnographic research**;
- Can **provide more detail in analysis through the ongoing iterative study** of a phenomenon or social-psychological process;
- Potential to **reduce ethnocentrism** by allowing the emergence of culture-specific concepts independent of etically derived predetermined frameworks or a priori theory;

## **Advantages of Grounded Theory Ethnography**

- Grounded theory ethnography provides flexible yet systematic and rigorous guidelines or procedures—a “theory methods” package—to help guide ethnographic research particularly in the pursuit of theory generation from data collected in the field.



## **Case Study: Mental Illness in Namibia**

- Namibian government estimates 2-3% of population serious endure mental illness with an additional 10% reporting more routine distress (MHSS, 2005)
  - These 12-13% of people account for 20-30% of primary care usage
- **Signs of distress noted in Namibia** (Bartholomew, in press)
  - Potential indicators of PTSD (Bartholomew; 2012; Feinstein, 2002), depression (Ruiz-Casares et al., 2009), and general psychological distress (Haidula et al., 2003) in Namibia
- Research conducted with Aawambo who live in northern portion of the country

## **Case Study: Mental Illness in Namibia**

- Ethnographic field work – February 2014 through May 2014.
  - Included observations of conversations about mental illness and informal interviews.
- Within ethnographic framework, conducted two separate data collections:
  1. Semi-structured interviews with Aawambo men and women ( $N = 14$ ) about perceptions of mental illness and its treatment
  2. Semi-structured interviews with mental health practitioners ( $N = 7$ ) living in the context of data collection

## **Case Study: Mental Illness in Namibia**

Followed Charmaz's (2014) guidelines for grounded theory analysis, utilizing incident-with-incident coding

- Significant statements in the transcribed interviews were coded;
- Alike codes were grouped into categories that reflected the experience of illness and its treatment in context;
- The construction of these categories involved constant comparison with memos written with the transcript analysis and reflections drawn from the overarching ethnographic process.

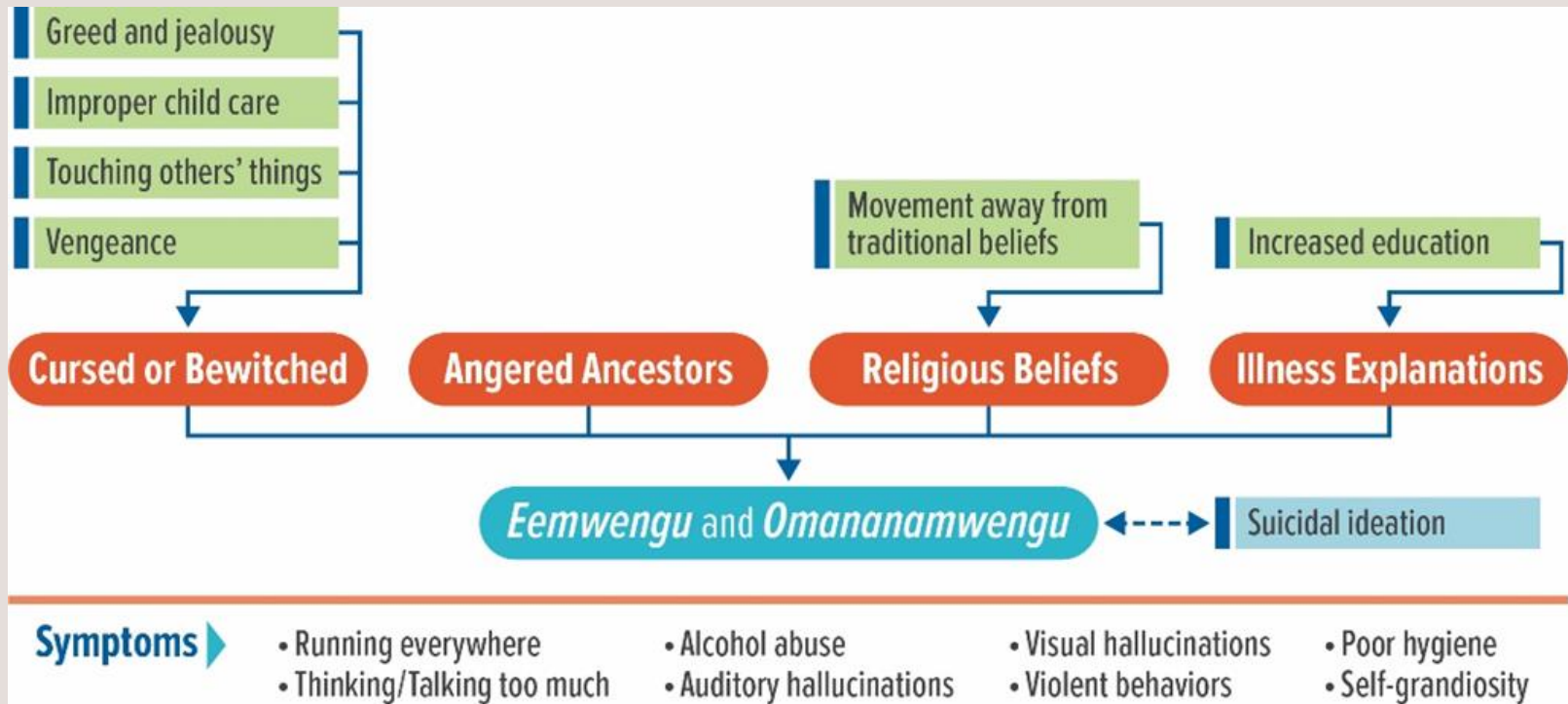
## **Case Study: Mental Illness in Namibia**

### Findings – Beliefs about Illness

- Within the data, beliefs about illness as madness (*eemwengu*) emerged. The grounded theory analysis led to identification of two pertinent categories:
  - (a) *Eemwengu* (madness) and *Omunanamwengu* (the mad one) and
  - (b) Where Madness Comes From: Explanations of Mental Illness.



## Case Study: Mental Illness in Namibia



*NOTE: This is a portion of the data illustrated for the purpose of this presentation. Further findings can be found elsewhere (Bartholomew, 2017; 2018; Bartholomew & Gentz, 2019)*

## **Questions for Discussion**

- Does grounded theory ethnography represent a different hybrid approach? Or just a form of grounded theory or just a form of ethnography?
- What research questions are best approached through grounded ethnography?
- Do language/translation barriers need to hinder this approach? How address these potential problems?
- Is grounded ethnography better adapted to shorter periods in the field?
- What about ethnography that is not cross-cultural in nature? Is it better-suited for that?
- What potential does grounded theory ethnography have for conducting community oriented anthropological research?

## **CONCLUSION**

Comparative methods and emergent theorizing have a long history in anthropology and sociology. We have argued that a hybrid approach to qualitative research embracing unique attributes of grounded theory's theory-methods package with traditional ethnographic procedures holds great potential for advancing social and behavioral research. Grounded theory ethnography can extend the often more limited theoretical component of ethnography that has traditionally relied on description and analysis of a priori theory. This approach shifts this focus from description to explanation and from theory verification to theory generation. Grounded theory ethnography can be a powerful tool for conducting community oriented anthropological research used across disciplines and settings to enrich the ethnographic study of culture-sharing groups both in the U.S. and abroad.