



# Phenomenology and Grounded Theory

# Intended Learning outcomes

**After this lecture, you will be able to:**

1. Understand the meaning of phenomenological research.
2. Describe the key tenets of phenomenological research.
3. Formulate a research questions that suit phenomenological research.
4. Identify strengths and weaknesses of phenomenological approach.
5. Understand the meaning of Grounded Theory (GT) research.
6. Describe the key element, uses and steps of GT research.



*Human beings, who are almost unique in having the ability to learn from the experience of others, are also remarkable for their apparent disinclination to do so.—  
Douglas Adams*



# Phenomenology “The lived Experience”

- The term phenomenology comes from Greek *Phainomenon* (*appearance, manifestation*) and *logos* (*the science of*).
- Phenomenology refers to reasoned inquiry into the ***nature of appearances***.
- Phenomenology can be defined as an approach to research that seeks to describe the **essence** of a phenomenon by exploring it from the perspective of those who have experienced it
- **Edmund Husserl** (1859- 1938), the German Mathematician, is the founder of the phenomenological movement (the father of phenomenology).
- **Moustakas** is a major name in phenomenology today.





# Phenomenology “The Lived Experience” (continued)

- At the core of phenomenology lies the attempt to describe and understand phenomena as experienced by individuals who have lived through them.

# Goal of Phenomenology

- To describe the meaning of experience—both in terms of *What* was experienced? and *How* it was experienced?
- By examining an experience as it is subjectively lived, new meanings and appreciations can be developed to inform, or even re-orient, how we understand that experience.
- The goal is to produce a brief statement that succinctly evokes the phenomenon



# Phenomenology (another definition)

- According to Creswell (2007), a phenomenological study describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon.

# Phenomenology (another definition)

- Phenomenology is the search for the “**essence of things**” that cannot be revealed by ordinary observation (Sanders, 1982; Moustakas, 1994).

# Meaning of essence

- An essence could be understood as a structure of essential meanings that explicates a phenomenon of interest.
- The essence or structure is what makes the phenomenon to be that very phenomenon.

# Assumptions

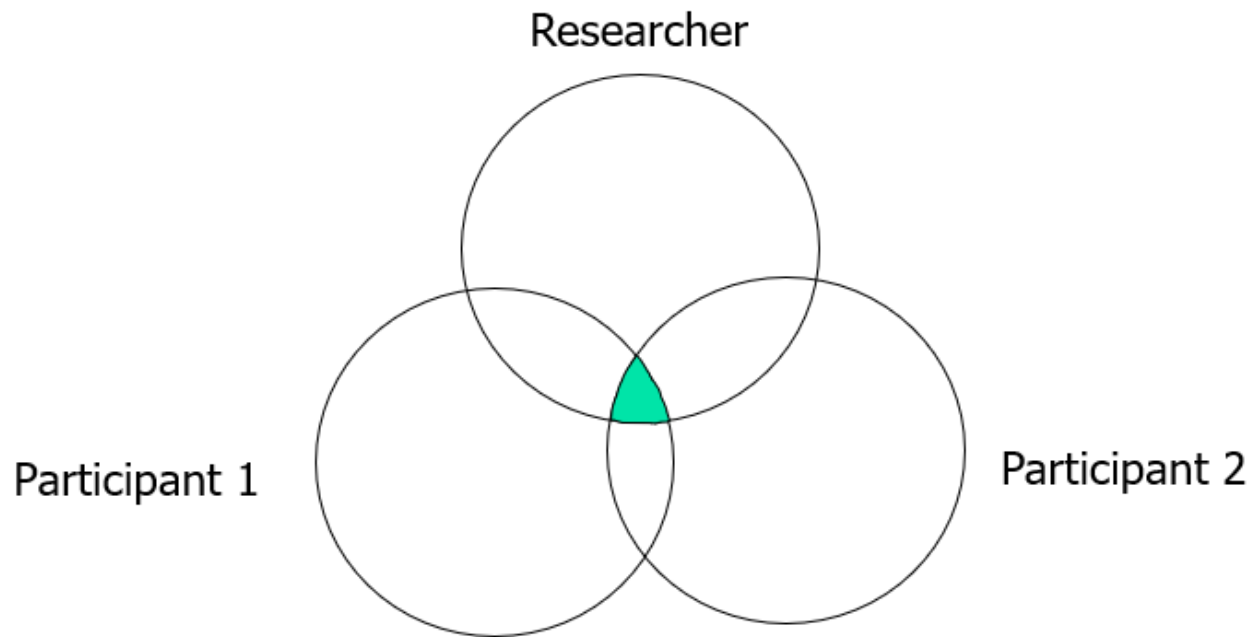
- Phenomenologists assume that human experience is inherently subjective
- Within these subjective experiences are essential structures that characterize the experience
- The way to gain access to these structures is through description of experiences



# Research Questions

- What is the essential meaning of an experience?
- What does this experience mean?
- How does the lived world present itself to the participant or to me as the researcher?
- For example:
  - What is the essence of being a mother?
  - What is the essential structure of a caring nurse-client interaction ?
  - What is it like to be bored?
  - What is it like to experience a heart transplant?
  - What is it like to experience empathy?
  - What is it like to experience pain?





- Researcher's own experiences with a phenomenon are included as a part of the study.
- Since the essence is universal, meaning must be true for researcher as well as participants



# Fields often use phenomenology

- Social sciences
- Health sciences
- Psychology
- Nursing
- Education
- Phenomenology is well-suited to studying research questions involving affective, emotional, and often intense human experience.

# Two very different branches

## 1. Descriptive (Transcendental) phenomenology

- Focus less on researchers interpretation and more on describing experiences of participants.

## 2. Interpretive (Hermeneutical) phenomenology

- Reflecting on lived experiences with interpretation by the researcher.

# Descriptive Phenomenology

- The goal of the researcher is to achieve *Transcendental Subjectivity*.
- Transcendental subjectivity means that the impact of the researcher on the inquiry is constantly assessed and biases and preconceptions neutralized, so that they do not influence the object of study.
- The process is transcendental because the researcher sees the phenomenon newly, as for the first time.

*More simply: It is an attempt to approach a lived experience with a sense of “newness” to elicit rich and descriptive data.*

- The researcher is to stand apart, and not allow his/her subjectivity to inform the descriptions offered by the participants.
- The concept of bracketing: Researchers setting aside their pre-understanding and acting non-judgementally (*Epoche*)



# Bracketing

- A methodological device of phenomenological inquiry that requires deliberate putting aside one's own belief about the phenomenon under investigation or what one already knows about the subject prior to and throughout the phenomenological investigation to better examine the consciousness itself.
  - For instance, a study could be designed to have multiple researchers triangulate their reductions (researchers triangulation) to confirm appropriate bracketing was maintained.
  - Alternatively, a study could involve validation of data via member checking (participant validation) to ensure that the identified essences resonated with the participants' experiences



# Interpretive (hermeneutic) Phenomenology

- The word hermeneutic is derived from the name Hermes, a Greek god who was responsible for making clear, or interpreting, messages between gods (Thompson, 1990).
- In interpretive phenomenological approach, it is acknowledged that pre-understanding cannot be eliminated or “bracketed”.
- Researchers can interpret a phenomenon only through their own experiences. The present can be understood only through the past, and the past can be understood only through the present.



# Interpretive Phenomenology (continued)

- Another term, *being-in-the-world*, was used by Heidegger to emphasize that humans cannot abstract themselves from the world. Therefore, it is not the pure content of human subjectivity that is the focus of a hermeneutic inquiry but, rather, what the individual's narratives imply about what he or she experiences every day.





Objectivism

Interpretivism



Descriptive Phen.

Interpretive (Hermeneutic) Phen.



Long, unstructured interviews. Often multiple interviews with the same person.

# Phenomenology Example

- Ouelette, Achille & Paquet, 2009 ( Article title: The Experience of Kidney Graft Failure: Patients' Perspectives).
- “How do patients experience kidney graft failure”
  - Develop a comprehensive description of the way individuals constructed meaning out of this experience.
- Analysis of data identified five themes which the authors then compared to an existing theoretical framework about psychosocial transition



# Design characteristics in Phenomenology

- Purposive samples of 5-25 usually going for saturation.

-The individuals must have experienced the phenomenon.

- The more diverse the people, the harder it is to find common experiences.

- Data collection is by interview of the groups or individual that are verbatim, taped, and field notes.

- Data collection is directly tied to analysis, that eventually is coded or structured into themes.



# Procedures in Phenomenological approach

- Determine if phenomenological approach is best
  - Do several people share a common experience?
  - Can you develop policies, practices or develop deeper understanding of the features of the phenomenon?
- 2. Define the phenomenon of interest to be studied
- 3. Recognize and understand the philosophy behind phenomenology including bracketing, objective reality and individual experience.
- 4. Collect data through multiple in-depth interviews or other forms of collection
- 5. Begin with the broad “What” and “How” questions. Proceed with broader open-ended questions to gather textural and structural data

(Creswell 2010)



# Phenomenological Data Collection

Interview -In depth  
interview

Participation  
observation

Conversation

Action research

Focus Meeting

Analysis of Personal  
Texts (Diary Writing)



# Interviews in Phenomenology

- Interview is by far the most dominant method for data collection in phenomenological research.
- Seidman's (2006) required **three interviews per person**, wherein the first is a focused life history that provides context, followed by an interview aimed to reconstruct the experience with its relationships and structures, and finally an interview that allowed the respondent to reflect on the meaning of his or her experience.
- A phenomenological researcher is free to structure his or her interview in a way that enables a thorough investigation.



# Phenomenological interview

- Phenomenological interview must contain three main domains:
  1. contextualization (natural attitude and lifeworld).
  2. apprehending the phenomenon (modes of appearing, natural attitude).
  3. clarifying the phenomenon (imaginative variation and meaning).



# Phenomenological interview

Source: (Bevan, 2014)

Phenomenological Attitude	Researcher Approach	Interview Structure	Method	Example Question
Phenomenological Reduction (Epoché)	Acceptance of Natural Attitude of Participants	Contextualization (Eliciting the Lifeworld in Natural Attitude)	Descriptive/Narrative Context Questions	"Tell me about becoming ill," or "Tell me how you came to be at the satellite unit."
	Reflexive Critical Dialogue With Self	Apprehending the Phenomenon (Modes of Appearing in Natural Attitude)	Descriptive and Structural Questions of Modes of Appearing	"Tell me about your typical day at the satellite unit," or "Tell me what you do to get ready for dialysis."
	Active Listening	Clarifying the Phenomenon (Meaning Through Imaginative Variation)	Imaginative Variation: Varying of Structure Questions	"Describe how the unit experience would change if a doctor was present at all times."

Figure 1. A structure of phenomenological interviewing.



# Data Analysis in Phenomenology

- **Horizontalization**

- Laying out all the data to examine it as equals.
- Highlight significant statements that provide understanding of participants' experiences.
- Organise the data into clusters and themes.
- Phenomenological Reduction
  - Process of continually returning to the essence of the experience to derive inner meaning.

# Strengths of Phenomenology

- Help to give a better understanding of the real-life situation and experiences
- Good at surfacing deep issues and making voices heard, helps individuals to connect to the phenomenon and possibly group.
- Has the ability to query and probe in-depth issue of a phenomenon
- Findings are allowed to emerge rather than being imposed by investigator

# Challenges of Phenomenology

- Bracketing personal experiences may be difficult for the researcher to implement ( the researcher to become separated from the text).
- The participants in the study need to be carefully chosen to be individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon in question.



# Conclusion

- The product of a phenomenological study is a “ composite description that presents the ‘ essence ’ of the phenomenon, called the essential, invariant structure (or essence) ” (Cresswell, 2007, p. 62, emphasis in original).
- This description represents the structure of the experience being studied.

*“ The reader should come away from the phenomenology with the feeling, ‘ I understand better what it is like for someone to experience that ’ ( Polkinghorn, 1989, p. 46) ” (Cresswell, 2007, p. 62).*



# Example

- 1 **How can tomorrow's doctors be more caring? Phenomenological**
- 2 **investigation**
- 3

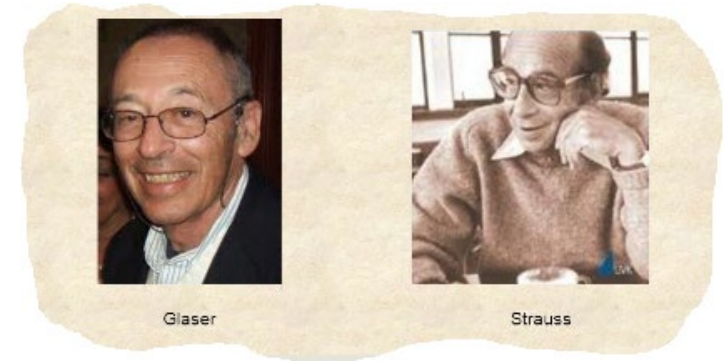
# Questions

1. What is phenomenology?
2. What are the two types of phenomenology?
3. What is the research tool that is mainly used in phenomenology?
4. What is the meaning of the term “Horizontalization”?



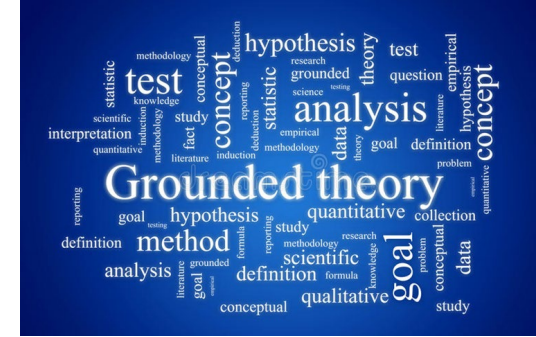
# Grounded Theory (GT)

- Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, are the creators of Grounded Theory (GT) method in their book '**The Discovery of the Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research**' in late 1960s.
- In their book, the term GT is used in a more sense to denote theoretical constructs derived from qualitative analysis of data.
- Grounded Theory is often used to describe research that does not start from some prior theoretical understanding of what is going on (process), but works inductively, or from the **ground up to build a theory of what is going on** (Dew, 2007).
- GT is a systematic (uses systematic set of procedures) qualitative research methodology in which the inquirer generates a general explanation (a theory) of a process ("What is going on here"), action, or interaction grounded in the views of participants in the study about a topic (Creswell & Poth, 2007).





# Definitions



- Charmaz: ‘a method of conducting qualitative research that focuses on creating conceptual frameworks or theories through building inductive analysis from the data’ (p. 187).
- Birks and Mills: ‘process by which theory is generated from the analysis of data’.



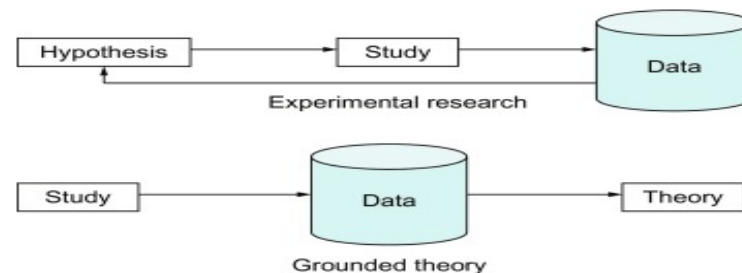
# Grounded Theory

- The overarching goal of grounded theory is to develop theory. Therefore, grounded theory studies may be carried out related to research phenomena or objects, which lack a (sufficient) theoretical foundation.
- A key idea is that this theory-development does not come "off the shelf," but rather is generated or "grounded" in data from participants who have experienced the process ( developed theories are "grounded" in the collected data ( see limitations: GT avoids literature review).
- It may be, that no theory exists for the phenomena under study or that the existing theories are insufficient in that
  - they lack important concepts;
  - the relationships among the concepts are not elaborated enough;
  - the relevance of the concepts and their relationships has not been corroborated for the population or the context under study.
- Grounded theorists not only code data for concepts (e.g., older adults recognize the importance of preventative approaches to health, most commonly mentioned being the winter flu vaccine) but also identify relationships between concepts/categories (i.e., variables) to build substantive theory (e.g., social class features as the strongest explanation of the likelihood of seeking flu vaccination in the sample)(Foley & Timonen, 2015).

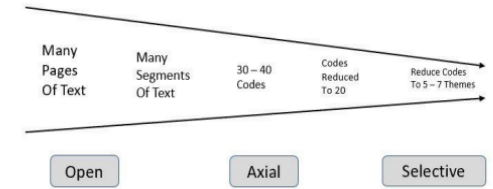


# Grounded Theory

- GT is a research method that operates almost in a **reverse fashion** from traditional research and at first may appear to be in contradiction to the scientific method.
- some researchers refer to the theory generated using this method as the “reverse-engineered” hypothesis.



# Grounded Theory Design- The systematic Design



Open Coding: properties and dimensionalized properties.



Axial Coding: researcher selects one open coding category and places it at the center as the Central Phenomenon and then relates all other categories to it.



Selective Coding: writing a theory based on the interrelationship of the categories from axial coding



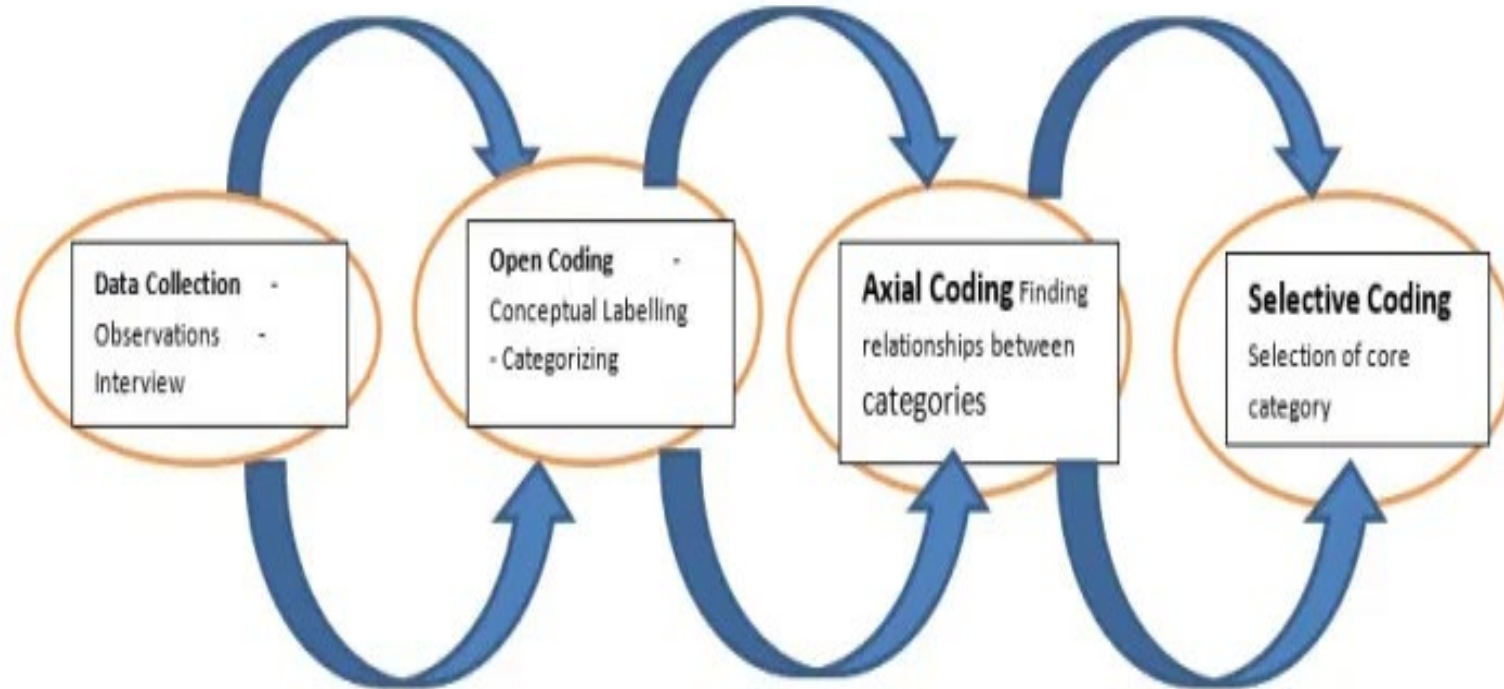
# Categories have properties

= multiple perspectives of the category

- And are dimensionalized
  - properties presented on a continuum
- Like colour has
  - Properties - hue, tone, shade, intensity
  - Dimensions - dark, light etc. are dimensions of shade.
- E.g. watching has frequency, duration, extent, intensity.
- information passing has amount of info., manner of passing etc.

# Coding in Grounded Theory

Source (Cho & Lee, 2014)



# Definition of coding

- Coding =
  - Process in which data are fractured, conceptualized and reordered in a new way
  - Process in which « codes » are given to parts of sentences, whole sentences, paragraphs etc

# Coding- quantitative/qualitative

- The main categorizing strategy in qualitative research is coding.
- "This is quite different from coding in quantitative research, which consists of applying a preestablished set of categories to the data according to explicit, unambiguous rules, with the primary goal being to generate frequency counts of the items in each category."
- • In qualitative research, the goal of coding is not to count things, but to "fracture" (Strauss 1987, p. 29) the data and rearrange them into categories that facilitate comparison between things in the same category and that aid in the development of theoretical concepts."

(Emphasis JS) Maxwell , Joseph A. , Qualitative research design..., 2005 , 96

# How to give a code: ask and answer questions

- Of what general category is this item of data an instance?
- What does this item of data represent?
- What is this item of data about?
- Of what topic is this item of data an instance?
- What question about a topic does this item of data suggest?
- What sort of answer to a question about a topic does this item of data imply?
- What is happening here?
- What are people doing?
- What do people say they are doing?
- What kind of event is going on?

Bryman , Alan , Social research methods , 2004 , S. 408

# Open coding defined

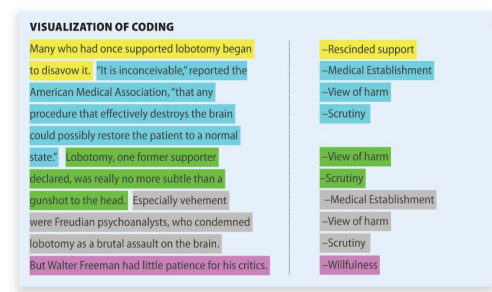


Figure 1 illustrates how color can be used to differentiate between sentences that have been coded.

- Open coding refers to the initial phase of the coding process in the grounded theory approach to qualitative research (generating theory from data).
- The process of open coding begins with the collection of raw data (e.g., interviews, fieldnotes, art, reports, diaries).
- The intent of open coding is to break down the data into segments in order to interpret them.
- Detailed word-by-word and line-by-line analysis is conducted by researchers asking what is going on.
- The researcher discovers, names, defines, and develops as many ideas and concepts.



## Open coding example-1

Interview with a woman in a study of arthritis sufferers. Taken from Strauss and Corbin (1990) Basics of Qualitative Research (1st ed.) p. 78.

Pain relief is a major problem when you have arthritis. Sometimes, the pain is worse than other times, but when it gets really bad, whew! It hurts so bad, you don't want to get out of bed. You don't feel like doing anything. Any relief you get from drugs that you take is only temporary or partial.



# Open coding example-2

| Marc: My conversion, that's a long, a very long story. Well, I come from a church, from the family perhaps, from catholicism My parents are catholic uh, I was just a bit, I was growing up in the catholic church when I was a child, I did the catechism, I have done first communion, I've been baptised I have even been married in the catholic church. Ah, but just after my marriage, uh, uh, our couple did not go too well we were already on the verge of divorcing so, me and my wife, we did not get along well and the situation got worse and worse, we were both unhappy, I was unhappy and my wife too, And, uh, I have to say that this is also a problem that did not come about just because of the marriage; I have had to put up with this all of my life.

| Marc: My conversion, that's a long, a very long story. Well, I come from a church, from the family perhaps, from catholicism My parents are catholic uh, I was just a bit, I was growing up in the catholic church when I was a child, I did the catechism, I have done first communion, I've been baptised I have even been married in the catholic church. Ah, but just after my marriage, uh, uh, our couple did not go too well we were already on the verge of divorcing so, me and my wife, we did not get along well and the situation got worse and worse, we were both unhappy, I was unhappy and my wife too, And, uh, I have to say that this is also a problem that did not come about just because of the marriage; I have had to put up with this all of my life.

Process long/short of conversion

Religion before conversion

Catholic socialization

Catholic marriage

Problems in the couple

Be on the verge of divorcing  
Dramatisation

Profound problems

Duration of problems short / long



# Axial coding Defined

- Axial coding is a stage in grounded theory analysis after open coding, where the researcher seeks to make links and find relationships between the concepts and categories derived from open coding.
- Strauss and Corbin (1990): 'The next step (axial coding) is the process of determining hypotheses about the relationships between a category and its subcategories, for example, conditions, context, action/interaction strategies and consequences' (p. 467).
- 'As our goal was not to create a whole new theory, we only used open and axial coding to identify the main categories and to make connections between categories, hereby identifying causal conditions, context, strategies and intervening conditions (Strauss and Corbin, 1990)' (p. 34).
- Rather than look for any and all kind of relations, grounded theorists emphasize causal relationships, and fit things into a basic frame of generic relationships.



# Axial coding

- Aims to integrate codes around the axes of central categories'; the essence of axial coding is the interconnectedness of categories. Hence codes are explored, their interrelationships are examined, and codes and categories are compared.
- The word 'axial' used by Strauss and Corbin (1998) is intended to put an **axis** through data. This axis connects identified categories in open coding. Axial coding puts categories back together in order to explore theoretical possibilities.



# Axial coding process

- Data has been entirely coded
- Objective of Axial Coding involves model development
- Look for:
  - Causal conditions: what influences the central phenomenon, events, incidences, happening
  - Strategies: How do actors address the phenomenon?
  - Context: When, where, with whom?
  - Intervening conditions: What factors constrain strategies?
  - Actions – How are strategies enacted?
  - Consequences – What are the consequences?



# Axial coding process

- Put the model together
  - Exploring relations among categories, and making connections between them (i.e., Cause and Effect)
  - Specifying the moderating conditions, and intervening states that may play a role in shaping outcomes.

- Specify model discursively:

When I have (condition) arthritic pain (phenomenon), I take aspirin (strategy). After a while, I feel better (consequence).

- Look for confirmation in the data & look for possible exceptions.
  - Exceptions don't refute model but may suggest additional moderators.



# Model in axial coding

Model=

= Causal conditions => Central Phenomenon =>  
context => intervening conditions => Action/ interaction  
strategies => Consequences.

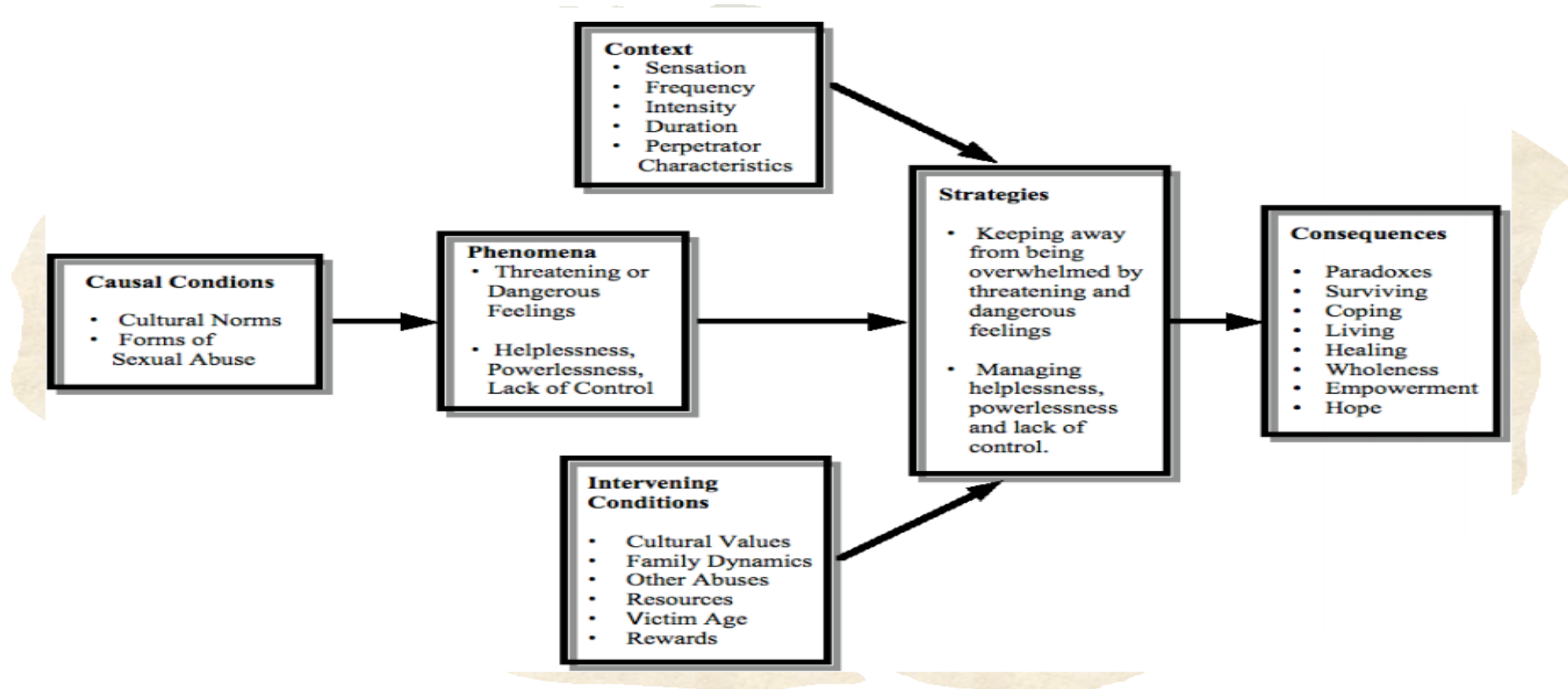
## Axial Coding: The Resulting Paradigm Model (Strauss & Corbin)

	<b>Model component</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>How to identify</b>	<b>Example</b>
A	Causal condition	events or incidents that lead to the occurrence of a phenomenon	Point out by: when, while, since, because, due to, on account of.	breaking a leg
B	Phenomenon	central idea	Ask: what is this data referring to?	pain
C	Context	Set of properties and that pertain to a phenomenon and conditions within the strategies are taken	Under the specific condition...	Located in, of high intensity
D	Intervening conditions	Broad and general condition bearing upon strategies	Time, space, culture, economic and technological status, career, history and individual biography.	Person age, other illnesses, past history with pain
E	Action / Interaction strategies	Respond, handle, carry out a phenomenon	Action oriented verbs or participles	Keep warm, go for emergency help
F	Consequences	Outcomes to a phenomenon	Events or happenings, actual or potential.	Pain relief



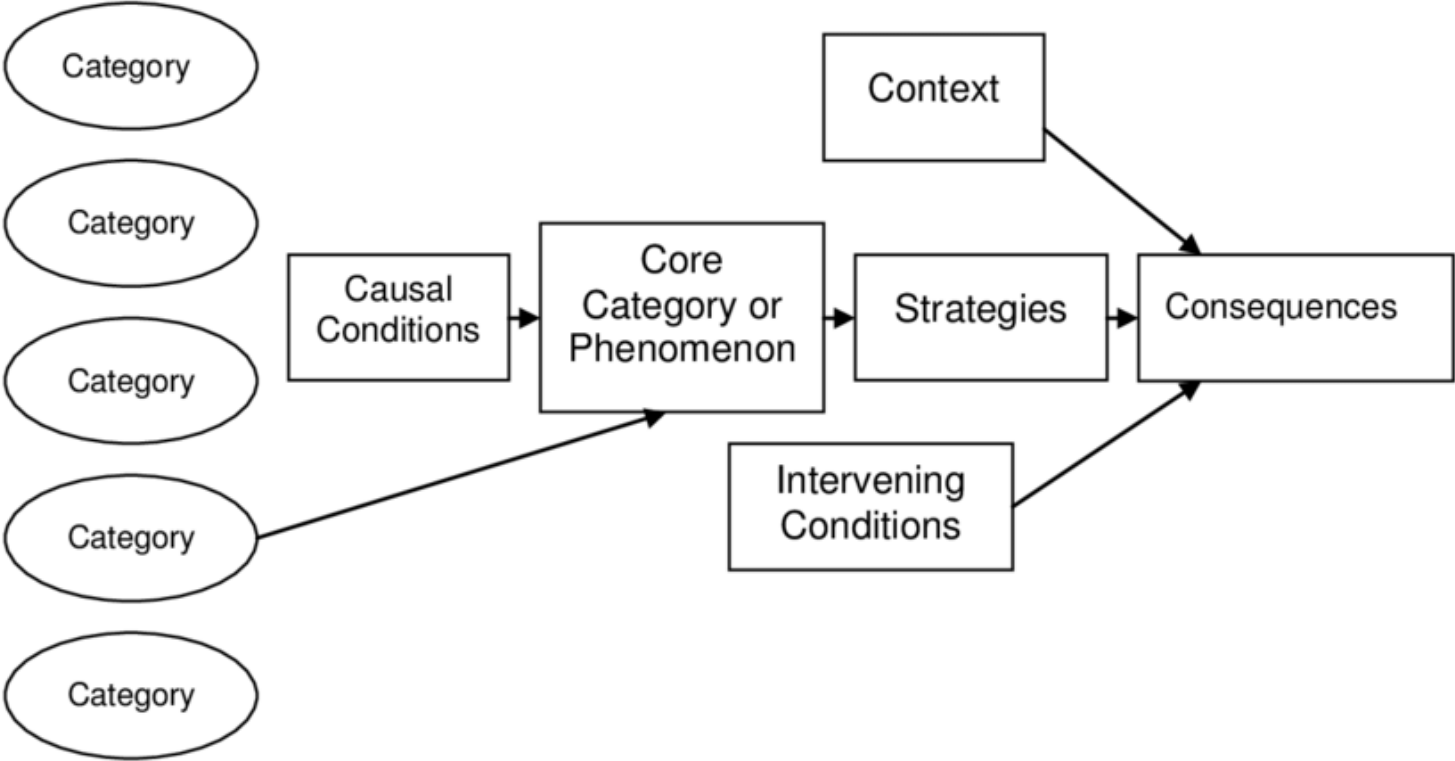
## Axial coding example

Morrow, S. & Smith, M. (1995). "A grounded theory study: Constructions of survival and coping by women who have survived childhood sexual abuse". In John Cresswell (Ed.), *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions* (pp. 297-321). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.



Open Coding Categories

Axial Coding Paradigm



# Selective coding

- Focus on most important categories. Try to form a theory explaining the subject of investigation.
- Core category
  - Accounts for most of variation
  - Most other categories relate to it
- Systematically relating the core category to other categories and filling in categories that need further refinement.



# Theoretical sampling

- Data analysis and data collection proceed together.
  - Data analysis begins to develop theories (explanations) that suggest further cases to sample.
- Use these to elaborate and refine emerging theoretical categories
  - Develop properties till no new ones emerge.

# Unique features of Grounded Theory

1. Simultaneous involvement in data collection and analysis phases of research.
  - Researcher's emerging analysis shapes his or her data collection procedures.
  - Insights emerging from early data shape further data collection, which in turn adds to existing understanding, and so on until 'saturation' occurs.
  - **Example:** using the data analysis of the first interviews to modify the interview format in order to explore certain concepts in more depth (Burck, 2005).
2. Creation of analytic codes and categories developed from data, not from preconceived hypotheses.



# Unique features of Grounded Theory

## 3. Memo-making

- Memos are informal analytic notes about the data and the theoretical connections between categories (Glaser & Holton, 2004).

## 4. Theoretical sampling

- Theoretical sampling means that starting by interviewing a small number (sometimes just one or two) people whose characteristics are relevant to the study, and selecting further participants on the basis of the information gathered from the early interviews (Foley & Timonen, 2015).
  - **Example:** in a study of maternity care services use among immigrants of African origin, starting with participants who fit this broad selection criteria before starting to purposively select some who are Muslim, others who are Christian, because early interviews suggested the importance of religion in inclination to access services.
  - Sampling ceases in GT studies when categories are well described and dimensionalized. This is known as “saturation” of the data. Saturation is not dependent on the amount of data that has been collected and analysed, but rather occurs when no significant new insights are emerging (i.e., additional interviews are not generating novel data/data necessary for fleshing out the categories that have already emerged) (Foley & Timonen, 2015).



# Unique features of Grounded Theory

## 5. Employment of Constant Comparative Method (CCM).

- theory emerges while constantly comparing data from different categories (Creswell & Poth, 2007).
- If a label appears repeatedly then the researcher can be satisfied with its existence.

# Unique features of Grounded Theory

## 6. Delay of the literature review

- GT supports initial data collection and preliminary analyses before attempting to incorporate previous research literature.
- Pre-existing knowledge about the topic is deliberately withheld until initial data collection and analysis are complete, in order to prevent it from influencing the research findings.
- As such, GT focuses on Emergence, that is, a research should start from a position where the researcher knows nothing about what they are studying, so that all concepts truly emerge from the data (Hancock, Ockleford, & Windridge, 2009).



# Challenges of Grounded Theory

- Truly inductive analysis is not possible and is always limited by the unconscious application of prior knowledge to the thematic analysis process- either from the researcher's own experience or from their reading of the literature.
- The researcher faces the difficulty of determining when categories are saturated or when the theory is sufficiently detailed.
  - The use of discriminant sampling- The final phase in Grounded Theory.
  - Researchers gathered additional information from individuals similar to those people initially interviewed to determine if the theory holds true for these additional participants.
- Studies are often limited by the available time or funding, and where smaller numbers of interviews are analysed there is a danger that the results may be incomplete and that the effect of bias may be greater.

# GT Example

- Hall, Tomkinson & Klein, 2012
- “How do care providers and women manage birth?”
  - Focus groups of women + health care providers (family docs, midwives, nurses, obstetricians, doulas)
- Generated a theory about how women and providers used different strategies to minimize risk and maximize integrity, including: accepting or resisting recommendations for surveillance and intervention; plotting courses v. letting events unfold.



# Questions

1. What is the purpose of grounded Theory?
2. What are the types of coding in Grounded Theory?
3. Give one advantage of GT?
4. What is the meaning of theoretical sampling?



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**THANK  
YOU**

