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Linking Symbolic Interactionism and Grounded Theory Methods in a Research Design: From Corbin and Strauss' Assumptions to Action

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Abstract

This article focuses on Corbin and Strauss' evolved version of grounded theory. In the third edition of their seminal text, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, the authors present 16 assumptions that underpin their conception of grounded theory methodology. The assumptions stem from a symbolic interactionism perspective of social life, including the themes of meaning, action and interaction, self and perspectives. As research design incorporates both methodology and methods, the authors aim to expose the linkages between the 16 assumptions and essential grounded theory methods, highlighting the application of the latter in light of the former. Analyzing the links between symbolic interactionism and essential grounded theory methods provides novice researchers and researchers new to grounded theory with a foundation from which to design an evolved grounded theory research study.

Keywords

grounded theory, symbolic interactionism, research design, methodology, methods

Introduction

Researchers approach the world with a set of beliefs and ideas about the nature of being (ontology), reality, and truth. This approach raises questions about knowledge and the relationship of the knower to the known (epistemology) and determines how a researcher approaches the research process (methodology) (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). Methodology includes the strategy and plan of action of a research study. Methods are the techniques or procedures that a researcher uses to answer their research question. Choosing which methods to use, including the recruitment and sampling of participants, data collection, data recording, data analysis, and reporting, is guided by the research methodology and the desired outcomes of the study (Crotty, 1998).

Literature aimed at postgraduate students and novice researchers reiterates the importance of researchers establishing the philosophical foundations of their study from the outset (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Yet this activity does not always occur. For example, in the case of grounded theory research, using the suite of grounded theory methods is often considered methodologically sufficient and due consideration is not necessarily given to a study's epistemological and ontological underpinnings. This issue is compounded by the fact that Glaser and Strauss (1967), the originators of grounded theory, did not articulate the philosophical foundation of this design. Glaser's (2004) publication states that classic grounded theory "is simply a set of integrated conceptual hypotheses systematically generated to produce an inductive theory about a substantive area" (Introduction, para.7), effectively dismissing the need for an underpinning philosophical perspective. Glaser's position, however, should not be used as a fall back that licenses a methodologically naïve approach to grounded theory research, particularly given the well-documented analysis of his position as a post-positivist researcher (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). In contrast, Strauss (1993) and later Corbin and Strauss (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) state a number of philosophical and sociological assumptions that explicitly underpin evolved grounded theory.

In the early 1960s, Glaser and Strauss conducted a study into the experience of dying, culminating in their book *Awareness of Dying* (1965) and subsequently *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1967). Prior to the publication of this seminal text, social researchers were focusing on verifying extant theories or on testing barely generated theories.

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However, *Discovery* changed accepted thinking with its methods of inductive theory development.

Since the introduction of grounded theory, the methodology has diverged into three discernible schools of thought, or versions: (i) classic grounded theory, which is associated with Barney Glaser; (ii) evolved grounded theory associated with Anselm Strauss, Juliette Corbin, and Adele Clarke; and (iii) constructivist grounded theory, which stems from work by Kathy Charmaz. In this article, the authors present Corbin and Strauss' (2008) "lost chapter" and the 16 assumptions, introduce the reader to essential grounded theory methods, and provide a background to the development of pragmatism and symbolic interactionism as the epistemological and ontological foundations of evolved grounded theory. Rather than elaborating on specific features and differences between the three versions of grounded theory, the authors focus on Corbin and Strauss' 16 assumptions of grounded theory (2008; Table 1), analyzing them for key symbolic interactionist themes and their links to essential grounded theory methods. Our purpose is to highlight, particularly for novice researchers and researchers new to grounded theory, the links between the assumptions and the fundamental contribution of symbolic interactionism to grounded theory methodology and methods.

The "Lost Chapter"

Grounded theory has its roots in pragmatist philosophy and symbolic interactionist sociology (Bryant, 2009; Charmaz, 2003; Clarke, 2003; Milliken & Schreiber, 2001; Morse, 1994; Nathaniel, 2011; Schreiber, 2001; Stern & Porr, 2011; Strauss, 1987). However, until the publication of what we term the "lost chapter" in *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory* (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), the influence of pragmatist philosophy and sociological symbolic interactionist theory on evolved grounded theory was not explicitly articulated by Corbin and Strauss. In Chapter 1 of the third edition of the text, the authors (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) present 16 assumptions that underpin their version of grounded theory methodology. They accompany this list of assumptions with a brief discussion on the epistemology and ontology of pragmatism and symbolic interactionism. Originally written for the second edition of *Basics of Qualitative Research* (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), the publisher originally considered this section "too complicated for a beginning text on qualitative research" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 17). Including the 16 assumptions in the latest version of the text provides the missing link that formally articulates the philosophical and sociological perspectives underlying Strauss and Corbin's evolved grounded theory methodology.

Essential Grounded Theory Methods

Grounded theory methodologies use a common "tool box" of methods in the design and implementation of a study. The following constitute this set of essential grounded theory methods: concurrent data generation or collection and analysis; constant comparative analysis; initial coding and categorization of data; intermediate coding; selecting a core category; advanced coding; theoretical integration; theoretical sampling, theoretical saturation; theoretical sensitivity; and writing memos (memoing) (Birks & Mills, 2011, p. 9). Used together, these methods constitute an unfolding, iterative process of actions and interactions that constitute the grounded theory research process (Charmaz, 2006).

In this article, we link each of the essential grounded theory methods to one or more of Corbin and Strauss' 16 assumptions (refer Table 1). Corbin and Strauss (2008) postulate that readers who familiarize themselves with their book will "easily grasp the relevance of the assumptions to [their] version of the [grounded theory] methodology" (p. 6). However, we believe "unpacking" the assumptions and their symbolic interactionist themes to explicate the links with essential grounded theory methods will clarify what it means to implement an evolved grounded theory design.

The 16 Assumptions

The assumptions are based on Corbin and Strauss' interpretation of works by John Dewey, George Herbert Mead, Herbert Blumer, and Anselm Strauss himself. All four scholars are members of a group of sociologists known as the Chicago School situated within the University of Chicago (Lutters & Ackerman, 1996). Table 2 provides a synopsis of each scholar's period at the University and highlights periods when their tenures overlapped. The Chicago School is particularly associated with qualitative methodologies, especially those using a naturalistic observational approach to the study of human group life and human conduct, such as symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969). A general understanding of the evolution of symbolic interactionism, and its precursor pragmatism, provides a point of departure from which to approach the assumptions and their links to essential grounded theory methods.

Pragmatism

Pragmatism is a humanistic movement in philosophy, which emphasizes the role of humans in the creation of objective and meaningful reality (Shalin, 1991). American pragmatism emerged between the 1860s and the end of World War II in the 1940s. During this period, personal material gain was driving American economic and social progress and scholars were demanding that philosophical pursuits extend beyond theory to prove their worth in practice. In a country with a meagre precapitalist past, pragmatism provided the "philosophical expression of middle class liberalism" (Novak, 1975, p. 12). The unification of knowledge and action, and applying theory to practice distinguished pragmatist philosophy from other philosophical positions, which at the time were based on empirical epistemology (Dewey, 1929).

Table 1. Linking Corbin and Strauss' 16 Assumptions With Symbolic Interactionist Themes and Essential Grounded Theory Methods (Birks & Mills, 2011; Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 6-8).

No.	Assumption compiled by Corbin and Strauss	Scholar and year of attributing text	Symbolic interactionism theme	Essential grounded theory methods
1	*The external world is a symbolic representation, a "symbolic universe." This and the interior worlds are created and recreated through interaction. In effect, there is no divide between external or interior world.*	Blumer, 1969	Meaning Action and interaction	Concurrent data generation and analysis Constant comparative analysis
2	*Meanings (symbols) are aspects of interaction, and are related to others within systems of meanings (symbols). Interactions generate new meanings . . . as well as alter and maintain old ones.*	Mead, 1934	Meaning Action and interaction	Constant comparative analysis
3	*Actions are embedded in interactions-past, present and imagined future. Thus actions also carry meanings and are locateable within systems of meanings. Actions may generate further meanings, with regard to further actions and the interactions in which they are embedded.*	Mead, 1934	Meaning Action and interaction	Constant comparative analysis Theoretical sampling Initial coding and categorization of data Intermediate coding Selecting a core category
4	*Contingencies are likely to arise during a course of action. These can bring about change in its duration, pace, and even intent, which may alter the structure and process of interaction.*	Dewey, 1929	Action and interaction	Concurrent data collection and analysis Constant comparative analysis Theoretical sampling Intermediate coding Advanced coding Theoretical integration
5	*Actions are accompanied by temporality, for they constitute courses of action of varying duration. Various actors' interpretations of the temporal aspects of an action may differ according to the actors' respective perspectives'; these interpretations may also change as the action proceeds.*	Mead, 1959	Meaning Action and interaction Perspectives	Constant comparative analysis Intermediate coding Advanced coding Theoretical sensitivity Memoing
6	*Courses of interaction arise out of shared perspectives, and when not shared, if action/interaction is to proceed, perspectives must be negotiated.*	Blumer, 1969	Action and interaction Perspectives	Concurrent data generation and analysis Initial coding and categorization of data Theoretical sensitivity Memoing
7	*During early childhood and continuing all through life, humans develop selves that enter into virtually all their actions and in a variety of ways.*	Mead, 1959	Action and interaction Self	Theoretical sensitivity
8	*Actions (overt and covert) may be preceded, accompanied, and/or succeeded by reflexive interactions (feeding back onto each other). These actions may be one's own or those of other actors. Especially important is that in many actions the future is included in the actions.*	Dewey, 1929	Meaning Action and interaction Self	Constant comparative analysis Memoing
9	*Interactions may be followed by reviews of actions, one's own and those of others, as well as projections of future ones. The reviews and evaluations made along the action/interaction course may affect a partial or even complete recasting of it.*	Dewey, 1929	Action and interaction Self	Concurrent data collection and analysis Theoretical sampling Theoretical sensitivity Memoing
10	*Actions are not necessarily rational. Many are nonrational or, in common parlance, "irrational." Yet rational actions can be mistakenly perceived as not so by other actors.*	Dewey, 1929	Action and interaction	Memoing

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

No.	Assumption compiled by Corbin and Strauss	Scholar and year of attributing text	Symbolic interactionism theme	Essential grounded theory methods
11	*Action has emotional aspects. To conceive of emotion as distinguishable from action, as entities accompanying action, is to reify those aspects of action. For us, there is no dualism. One can't separate emotion from action; they are part of the same flow of events, one leading into the other.*	Dewey, 1929	Action and interaction	Concurrent data collection & analysis Memoing Theoretical sensitivity
12	*Means-ends analytic schemes are usually not appropriate to understanding action and interaction. These commonsense and unexamined social science schemes are much too simple for interpreting human conduct.*	Strauss, 1993	Action and interaction	Grounded theory as a whole process
13	*The embeddedness in interaction of an action implies an intersection of actions. The intersection entails possible, or even probable, differences among the perspectives of actors.*	Strauss, 1993	Action and interaction Perspectives	Concurrent data collection and analysis Initial coding and categorization of data Intermediate coding Memoing
14	*The several or many participants in an interactional course necessitate the "alignment" (or articulation) of their respective actions.*	Blumer, 1969	Meaning Action and interaction	Selecting a core category
15	*A major set of conditions for actors' perspectives, and thus their interactions, is their memberships in social worlds and subworlds. In contemporary societies, these memberships are often complex, overlapping, contrasting, conflicting, and not always apparent to other interactants.*	Strauss, 1993	Action and interaction Perspectives	Concurrent data collection and analysis Theoretical sampling Intermediate coding Advanced coding Theoretical integration
16	*A useful fundamental distinction between classes or interactions is between the routine and the problematic. Problematic interactions involve "thought," or when more than one interactant is involved then also "discussion." An important aspect of problematic action can also be "debate"–disagreement over issues or their resolution. That is, an arena has been formed that will affect the future course of action.*	Dewey, 1929; Strauss, 1993	Action and interaction	Concurrent data collection and analysis Intermediate coding Advanced coding Theoretical integration Memoing

Table 2. University of Chicago: Tenures of Key Scholars (M. Gibbons, personal communication, September 28, 2012).

	Position	Years	Notes
John Dewey	Position title not provided	1893-1904	Taught in the Philosophy Department
George Herbert Mead	Assistant professor	1894-1902	
	Associate professor	1902-1907	
	Professor of philosophy	1907-1931	Retired in 1931 and remained an Emeritus Professor until his death in the same year
Herbert Blumer	Attended graduate school	1923-1928	Awarded a PhD in 1928
	Instructor Associate professor Professor	1926-1952	Specific dates for each position not provided
Anselm Strauss	Student	1939-1945	Awarded a PhD in 1945
	Instructor	1952-1959	Commenced teaching 1952 (Unofficial source) Commenced teaching 1955 (Official source)

Mead (1936) considered pragmatism "a practical sort of philosophy" (p. 352), evolving from rationalistic philosophies and a psychological approach to establish "the process of knowing [-] inside of the process of conduct" (pp. 351-352). Pragmatism is considered a precursor of symbolic interactionism (Musolf, 2009; Plummer, 1996; Reynolds, 2003; Sandstrom, Martin, & Fine, 2001; Stryker, 1972).

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism is an empirical social science perspective on the study of human group life and human conduct (Blumer, 1969). Mead is credited with developing symbolic interactionism, although he did not use this term. Blumer explains how he himself offhandedly coined the term symbolic interactionism in a chapter he wrote for *Man and Society* (Blumer, 1937) and that it "somehow caught on and [came into] general use" (Blumer, 1969, p. 1).

The theory and conceptualization of symbolic interactionism developed during the period between the late 19th and mid-20th centuries within the Chicago School (Deegan, 2001; Musolf, 2003). Symbolic interactionists distinguish themselves from other social scientists by their shared claim to Mead and his original idea that the "human biological organism possesses a mind and a self" (Herman-Kinney & Verschaeve, 2003, p. 214). In addition, meaning and the concepts of self, action, and interaction are key interweaving themes that feature in the various interpretations of symbolic interactionism.

Reformulating the 16 Assumptions Into Themes

Meaning and the concepts of action, interaction, self, and perspectives are themes of symbolic interactionism that feature in Corbin and Strauss' assumptions (refer Table 1). Blumer's (1969) three premises of symbolic interaction highlight the interconnectedness of each of these themes and "sketch a picture of human society" (Blumer, 1969, p. 72):

> Human beings act toward things on the basis of the *meanings* that the things have for them . . . [T]he meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social *interaction* that one has with one's fellows . . . [T]hese meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the *person* in dealing with the things he encounters. (Blumer, 1969, p. 2)

The three themes of meaning, action and interaction, and self, together with the subtheme of perspectives are used to group the 16 assumptions, and to link them with essential grounded theory methods.

Meaning

In the first half of the 20th century, realist philosophy and psychological ways (Blumer, 1969) of accounting for the origin of meaning were particularly dominant. A realist account of the origin of meaning considers meaning as being intrinsic to all things. Thus, a hat is a hat. A psychological view of the origin of meaning contends that meaning is an expression of sensations, feelings, memories, ideas, attitudes, and motives that are brought into play in connection with a person's perception of a thing (Blumer, 1969). Thus, a hat may be viewed as a fashion statement or sun protection. From a symbolic interactionism perspective, objects such as hats do not have an innate, permanent character; they cannot be isolated from what happens to them (Mead, 1959). Meaning arises in the process of interaction. Meaning is not fixed and immutable; it is fluid, modifiable, and open to reappraisal (Blumer, 1969; Charon, 2007; Mead, 1934; Plummer, 1996).

The process of ascribing meaning (Assumptions 2 and 3) to data corresponds to the essential grounded theory methods of initial coding and intermediate coding. Continually reassessing meanings in the data is demonstrated in the essential grounded theory methods of constant comparative analysis (Assumptions 1, 2, 3, 5, and 8). During the initial and intermediate coding phases, the researcher ascribes meaning to data through the use of codes. Ascribing meaning is not, however, an isolated act. Through the process of constantly comparing data codes to codes, codes to categories, and categories to categories, the researcher interacts with the data, continually reassessing meaning to "what is really going on" in the data (Glaser, 1998, p. 12). Assumptions 2, 3, and 5 highlight the temporal aspects of this process whereby interaction with the data changes previous meanings and generates new ones. Viewing the data in new contexts is not a matter of simply rejecting past codes and embracing new ones. It is a process in which previous codes converge into present analysis to advance the developing theory. Mead (1959) proposes that "reality exists in a present" (p. 1). In this, Mead is not referring to a single reality; rather that the present is the reconstruction of past and imagined future actions and interactions. The transformative aspect of constant comparative analysis is a unique characteristic that extends the scope of grounded theory research beyond descriptive analysis.

A unique feature of grounded theory research is the data analysis method of selecting a core category. It is the point in the grounded theory research process where previous actions, which led to the development of categories and subcategories, are aligned (Assumption 14). Until this point in the process, the researcher attributes meaning to data through the development of codes, categories, and subcategories. Comparable with the concept of locating meaning within systems of meanings (Assumption 3), selecting a core category requires the researcher to select an overarching concept that encapsulates all previously developed categories and subcategories (Birks & Mills, 2011). This process requires an intimate and distant relationship to the data and subsequent categories and subcategories. Intimately questioning the

meaning of the data assists the researcher to reach a point where the grounded theory can be explained and not merely described (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Selecting a core category also requires the researcher to stand back from the data, so that, with a wide view lens, they can isolate the common feature in all the categories and subcategories. Selecting a core category does not, however, commit meaning to an immutable state. It is a conceptually abstract representation of a range of meanings that an individual, or team of researchers, ascribes to data to explain a social phenomenon (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Selecting a core category provides the "hook" on which to hang all other categories and subcategories.

Action and Interaction

Actions arise out of social interaction. Mead (1934) identifies two forms of social interaction: nonsymbolic and symbolic. Nonsymbolic interaction is a "conversation of gestures" (Mead, 1934, p. 167), a stimulus-response process in which individuals respond directly to one another's gestures or action (Blumer, 1969). Interaction becomes symbolic when individuals interpret and define objects and their own or another's actions and act on the basis of assigned meanings. Symbolic interaction is an interpretive process that directs the actions of the one doing the interpreting and conveys to the other, or to one's self, how he or she "is to act" (Blumer, 1969, p. 66). It is a cyclical and fluid process, in which participants continually adapt or change their acts to fit the ongoing acts of one other.

The symbolic interactionism theme of action and interaction is a feature of all the assumptions, and interacting with participants, the data, and with one's self are key activities in grounded theory research. Assumption 9 refers to the review and evaluation of actions and their influence on future actions and interactions. This assumption demonstrates the processes of interaction and action within grounded theory methods of concurrent generation or collection and analysis of data, and theoretical sampling. Concurrently generating or collecting and analyzing data requires the researcher to interact with a first round of study participants and data prior to advancing to the next stage of data collection and analysis. The results of this interactive process direct what and from whom or where the researcher will theoretically sample the next phase of data collection. Data generation, collection and analysis, and theoretical sampling are iterative processes that continue throughout the research process until a theory is fully developed.

During a course of action and interaction, contingencies are likely to arise (Assumption 4). In *Continual permutations of action*, Strauss (1993) defines two types of contingencies, external and internal, that may affect a course of action. The first are external contingencies such as economic, political, organizational, and social world conditions (Assumption 15). Being aware of external conditions that may influence an individual's actions is a consideration when undertaking concurrent data generation and analysis. When comparing data through the process of constant comparative analysis, patterns in the data relating to external conditions may become apparent. The researcher is cautioned, however, not to force the data (Glaser, 1992). Strauss and Corbin (1990) and Strauss (1993) suggest using a conditional matrix to conceptualize, discover, and keep track of conditions that influence the phenomenon being studied. During the intermediate coding phase, when categories and subcategories are developed, external conditions and their properties, such as time and place, are identified and explored. The challenge for the researcher is to explore the effects and interconnectedness of external conditions on the process of interaction and not merely to rely on conditions to provide a background for understanding the context of the phenomenon (Strauss, 1993). The effects and interconnectedness of conditions are incorporated into the advanced coding and theoretical integration stages when categories and subcategories are integrated into a grounded theory that comprehensively explains the phenomenon under study. The second type of contingency is the course of action itself. Unanticipated consequences that may arise in any course of action become consequential for pursuant acts. That is, unanticipated consequences become internal conditions in the process of interaction (Strauss, 1993).

Individuals are members of multiple social worlds and subworlds and these worlds are not without problematic interactions. Assumption 16 refers to the formation of arenas in which problematic interactions between social worlds and subworlds may be discussed, debated, and or resolved (Strauss, 1993). Clarke (2003) suggests that mapping study participants' memberships within social worlds/arenas is a useful analytic exercise that "lays out all of the *collective* actors" (Clarke, 2003, p. 559), which then provides the researcher with a view of their own and participants' affiliations within the broader social context. Understanding the broader social context provides insights into macro-level interactions that may influence individuals and groups of individuals' actions and interactions. It also provides insight into participants' arenas, which as Strauss (1993) states "are central to an understanding of 'social order'" (p. 242).

Identifying the researcher's and participants' membership of social worlds and subworlds occurs, in the case of the researcher, at the very beginning of the research process, and in the case of participants during concurrent data collection and analysis. Researchers may wish to explore their membership of social worlds through the use of memo writing. Although some researchers confine memo writing to the grounded theory stages between data collection and theory construction (Charmaz, 2003; Glaser, 1978) or see it as unique to data analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), writing memos from the conceptual stages of a research study can assist researchers to identify their world-views, memberships' of social worlds, and biases. Identifying and reflecting on these elements can guide methodological decisions,

thereby influencing how essential grounded theory methods are used (Birks & Mills, 2011).

Identifying participants' membership of social worlds and subworlds is most likely to occur during concurrent data collection and analysis, through the collection of demographic data and through discussions with participants in the interview process. During intermediate coding, understanding study participants' broader social contexts may assist the researcher to conceptualize how codes previously developed in the initial coding phase may relate to each other. Understanding broader social contexts also provides contextual variants, which can be included in the storyline during advanced coding and theoretical integration (Birks & Mills, 2011; Birks, Mills, Francis, & Chapman, 2009; Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

The intrinsic link between actions and emotions is emphasized in Assumption 11. Expressed emotions and feelings are often preceded or succeeded by action or inaction; they are part of the same flow of events. Recognizing these linkages is particularly important when concurrently collecting and analyzing data. Identifying participants' emotions and feelings during data collection and analysis can provide the researcher with cues as to meanings that participants ascribe to events and situations relating to the phenomena under study (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Hoare, Buetow, Mills, and Francis (2012) explore the researcher's role in a study in which the researcher was both a participant and the researcher. The article highlights the duality of the researcher's emic, or insider, perspective and etic, or outsider, perspective. Documenting your own emotions, feelings, and associated actions, particularly in light of your emic and etic perspectives, enables you, as the researcher, to more fully explore and challenge your interpretations of the research data. This process heightens your sensitivity to the data and to the research process (Birks, Chapman, & Francis, 2008).

Self

The French anthropologist and sociologist Le Breton (2008) refers to the symbolic interactionism concept of self as "a corner stone of the conceptual edifice" (p. 62; translation by Chamberlain-Salaun).Self is central to all social acts. According to Mead (1934, 1959) self arises through social process (Blumer, 1969; Charon, 2007; Mead, 1934). Mead's concept of self differs from the accepted psychological and sociological concepts of self, dominant in the first half of the 20th century, which view self as a definitive stable entity (Blumer, 1969; Charon, 2007). Instead, Mead's self consists of the subjective "I" and the objective "me." In other words, the human being is an object to one's self and one's own actions. Self is continually constituted through reflexive processes, or self-interaction. The individual is a self-conscious being able to reflect back on itself and act toward itself as one may act toward others. The self exists for the individual insofar as the individual assumes the roles of the other (Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1959). Through taking the role of the other, one can view oneself from different perspectives and correlate these perspectives to make meaning of one's own world (Murphy, 1959). Baert (1998) refers to this as the interactionist dimension of self, whereas the symbolic dimension of self refers to the self's "dependency on the sharing of symbols, in particular language, with other selves" (1998, p. 69).

Self is implicit in all of the essential grounded theory methods. However, it is in the act of memoing and in developing theoretical sensitivity that the symbolic interactionist concept of self predominates. Similar to the stream of consciousness produced by a character in a Virginia Woolf novel, memos record the researcher's reflexive processes, the internal discussions between the "I" and "me," while providing an audit trail of "the thinking that goes into [-] decisions and actions" (Charon, 2007, p. 119). The concept of self-interaction and its influence on actions and interactions is demonstrated in Assumptions 8 and 9. As highlighted in Assumption 9, reviews and evaluations made along the action/interaction course may influence the direction or even recast the course. Recording actions, feelings, thoughts, and impressions in the form of memos preserves ideas and provides a tangible means for researchers to review the research process related to their study, including decisions made and actions taken (Birks et al., 2008; Milliken & Schreiber, 2001).

Assumption 7 draws from Mead's (1934, 1959) concept of the continually constituted reflexive self and can be linked to the essential grounded theory method of theoretical sensitivity. Theoretical sensitivity relates to a researcher's insight into themselves, others, and the area they are researching (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). It is demonstrated by a researcher's ability to recognize nuances in the data, to extract data elements relevant to a developing grounded theory, and to reconstruct meaning from data generated with participants (Birks & Mills, 2011; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006). The act of memoing supports the development of theoretical sensitivity. It provides the researcher with a mechanism for contemporaneously recording and reflecting on their thoughts, feelings, and actions, thus providing insight into themself (Assumption 9). Similar to Mead's self, which continues to develop throughout a person's life, a researcher's theoretical sensitivity continues to develop throughout the grounded theory research process. An example of acquiring theoretical sensitivity in a grounded theory study is demonstrated in Hoare, Mills, and Francis (2012).

Perspectives

A grounded theory research process is not an objective process. Instead it is an interwoven process that integrates the phenomenon under study, with the study participants' and the researchers' perspectives and interpretations. An individual's perspective and how they interpret the world, an event or a situation, influences how they act (Blumer, 1969)

Table 3. Cross Referencing of Essential Grounded Theory Methods and Assumptions.

Essential grounded theory method	Assumption (refer Table 1)
Advanced coding	4, 15, 16
Concurrent data generation or collection and analysis	1, 4, 6, 9, 11, 13, 15, 16
Constant comparative analysis	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 15
Initial coding and categorization of data	2, 3, 6, 13
Intermediate coding	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 13, 15, 16
Selecting a core category	3, 14
Theoretical integration	4, 15, 16
Theoretical sampling	4, 9, 15
Theoretical saturation	NA
Theoretical sensitivity	5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 13
Writing memos	5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 16

and this is highlighted in Assumptions 5, 6, 13, and 15. In a grounded theory study, the researcher negotiates divergent perspectives within the data to produce an integrated theory. Conscious awareness of multiple perspectives and how perspectives influence participants' and the researcher's own actions and interactions enable the researcher to build variation into data analysis, particularly during intermediate and advanced coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Understanding how and why various data elements are interrelated produces a multi-factorial theory grounded in the data (Silverman, 2011). During the concurrent data generation and analysis and comparative analysis phases, perspectives must be negotiated (Assumption 6) for action and interaction to proceed. It is at the intersection of actions (Assumption 13), between generating and analyzing data, that difference among perspectives is highlighted. During initial coding and categorization of data, the researchers negotiate their own perspective of the substantive area of inquiry with that of the participant's to make meaning of raw data and assign codes. Over time and through the process of intermediate coding, in which codes are grouped together into categories, the researcher's interpretations of divergent perspectives within the data may change. Mead (1959) refers to the temporal aspect of perspectives and interpretations in Assumption 5. Constant comparative analysis of codes to codes, codes to categories, and categories to categories facilitates and indeed impels the researcher to negotiate and renegotiate perspectives to advance the developing grounded theory.

Memoing provides a means through which the researcher can make visible their internal dialogue regarding the negotiation and integration of their own and participants' perspectives (Milliken & Schreiber, 2001) and heightens the researcher's theoretical sensitivity (Assumptions 5, 6, and 13). As previously highlighted, memoing also creates a record of decision making. This may prove particularly valuable when actions within the research process are perceived, by others, as irrational (Assumption 10).

Assumption 15 draws particular attention to the influence of social worlds and subworlds membership to individuals' perspectives and therefore their interactions with others. As Strauss (Strauss, 1993) points out, memberships are often complex, overlapping, contrasting, and conflicting (Assumption 15) and therefore it is "impossible to analyze [interaction] in overly simple terms" (Strauss, 1993, p. 181). Exploring participants' and the researcher's own membership of various worlds, within the context of the phenomenon under study, may provide information about how and why membership influences individuals' perspectives and actions. This can be a valuable aspect to consider within the data when thinking about where, what, and from whom to theoretically sample subsequent data. Individual's membership of social worlds and subworlds may also provide conditional contexts when developing properties and dimensions of categories and linking categories together during intermediate coding (Birks & Mills, 2011; Strauss, 1993). However, the process of symbolic interaction cannot be simplified to a dependence on conditions such as social world memberships. Although social worlds and subworlds influence perspectives and actions, they are antecedent conditions and their value is in assisting the researcher to understand individuals' interpretive processes; they do not constitute the process itself (Blumer, 1969). The process of symbolic interaction occurs in the present when actions are interpreted and direct, adapt, and change ongoing acts.

Assumption 12

The authors agree with Milliken and Schreiber's (2012) contention that a conscious awareness and an appreciation of the influence of symbolic interactionism in grounded theory research will enhance the researcher's capacity to "develop a useful, deep, rich, explanatory theory" (p. 693). Corbin and Strauss' (2008) inclusion of Assumption 12 in their original list of assumptions highlights the complex nature of understanding human action and interaction and suggests that grounded theory, with its inherently symbolic interactionist underpinnings, is an appropriate methodology for understanding and interpreting human conduct.

Cross Referencing the Assumptions and Essential Grounded Theory Methods

Corbin and Strauss' (2008) assumptions summarize their interpretation of the works of Mead, Blumer, Dewey, and Strauss himself. This article in turn represents our interpretation of the links between Corbin and Strauss' assumptions and essential grounded theory methods and Table 3 provides a cross-referencing overview of linkages between these two elements. This cross-referencing is, however, by no means definitive and is open to alternative interpretations.

Theoretical Saturation

Theoretical saturation, which Birks and Mills include in their list of "essential grounded theory method[s]" (2011, p. 9), is the point at which categories and subcategories are well developed, continued data collection and analysis provide no significant new insights, and previously identified gaps in the theory are filled (Bloor & Wood, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Theoretical saturation is not cross-referenced in Table 3, as the authors do not consider that the method aligns with any of the 16 assumptions.

Conclusion

It is important for researchers to establish the philosophical foundations of their research study from the outset. In this article, the authors unpack the 16 assumptions presented in Corbin and Strauss' (2008) "lost chapter." Unpacking the assumptions highlights the inherent symbolic interactionist themes of meaning, action and interaction, self and perspectives, and explicates their links with essential grounded theory methods. These linkages are our interpretation and are not intended as a prescription for undertaking a research study using Corbin and Strauss' version of grounded theory methodology. Rather, providing and explicating these linkages attempts to clarify what it means to conduct a research study using an evolved grounded theory approach. Awareness and an appreciation of the influence of symbolic interactionism to grounded theory methodology and methods will, we hope, ease the researcher's journey across the methodology bridge.

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