

# Grounded Theory

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## Biography

**Cathy Urquhart** is Professor of Digital and Sustainable Enterprise at Manchester Metropolitan University Business School. She is a past Senior Editor for *MIS Quarterly* and an Associate Editor for *Information Technology and Development*. Honours and awards include; Best paper award, Pan Pacific Conference on Information Systems (PACIS), AIS Volunteer Spotlight for Outstanding Contributions to Membership Services in 2008, *MIS Quarterly* Most Developmental Associate Editor in 2007, Outstanding Paper Award in the journal *Information Technology and People* in 2000. Her current research interests span Green IT, IT in developing countries, and social media. She has a strong interest in the use of grounded theory in business research, and in 2013 published her book *Grounded Theory for Qualitative Research* with Sage. Her website can be found here <http://www2.business.mmu.ac.uk/staff/staffdetails.php?uref=430>

## Abstract

*This entry describes the basic aspects of Grounded Theory Method (GTM), and covers four key points. First, the goal of GTM is to generate a theory. Often the coding procedures are leveraged independently by researchers for data analysis, not to generate a theory. Second, the use of GTM implies a non-committal literature review, where the emerging theory determines the relevance of that literature review. There is an absolute obligation on the grounded theorist to engage their emergent theory with the existing literature for theory building purposes. Third, overlapping data collection and analysis is recommended, but not essential, because it helps build the theory using theoretical sampling and 'slices of data' to build out and densify the emerging theory. Fourth, the history of GTM involves a major intellectual dispute between Glaser and Strauss in 1990, which resulted in a split between the founders. Understanding this split helps us understand grounded theory.*

## Introduction

It is perhaps best to start with how the creators of grounded theory defined their method, in their seminal book which launched grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). They defined it as “*the discovery of theory from data – systematically obtained and analysed in social research*”. The key point here is that the theory produced is *grounded* in the data. In other words, the focus is on what the data has to tell us, as opposed to fitting a theory to the data. Established theories come later, as there is a distinct obligation in grounded theory to then engage the emergent theory with current literature. The emphasis on theory in the original book is in sharp contrast to the use of grounded theory method today, where it is known primarily as a method of qualitative data analysis.

GTM started with a revolutionary book in revolutionary times. In 1967, Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss published a book entitled “*The Discovery of Grounded Theory*”. This book outlined a research methodology that aimed at systematically deriving theories of human behaviour from empirical data (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). It was a reaction against the use of ‘armchair’ functionalist theories in sociology. The book gives a strong call to generate and ground theory, and to refocus on qualitative data rather than quantitative verification of theories. Many people find it difficult to read the original

1967 book - Melia (1996) says it has some ‘near mystical passages’, and that is true. However, it remains a classic, and a touchstone for those interested in grounded theory and its intellectual wellspring. No elaborate procedures are given in the book, and there is a focus on what theory actually is, as well as the means of developing it.

Several more books and articles by the co-originators followed, which developed, and later debated, the method. Glaser published *Theoretical Sensitivity* in 1978 (Glaser, 1978), which introduced several key concepts that are useful in grounded theory. In 1990, the *Basics of Qualitative Research* was published by Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, Glaser, 1978). A long and bitter dispute erupted between Glaser and Strauss, and what was at stake was nothing less than the identity of grounded theory. It marked the start of what are effectively two strands of grounded theory, which endure to this day. Later in this entry, we’ll return to this important intellectual dispute, because understanding the dispute helps clarify some key issues with grounded theory and its application.

Following the publication of the seminal work in 1967, grounded theory spread fairly quickly, as a qualitative research method within the social sciences and many other fields. By the mid-1990’s the methodological procedures of grounded theory had permeated qualitative research to such an extent that Miles and Huberman (1994) labelled it a “common feature’ [of qualitative] analytic methods.

## **Key Characteristics of Grounded Theory**

These are the key features of GTM as explained by Cresswell (1998) and Dey (1999).

1. The aim of grounded theory is to generate or discover a theory.
2. The researcher has to *set aside theoretical ideas* in order to let the substantive theory emerge.
3. Theory focuses on how individuals interact with the phenomena under study.
4. Theory asserts a plausible relationship between concepts and sets of concepts
5. Theory is derived from data acquired from fieldwork interviews, observation, and documents.
6. Data analysis is systematic and begins as soon as data is available.
7. Data analysis proceeds through identifying categories and connecting them.
8. Further data collection (or sampling) is based on emerging concepts.
9. These concepts are developed through *constant comparison* with additional data.
10. Data collection can stop when no new conceptualisations emerge.
11. Data analysis proceeds from open coding (identifying categories, properties and dimensions) through selective coding (clustering around categories), to theoretical coding.
12. The resulting theory can be reported in a narrative framework or a set of propositions.

## **GTM and Literature**

A key feature of GTM is that, as stated above - *the researcher has to set aside theoretical ideas in order to let the substantive theory emerge*. Of all the features of GTM, this is the one that causes most difficulty for new users, and indeed has attained mythic status as a barrier to its use (Urquhart and Fernandez 2013). The idea here is that the literature about whatever is being researched is referenced *after*, not before, you build the theory. Glaser and Strauss recommended this because they wanted the data to speak to the researcher, rather than the researcher forcing preconceived theories on the data. This is one of the reasons why GTM was revolutionary in its time, and still is tremendously relevant today. The idea that we should seek to see what the data indicates, rather than shoe horning that data into a theory that already exists, means that there is more chance of discovering something new. It also seems to have more integrity as a research process, because it does not seek to impose preconceived ideas on the world.

Of course, no one enters the research process as a blank slate – most researchers will have read something about the phenomena. The idea that the GTM researcher is a ‘blank slate’, who launches into data collection without first looking at the literature, is a particularly pervasive misconception. This despite the fact that in a footnote in the original 1967 book, Glaser and Strauss (1967, p. 3) state that the researcher does not approach reality as a *tabula rasa* (blank slate) but must have a perspective that will help him or her abstract significant categories from the data. Dey (1993) speaks of the difference between an ‘open mind and an empty head’. Urquhart and Fernandez (2013) suggest that the founders of GTM inclined to the former position, and that we are all capable of keeping an open mind, and putting the theories we know about to one side, when analysing the data.

In developing any type of theory, the researcher needs to be capable of *theoretical sensitivity*, a concept pioneered by Glaser in his 1978 book. The idea of theoretical sensitivity is based on being steeped in the field of investigation and associated general ideas (Glaser, 1978) so that a researcher understands the context in which the theory is developed. The need to be theoretically sensitive is explained as the need to understand theories and how they are constructed, *without then imposing those concepts* on the emergent theory. Glaser also introduced the notion of ‘coding families’ to help with relating concepts in the data. The concept of theoretical sensitivity is key – how can we build theories ourselves, unless we understand what a theory is?

According to Glaser (1992), the dictum in GTM is that there is no need to review the literature in the substantive area under study, first stated in the Glaser and Strauss book of 1967, “is brought about by the concern that literature might contaminate, stifle or contaminate or otherwise impede the researchers effort to generate categories..” (Glaser, 1992). Strauss (1987) says that the advice about delaying the scrutiny of related literature applies less so to experienced researchers, as they are more practiced at subjecting theoretical statements to comparative analysis.

Like most myths, the idea of the researcher as blank slate, has at its base a kernel of truth. However, it is more accurate to say that GTM research does not *start* with a theory to prove or disprove. It is more helpful to think of the literature review *being delayed*, rather than not happening at all. In fact the grounded theorist has a strong obligation, once the theory has emerged, to engage the emergent theory with the existing literature. Without that engagement with the literature, it is difficult to see how a theory generated using GTM relates to other theory building efforts in that particular field.

Urquhart and Fernandez (2013) suggest that a non-committal, preliminary literature review can be conducted within the GTM approach. This will probably include what theory exists in the area, and how other people may have addressed aspects of a research problem, but, crucially, does not then impose a framework on future data collection. Even more importantly, this preliminary literature review is conducted *on the understanding that it is the generated theory that will determine the relevance of the literature*. The literature review is revisited, and extended, once the theory has been generated from the data, and is then used to help the scholar engage their theory with the literature.

### **GTM and Theory**

The key features of GTM with regard to theory, and the theory it builds, are summarised in the following statements: *The aim of grounded theory is to generate or discover a theory; Theory asserts a plausible relationship between concepts and sets of concepts; and The resulting theory can be reported in a narrative framework or a set of propositions*

So, we can see from the above statements that grounded theory method is all about theory generation, even though its procedures are often more commonly used to analyse data than to generate theories. In *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), which started grounded theory, the authors state that the aim of the book is to generate theory based on data, rather than to verify ‘grand theory’. They discussed the idea of qualitative versus quantitative data, and concluded that both types of data were needed, for both generation and verification of theories. So, the very first book on GTM

began by putting forward two major points – the need to generate new theories, rather than to force data into a few existing theories, and the idea that qualitative data and quantitative data are *both* useful.

It is worth, at this point, discussing what a theory actually is. We all formulate theories in everyday life – for instance, we might say, based on our experience, that people who are extremely good at IT tend to be more introverted. This working theory is based on our experience of the world, and may not be true. It is after all an individual perception, so not really grounded in the true sense of the word. However, it has the key components of a theory – some constructs – ‘good at maths’ ‘introversion’, and a *relationship* between the two.

Shirley Gregor in her 2006 paper on theory (Gregor, 2006 ) gives some useful building blocks of a theory. Table 1 considers how these theory components appear in GTM.

<b>Theory Component</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>In Grounded Theory</b>
Means of representation	The theory must be represented physically in some way: in words, mathematical terms, symbolic logic, diagrams, tables or graphically.	Theories in GTM are often represented by a narrative framework, diagrams or statements of hypotheses
Constructs	These refer to the phenomena of interest in the theory (Dubin’s “units”). All of the primary constructs in the theory should be well defined. Many different types of constructs are possible: for example, observational (real) terms, theoretical (nominal) terms and collective terms.	In GTM, the aim is to get to one to two core categories or constructs. This makes for a more coherent theory. All the constructs in a grounded theory, are, well, grounded, in observations. They come from the data.
Statements of relationship	These show relationships among the constructs. Again, these may be of many types: associative, compositional, unidirectional, bidirectional, conditional, or causal. The nature of the relationship specified depends on the purpose of the theory. Very simple relationships can be specified: for example, “x is a member of class A.”	In GTM, because the theory is often based on qualitative data, relationships are not often causal. There is a lot of guidance in GTM about the sort of relationships that are possible between constructs, in the form of coding families (Glaser, 1978) and a coding paradigm (Corbin and Strauss, 2008)
Scope	The scope is specified by the degree of generality of the statements of relationships (signified by modal qualifiers such as “some,” “many,” “all,” and “never”) and statements of boundaries showing the limits of generalizations.	GTM aims to produce substantive theories which pertain to the area being investigated. The scope and generalisability can be extended by theoretical sampling (Glaser, 1978). The substantive theory can and should be engaged with existing theories – in grounded theory, existing theories can also be seen as slices of data which help build the theory.

**Table 1 Components of a Theory in GTM adapted from Gregor (2006)**

The theory discovered or generated by use of GTM is often represented by a narrative framework, a diagram or a set of hypotheses. In all three cases of representation, it is important that there be a relationship between the constructs, because this is a cornerstone of all theories. So there must be a plausible relationship between the constructs – in GTM, this is not usually causal, because in the majority of cases, GTM uses qualitative data. So the relationships between constructs tend to be more a case of ‘A is a part of B’, or ‘A influences B’. There is also extensive guidance in GTM as to how to formulate these relationships between constructs, in Glaser (1978) and Corbin and Strauss (2008). The theorising procedures of GTM are also the most controversial aspects of GTM, and were the major cause of a split between Glaser and Strauss in 1990. This split, and its consequences, will be discussed later in the entry. The important thing to note here is that GTM is a method of generating theories, and theories contain relationships between constructs.

### **GTM and Fieldwork**

Some key features from the list that relate to using GTM in the field are as follows: *Theory focuses on how individuals interact with the phenomena under study; Theory is derived from data acquired from fieldwork interviews, observation, and documents; and Further data collection (or sampling) is based on emerging concepts.*

While it is true to say that many GTM studies do focus on how individuals might interact with the phenomena under study – for instance, how a work group might react to a new information system – the use of GTM is quite flexible and varied. In practice, it can be applied to all sorts of phenomena, some examples from my own field include analysing citation information, to the design of software. GTM is said to be perfect for studying micro phenomena, because of its close examination of the data. However, it is worth considering that GTM can be applied to larger units as well, such as firms. This is consistent with the idea of theory building, where larger theories are built from smaller, substantive ones.

GTM builds its theory from data acquired from fieldwork interviews, observation and documents. All these data sources are qualitative, and the use of qualitative data fits well with the inductive process that GTM is. When we say that GTM is inductive, what we mean is that GTM reasons from the ground up – from specific instances in the data, to more general conclusions.

A key feature of use of GTM in the field is that of *overlapping data collection and analysis*. This means that the researcher will be analysing the data in the field, and using the emerging concepts from that analysis to decide where to sample from next. This process is known as *theoretical sampling*, because the emerging theory directs future data collection. So, for instance, if a particular concept, such the effects of job losses on remaining staff, arises from an interview, the researcher could decide to interview more individuals who have witnessed such job losses. Theoretical sampling does two things – first, it enables the researcher to build up justification for concepts in the theory by finding more instances of a particular concept. Secondly, it also allows the researcher to follow an emerging storyline suggested by the data.

Theoretical sampling may not always be practical, depending on the access that the researcher is allowed, of course. Sometimes there may be only a set amount of interviews permitted in an organisation, for instance. So, one good idea for a grounded theory study is to allow for more than one phase of data collection, as Charmaz (2006, 2014) suggests.

The researcher accesses ‘*slices of data*’ (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) to support theoretical sampling -

because different kinds of data give the researcher different views from which to understand a category or to develop its properties. This in fact a liberating and interesting idea which is not always understood – the idea that we should be constantly sampling slices of data from the phenomena, in order to build the theory out and upwards. The more diverse those slices are, the better. So one slice of data could be field interviews, another could be surveys. Although the 1967 book did focus on qualitative data, quantitative data was also seen as a legitimate source of slices of data. Glaser and Strauss (1967) even go as far as to suggest that a slice of data could be anecdotal, or, for instance, using a national meat consumption report for a particular professional group. When the theory is more fully formed, a conceivable slice of data might even be another theory – but the researcher has to be very aware of the dangers of forcing a category down a particular road, lest we compromise that very precious quality of grounded theory – emergence.

### **GTM and Data Analysis**

The key features of GTM associated with data analysis are as follows: *Data analysis is systematic and begins as soon as data is available; Data analysis proceeds through identifying categories and connecting them; These concepts are developed through constant comparison with additional data; Data collection can stop when no new conceptualisations emerge; and Data analysis proceeds from open coding (identifying categories, properties and dimensions) through selective coding (clustering around categories), to theoretical coding.*

The features above, all devoted to data analysis, give a clue as to why GTM is most frequently leveraged for data analysis, even if a theory is not subsequently built. The procedures from all strands of grounded theory are without exception systematic, and this is a very attractive characteristic of GTM for the researcher. GTM has the advantage of an excellent chain of evidence because of these procedures – the researcher can point to the underpinning data for concepts they have built, with consummate ease. These coding procedures are well known and described in the literature, and as such they are seen as a very legitimate way of analysing qualitative data.

In a systematic fashion, often analysing the data line by line, categories are attached to the data. This is ‘coding’. A category is generally a low level concept, attached to a particular piece of data. So, for instance, we might look at a line of text and decide that, in this line, the person is trying to justify a decision. So, we might call this category *justification*, and find more instances of this in other parts of the data we are analysing.

The important thing to note here is that the *connecting* of those categories is as important as naming those categories – because, as indicated in **Error! Reference source not found.**, an important component of a theory is building of relationships between constructs. So, it’s helpful to see the data analysis in grounded theory – which concentrates on naming categories and connecting them – as laying the foundation for constructs and relationships. As previously stated, further data collection is ideally based on the emerging concepts from the analysis.

Constant comparison is the process of constantly comparing instances of data labelled as a particular category, with other instances of data in the same category, and is often described as the heart of GTM. It is no more than a simple rule of thumb, but it is also a way of thinking – to ask yourself ‘how does this instance I have labelled x, compare to all the other instances of x I have labelled?’. It really does work as a method of analysis, because it encourages the researcher to consider closely what they are analysing.

It is actually quite obvious, in a grounded theory study, when to stop data collection – the researcher finds that no new concepts are emerging from the data, that all that is happening is more instances of existing categories. In this way, ‘theoretical saturation’ is reached, the particular category is seen to be ‘saturated’, ie full!

The stages recommended by Glaser (1978), are open coding, selective coding, and theoretical coding. *Open coding* means just that – going through the data, line by line or paragraph by paragraph, and attaching codes to the data, and very much staying open – seeing what the data might be telling you. Second, those codes are grouped into larger categories in the stage of *selective coding*, on the basis of the key categories that are shaping the theory. Third, in *theoretical coding*, those categories are related to each other, and the relationships between them considered. Attentive readers will spot that this is the act of building theory – finding constructs, and connecting them, and considering the nature of the relationships between constructs.

Different versions of grounded theory use slightly different stages of coding, and these are included in the table below for reference. The table clearly illustrates how coding procedures diverged between the Straussian and Glaserian strand of grounded theory, and this will be discussed in the next section.

Book	Suggested coding procedure
(Glaser and Strauss, 1967)	Comparing incidents applicable to each category (includes open coding ) integrating categories and their properties (selective coding and theoretical coding) delimiting the theory (selective coding and theoretical coding),writing the theory
(Glaser, 1978)	Open coding, selective coding, theoretical coding
(Strauss, 1987)	Open coding, axial coding, selective coding
(Strauss and Corbin, 1990)	Open coding, axial coding, selective coding
(Glaser, 1992)	Open coding, selective coding, theoretical coding
(Strauss and Corbin, 1998)	Open coding, axial coding, selective coding
(Charmaz, 2006)	Initial coding, focused coding, axial coding, theoretical coding
(Corbin and Strauss, 2008)	Open coding, axial coding and theoretical coding as distinct stages no longer appear, though open coding and axial coding appear as terms in one chapter. The emphasis is on a broader set of tools named Context, Process and Theoretical Integration. Two coding paradigms are used as a foundation for Context.

**Table 2 Different grounded theory coding procedures**

### The two strands of grounded theory

Any user of GTM needs to be aware of the fact that GTM has evolved into two distinct strands, the Glaserian and Straussian, as a result of a cataclysmic dispute between the co founders in 1990. This dispute went to the core of what GTM actually comprises, and what it does, so understanding the dispute is also key to understanding what GTM actually is. The dispute was triggered by the publication of Strauss and Corbin’s book in 1990 (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). This book was written in response to their students’ requests for a ‘how to’ manual of grounded theory, and contains clear guidelines and procedures. It was at this point, perhaps, that the founders of grounded theory realised that their views of what grounded theory actually was might be different.

*‘students of Glaser and Strauss in the 1960s and 1970s knew that the two had quite different modus operandi, but Glaser only found out when Strauss and Corbin’s Basics of Qualitative Research came out in 1990’* ((Stern, 1994), p.212, as quoted by Melia (1996))

Glaser reacted badly to the book, and requested it to be pulled from publication, and when it was not wrote a correctional rejoinder “Emergence vs. Forcing: Basics of Grounded Theory Analysis” (Glaser, 1992). For him, the issue was nothing less than the heart and soul of grounded theory: he felt that the 1990 book was far too restrictive in the way it presented grounded theory. He felt strongly that to follow the procedures outlined in the book would strangle any emergent conceptualisations, and instead force the concepts into a preconceived mould. He summed up his critique as follows:

*“If you torture the data long enough, it will give up! . . . [In Strauss & Corbin’s method] the data is not allowed to speak for itself as in grounded theory, and to be heard from, infrequently it has to scream. Forcing by preconception constantly derails it from relevance” (Glaser, 1992), p.123*

Glaser disagreed on two fundamental issues. First, Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggested breaking down the coding process into four prescriptive steps (open, axial, selective, and ‘coding for process’), whereas Glaser suggested just three: open, selective and theoretical coding, at incremental levels of abstraction.

Second, Glaser objected to the use of a coding paradigm and the ‘conditional matrix’, which are designed to provide ready-made tools to assist with the conceptualisation process. Glaser felt that to ‘force’ coding through one paradigm and/or down one conditional path ignored the emergent nature of grounded theory (Glaser, 1992). This makes sense, given that Glaser had suggested 18 coding families (or coding paradigms) in his 1978 book.

This is a disagreement that does cut to the heart of grounded theory. The 1990 book represented a substantial departure from what had gone before, in its insistence that only one coding paradigm be used. In fact, the 1990 book says ‘*“Unless you make use of this model, your grounded theory analysis will lack density and precision...”*’ (p. 99). The mandatory nature of the paradigm, in retrospect, was quite extraordinary. To claim that there could be only one way of relating categories, and that this was essential, seems in the cold light of day to have been an aberration in the history of grounded theory, and one that was not necessarily heeded by researchers.

Interestingly, this advice was modified as early as 1998. Strauss and Corbin (1998) say in their 1998 book *“In actuality, the paradigm is nothing more than a perspective taken toward data, another analytic stance that helps to systematically gather and order data in such a way that structure and process are integrated”*. In my own discipline, that of information systems, we could identify only 7 papers out of 96 that applied the paradigm (Seidel and Urquhart, 2013). Of the small percentage of papers using the paradigm, we could see that causal relationships between categories were more frequently identified in those cases, and that a substantive theory was more likely to be built as a result.

Arguably, the Glaserian version is much more flexible in the procedures it adopts, but each researcher needs to make up their own mind. They also have the option of adopting Charmaz’s (2006, 2014) procedures of open, selective, theoretical *and* axial coding. Charmaz (2006, 2014), effectively suggests axial coding as an extra option for the researcher to consider.

In the 2008 edition, (Corbin and Strauss, 2008), the role of the paradigm is further weakened in favour of emphasising a broader set of tools, named Context, Process, and Theoretical Integration. The coding paradigm of 1990 is presented as only one of a number of ‘analytic strategies’ or ‘tools.’ They write that: *“One tool for helping the researcher to identify contextual factors and then to link them with process is what we call the paradigm. The paradigm is a perspective, a set of questions that can*

be applied to data to help the analyst draw out the contextual factors and identify relationships between context and process” (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). Throughout the book, the author is careful to highlight that researchers must choose among a variety of analytical tools and “make use of procedures in ways that best suit him or her”

A strong recommendation then, is to read more widely than the 1990 book about grounded theory, which is still widely used and available in libraries. Possibly because Glaser has self-published his books since 1978, his books are less available. A reading of the original 1967 book (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), and two of the most important Glaser books (Glaser, 1978, 1992), reveal how complex the intellectual tradition of grounded theory is. If only the 1990 book is used by a researcher, the new user runs the danger of encountering peer reviewers for whom the type of grounded theory being used – Glaserian or Straussian – really matters. It really does matter, because understanding the dispute helps us to understand the core principles of grounded theory.

Table 2 below gives an overview of the key books in grounded theory, authored by the founders of grounded theory.

Book	Description
Glaser, B.G., and Strauss, A.L. (1967) <i>The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research.</i>	Essential reading, despite it not being the most accessible of books. Melia (1996) talks of its ‘near mystical passages’. As it was the first book on grounded theory, the principles on which grounded theory is based are obvious, and the book is notable for its concern about building theory, as opposed to the mechanics of coding. It is also very helpful to see the idea of grounded theory in its historical and disciplinary context.
Glaser, B.G. (1978) <i>Theoretical Sensitivity.</i>	The first book in the grounded theory canon that gives a lot more detail on how the process of coding might proceed. Introduces the idea of theoretical sensitivity, an important idea about being aware of how theories are built. This book also discusses spacing, sampling, coding, memos, sorting and writing, and provides a very important discussion on basic social processes. It introduces 18 ‘coding families’ to assist with theoretical coding.
Strauss, A.L. (1987) <i>Qualitative analysis for social scientists.</i>	Provides advice for the first time user of GTM, especially around relating efforts to the technical literature, and the process of coding in a group. This book also marks the first divergence between the two strands of grounded theory as only one coding paradigm is proposed in this book.
Strauss, A.L. and Corbin J.M. (1990). <i>Basics of qualitative research: grounded theory procedures and techniques.</i>	Probably the most widely read book on GTM, but also the most controversial. Gives very clear procedures for GTM, but at the same time offers a narrower view of the method.
Glaser, B. G. (1992). <i>Emergence vs. Forcing: Basics of Grounded Theory Analysis.</i>	This book is the response to Strauss and Corbin (1990). Helps to understand the divergent views held by Glaser and by Strauss and Corbin. It discusses in detail the significance of the issue of ‘forcing’ in GTM.
Glaser, B.G. (1998) <i>Doing Grounded Theory: Issues and Discussions.</i>	Covers practical areas of doing GTM research, such as: motivation, reading of the literature, forcing, generating concepts, and more on theoretical sampling, theoretical coding, memoing, sorting and writing.
Glaser, B.G (2005) <i>Grounded Theory Perspective III: Theoretical Coding</i>	This book breaks new ground in thinking about theoretical coding and the process of relating categories. It introduces 23 new ‘coding families’ to complement the original 18 coding families in the 1978 book

**Table 3 Seminal Books on Grounded Theory Method (GTM) by the founders of GTM**

Recommended books to start with are Glaser (1978) and Strauss (1987), which give a good sense of the two strands of grounded theory. It is also worth engaging with the seminal 1967 book, despite the fact that some people find it difficult to read. It is in fact the definitive, seminal, text, and gives a good sense of the original intent and form of grounded theory method. It also helps by giving a foundation from which to understand how grounded theory method has evolved since 1967. Glaser’s 2005 book (Glaser, 2005), is also worth reading, simply because of the joy and intellectual energy with which Glaser explores theory building and theoretical codes.

## Summary

This entry has described the basic aspects of Grounded Theory Method (GTM), and the researcher is recommended to try out the coding procedures for themselves, and to seek out examples of grounded theory application that have been successful. A number of key points have been covered:

- The goal of GTM is to generate a theory. Often the coding procedures are leveraged independently by researchers for data analysis, not to generate a theory. This is because the coding procedures are both systematic and well established.
- The use of GTM implies a non-committal literature review, where the emerging theory determines the relevance of that literature review. This means maintaining an 'open mind' as opposed to an 'empty head' (Dey 1993). There is an absolute obligation on the grounded theorist to engage their emergent theory with the existing literature for theory building purposes.
- Overlapping data collection and analysis is recommended, but not essential because it helps build the theory using theoretical sampling and 'slices of data' to build out and densify the emerging theory.
- The history of GTM involves a major intellectual dispute between Glaser and Strauss in 1990, which resulted in a split between the founders. Understanding this split helps us understand grounded theory. Charmaz (2006, 2014) represents an alternative to these strands, constructivist grounded theory.

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