



## GUEST EDITORIAL

### The value of Grounded Theory in researching psychological and nursing Practices

Many years of hypothetico-deductive research in psychology and nursing have not mediated in resolving the problem of subjectivity of researcher and participant. The fields of nursing, psychotherapy, counselling and psychology would greatly benefit from a sharper understanding of the lived experience of those holders of knowledge who are investigated. This is better achieved through qualitative methods. Qualitative research is increasing in popularity, mostly due to the growing recognition that the testing of hypotheses, especially in experimental settings, is not without researcher bias. Indeed, the subjectivities of researchers and participants mediate in the construction of new knowledge. Objectivity in researchers refers to ideas that phenomena exist out there and if we are consistent with our observations and rigorous with our methods we could discover the truth. There is now growing recognition that researchers are subjects who exercise our agency uniquely and the issue is how we manage our agency rather than denying its existence.

Alongside its qualitative sisters, Discourse Analysis, Narrative Analysis, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss 1967; Strauss & Corbin 1998; Charmaz, 2006) is the most popular method for the social sciences, particularly in nursing and psychotherapy, recognised for its ability to provide opportunities for developing theories grounded in the data. Postmodern epistemology has influenced debates on grounded theory as a qualitative research method, led to major revisions and to the development of guidelines and quality criteria (Morrow, 2005) to manage researcher agency. Because grounded theory is inductive and systematic, it is relevant in understanding the holders' of knowledge personal accounts and socially contextualising these. Understanding subjective worlds contains a hermeneutic element and the constructivist grounded theory of Charmaz (2006) is particularly known for acknowledging that theory is a co-construction between researcher and participant. The analysis of data therefore captures the phenomenon under investigation from the *inside out*, places it under the reflexivity lenses of the researchers from *outside in*, scrutinises its constituent parts until saturation point and sharpens its colours. Thus, a '*circling of consciousness*' is at play, where the researcher holds the tension arising through bringing together subjective and objective theorising, until he or she is satisfied that saturation has been reached. Grounded theory distils data by identifying meaningful chunks, categorising these and through a constant comparative analysis, develops a conceptual frame that captures the lived experience of participants. From this point of view grounded theory has the potential to contribute to our knowledge of social and psychological phenomena.

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### References

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