

Title:

Where are the Grounds for Grounded Theory? A Troubled Empirical Methodology Meets Wittgenstein

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Abstract

This article provides a critical exposition of the epistemological underpinnings of a recent redevelopment of Grounded Theory methodology, 'Constructivist' Grounded Theory. Although proffered as freed from the 'objectivist' tenets of the original version, critical examination exposes the essentialism threaded through its integral analytic practices. Movement towards a position critical of an external referent, discernible within Wittgenstein's later works, is the apparent target of Constructivist Grounded Theory. However, despite its championing of indeterminate, multiple meanings, the notion of correspondence to the world, discernible within the Tractatus, persists. In order for Constructivist Grounded Theory to achieve coherence, Socio-Linguistic Realism is suggested here as a stance which would help sharpen its distinction from the atomism of the original version of GT. However, in order for such repositioning to extend to all its analytic practices, particularly coding, further development would be required so that it can accommodate the notion of context bound meanings and language use. As it stands, its fuzzy epistemological position translates into rather ambiguous analytic coding practices. Further, an ill-defined conception of linguistic meanings and the intermittent positing of referents external to the social contexts researched does little to foster a secure methodological position with a clarified notion of grounding.

Keywords: Wittgenstein, Methodology, Theory

Introduction

Grounded theory (GT), a widely deployed empirical methodology continues to provoke questions concerning the clarity of its epistemological underpinnings. Epistemic stance has become dominant in GT methodological literature since it is acknowledged to shape analytic practices or 'methods'. Moreover, explication of epistemological stance is believed to encourage researchers to be more critical of the impact of their 'epistemological choice' upon the 'claims that are made from their findings' (Slade and Priebe, 2007, p.78) and assist the reader in evaluating methodological integrity. Critique from those sceptical of its central notion of 'grounding', along with fervent defence from its advocates, has precipitated the redevelopment of GT. Consequently, various permutations now sit within the GT family, each serving as a response to the original version created by Glaser and Strauss several decades ago. Permutations such as Constructivist GT, now widely cited and championed as the contemporary solution to GT's issues (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Mills *et al.*, 2006), purports to have brought GT into closer alignment with a defined epistemological position. Charmaz (2006; 2009) proffers Constructivist GT, the focus of this paper, as a permutation that disavows the alleged 'objectivism' embedded in the original version of GT, henceforth referred to as Classic GT.

GT's acquired status as 'objectivist' owes much to its assumption that coding and categorising facilitate the mining of essential properties from data. Charmaz' 'Constructivist' permutation, propounded as a holistic repositioning extending to all its analytic practices, is predicated upon alternative, 'interpretivist' tenets. However, this alleged refocusing of interest towards a

contextualised understanding of participants' interpretation of their circumstances is not clear cut in terms of epistemological position. The notion of an interpretative form of coding attuned to 'liminal' meanings stands out as especially obfuscating. It sits uneasily with integral analytic practices which appear predicated upon an epistemologically realist stance. Misalignment between analytic practices and alleged non-objectivist tenets thwarts the chances of the researcher embarking on a research study with a secure methodological position.

Part of the trouble with Constructivist GT is that it continues with an unarticulated, shaky conception of grounding, persisting from Classic GT. Such issues echo those captivating Wittgenstein in his later works which disavow allusion to objects given in the world. He thus can be considered a useful critical companion for Constructivist GT as his works help define and shed light upon the tensions with which it wrestles. Specifically, there are consistent threads through his notions of family resemblances, language games and forms of life which show Wittgenstein's position to be one that has dispensed with the notion of an external reference point for one's interpretations. This is a notion Constructivist GT seems reticent to discard.

Part one of the article draws out tensions within Constructivist GT and how they manifest in coding and categorising practices. An exposition of its fuzzy epistemological underpinnings, emanating from Classic GT, is provided. Classic GT's supposed 'objectivism' and Charmaz' (2006) accompanying claim that this has been expunged within Constructivist GT is examined critically. Essentialism is shown in this article to be interwoven through its practices. Part two focuses upon the problems surrounding Constructivist GT's intent to 'capture' participants' meanings. Contextualisation of such meanings presents a challenge to a methodology wedded to micro-analytic practices and fragmentation of research participants' utterances. An ambiguous conception of language and intermittent championing of referents for research participants' wording translates into an equally unclear set of analytic practices within Constructivist GT.

Part One: Critical Exposition of Constructivist GT's Epistemological Stance

Overview of GT

GT is an iterative mode of inquiry deemed driven by data rather than extant conceptual frameworks. Coding and categorising constitute its key analytic practices. Together they comprise a blueprint for GT methodology and its various permutations. Codes are considered to capture, or in some way represent, characteristics of 'pieces' of data. The examination of similarities and differences between these pieces facilitates the establishment of definitive criteria for the assimilation of data

to emergent categories. Categories become progressively more defined and come to reflect their constituents in a clearer way through having to house more and more data. Despite its intricacy and somewhat technical overtones, matters of GT praxeology continue to be irreducible to step-wise instructions or cookbook recipe guides. Rather, the researcher reflects continually upon the way she approaches the data (Jeon, 2005), the epistemic precepts underlying her analysis and whether these are consistent with one another.

The changes made to GT, or its 'evolution' (see Birks and Mills, 2011), have been comprehensively charted in methodological literature. The differing positions that can be held in regard to GT have been brought to the forefront of methodological concerns. Less attention has been paid, however, to how integral analytical practices of coding and categorising which have survived GT's redevelopment are shaped by a particular epistemic stance. Constructivist GT is purported by advocates to possess a more clearly demarcated epistemological positioning than its parent, Classic GT. However, how such precepts underpin all its analytic practices has not been explicated or critiqued. Only tentative, sceptical commentary regarding its distinctiveness and cogency (see Greckhamer and Koro-Ljungberg, 2006) appears in the literature.

Epistemic Precepts of Analytic Practices

Charmaz disavows the idea that the researcher discovers the reality of a situation and that analytic practices constitute objective tools to facilitate this discovery. She defines her 'Constructivist' vision of GT against such tenets, purporting that its analytic practices, deriving from Classic GT, have been reconfigured to engage a different epistemological stance. The cogency of this alleged repositioning, from supposedly, in Charmaz' terms, 'objectivist' to 'interpretivist' is the subject of critique below. It is important to note that, despite its indictment as 'objectivist', an epistemological position was never actually explicated in Classic GT's texts themselves and may even have been a matter evaded by its authors (Bryant, 2012).

Coding: Interpreting or Just Naming Data?

The epistemological premises of Classic GT are not clear cut. Classic GT's broadly realist premises are implied by its predilection for micro-analytic treatment of data and the fracturing of participants' utterances. Further, while such practices are espoused across GT's permutations, it is Classic GT which is especially wedded to the notion of seeds of eventual conceptual categories found via sifting data. Scrutiny of data is believed to foster identification of their essential properties which facilitates

the creation of codes. Coded data are connected to other data bearing similar codes to form larger clusters which become the major constituents of conceptual categories. The assumption that properties exist within data and, moreover, that they can be unequivocally identified, is a clear indicator of epistemological realism, a stance from which Charmaz appears to seek distance. Glaser's insistence that coding involves naming, and not interpretation (Simmons, 2011), goes some way towards affirming that Classic GT epistemological premises are realist. Indeed, the implication is that data pertain to static entities awaiting excavation. It is this aspect which has perhaps earned it an objectivist reputation.

There remains a certain opacity, however, concerning whether naming, to use Glaser's term, reflects the researcher's thought processes, or whether it serves as a literal 'labelling' of an object in the world, as though the label reflects it. Naming data, taken in the latter sense, would indeed invoke the principles of atomism. However, it is worth noting Classic GT's focal matter was never stated to be that of physical objects. Rather, data were construed by its advocates as indicators - in the eyes of the researcher - of a particular concept. Thus, it is more a case of the researcher attaching an identifier, in the form of a code, to a piece of data which serves to earmark it for inclusion within a burgeoning conceptual category. Such emphasis upon what the researcher thinks a piece of data might indicate means Classic GT could be considered interpretivist. However, this possibility is countermanded by the more dominant notion of extracted 'pieces' of data which remain constant regardless of where they are placed.

Classic GT's presupposition of essential properties which guide how a piece of data is earmarked is commensurate with traditional realism. However, this is undermined by the absence of a way of checking that the researcher has coded a piece of data 'accurately' within Classic GT. As Lo (2014) has noted, it contains no explicit method to ensure this. Put another way, there is no way of ascertaining correspondence between the code created and the world, commensurate with traditional realism. Despite Lo's criticism of Classic GT's patchy realist positioning and his own proffering of a more coherent, distinctively 'realist' redevelopment of Classic GT, he does not exemplify, with respect to coding, the realism he champions. As coding is so central to GT, it is a surprising omission.

Although Charmaz neglects to elucidate the epistemological premises of Classic GT, she seeks to place a stake in the ground for Constructivist GT on account of what she considers its distinctively 'interpretative' manner of coding. Through explicitly acknowledging the role of the mind and the researcher's intuition during coding she obtains a degree of distance from the rather empiricist tone of Classic GT. As Constructivist GT's analytic focus is identified more overtly as communal symbolic

objects - or constructs appearing in participants' talk - the act of interpretation as a requisite for coding becomes more comprehensible. Further, the deliberation required by the researcher concerning what constitutes a construct within a few words or lines of transcript is perhaps easier to appreciate.

Inner Tensions within Constructivist GT

While Charmaz appears to eschew the idea of properties inhering within 'pieces' of data, it is unclear whether she deems such pieces to take form via an interpretative process, or whether they exist as particular units of meaning. The former seems commensurate with her espoused interpretivist positioning, but it unsettles the notion of 'grounding'. Indeed, the muting of a referent to which language 'points' (Hallett, 1967, p.37) would render the grounds which Constructivist GT presumably seeks indeterminable. Furthermore, the code indicating what the researcher infers to be a wider notion, such as 'complaining', would not be construed as touching, or contacting, a complaining entity – the external referent; rather, it would reflect merely the idea arising from an object of understanding, namely, the utterance stimulating this idea, as Locke would have it (Gilroy, 1996).

Charmaz' position appears somewhat congruent with the later Wittgenstein. This is a position critical of an ultimate base for meaning and doubtful of 'atomic meanings' (Hallett, 1967, p.36) posited in the *Tractatus*. Charmaz seems to eschew Classic GT's belief in the incontrovertible nature of qualities affixed to the words constituting one's data. This essentialist stance, manifest in Classic GT's coding practices and disavowal of interpretation, concurs with the Tractarian view of words mirroring the world. In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein posits the idea of language, meaning and the world as in concert. In other words, a single meaning is reflected in a word and this word is literally a mirror of some 'thing' in the world. Within Classic GT, words serve to import such independent objects – which they stand for – into the analysis. Further, despite some ambiguity concerning the role of the mind within coding practices, as mentioned above, Classic GT construes codes as identifying – or labelling - qualities pinned to words which come under the researcher's purview. Subsequently, the researcher treats them in a manner which pays regard to essential qualities.

Classic GT's construal of grounds is one that pertains perhaps to the structures holding together language and the world. Moreover, it presupposes that words constituting one's data are sufficient in themselves to be able to reflect or 'show' aspects of the world, in accordance with Wittgenstein's Tractarian thinking (Ackerman, 1988, p.97). Charmaz' championing of multiple, indeterminate meanings signals a step away from such essentialist thinking. Although such issues were not

addressed by Classic GT proponents, Charmaz' more direct championing of the multiple inferences stimulated by a word at least shows she has misgivings over the Tractarian notion of each word having its own unique referent (Hallett, 1967). The structures screwed onto the world thus weaken.

There is concord between Constructivist GT and Wittgenstein's refutation, within *Philosophical Investigations*, of words with their corresponding objects. However, it is unclear whether Charmaz disavows the notion of essences altogether. Indeed, in one breath she advocates the act of interpretation involved in discerning all manner of possible meanings intended by the utterer of certain words; in another, she supports the notion of atomic meanings embedded within Classic GT through her endorsement of the fracturing of utterances. Joining the two precepts results in tension. In spite of Charmaz' quest to demarcate Constructivist GT from 'objectivism', essentialism still reverberates through her methodological guidelines. Inconsistencies in her advice and especially her interdiction that the researcher's interpretations should remain 'close to data' are highlighted below.

Remaining 'Close to' Data

While it appears the external referent has been muted and all that is required of the researcher is to render transparent the connections between a piece of stimulating data and an inference, Charmaz seems wedded to the idea that some interpretations are 'better' than others. She persists with what Schwandt (2000, p.198) would term maintaining 'fidelity to phenomena', contending the researcher must adhere to something external to her. This is echoed in Charmaz' (2006, p.19) notion of 'careful interpretations'. Furthermore, she states:

Your research participants' actions and statements teach you about their worlds, albeit sometimes in ways they might not anticipate. Studying your data through line-by-line coding sparks new ideas for you to pursue. Hence, the grounded theory method itself contains correctives that reduce the likelihood that researchers merely impose their preconceived notions on the data. Line by line coding provides an early corrective of this type. (Charmaz, 2006, p.51)

The 'correctives' alluded to here in relation to line-by-line coding seem to presuppose a fixed point of reference for the researcher's inferences. However, she maintains the researcher can be taught about participants' worlds 'in ways they might not anticipate' (Charmaz, 2006, p.51) thereby suggesting the grounded theorisation, albeit a product of interaction with participants, reflects merely the researcher's constructivist epistemic process. Further, it appears this is irrespective of what the participants eliciting the data might have intended. Thus Charmaz appears to acknowledge

that participants themselves are not the final arbiters of an essential, or intended, meaning within the data.

The inner tensions within Constructivist GT's stance also translate to the practical difficulties surrounding isolating strings of words and making a 'cut', so to speak, at a certain place. The atomism within the *Tractatus* would support the practice of dividing words in an utterance, as though each word could be turned over to reveal its corresponding object. Conversely, if one rejects the view that slicing up utterances is objective, or guided by essential qualities of the words, then placement of the cutter becomes problematic as it is not directed by an essence within the words themselves. Further, commensurate with the later Wittgenstein, isolating and placing words with others overlooks how they are influenced by those surrounding them (Ackerman, 1988).

One possible defence from the interpretivist line of thinking would be that to 'ground' the findings, one must point merely to the specific piece stimulating each inference and resultant code. This is corroborated by Constructivist GT advocates, Piantanida *et al.* (2007, p.12) who contend the plausibility or conviction of the final grounded theorisation is determined by 'the persuasiveness with which the researcher lays out her/his lines of reasoning about the concepts and the relationships among them'. The implication here is that little importance is placed upon whether there is relationship of correspondence between the inference and what is 'really' there. Rendering transparent the connections between the stimulating data and inferences appears paramount.

An aspect in tension with the non-objectivist stance Charmaz espouses is the requirement for the researcher to suspend, temporarily, the process of interpretation to focus on what is contained within utterances. This echoes the micro-analytic principle of Classic GT and objectivism associated with its predilection for discerning properties. However, Charmaz appears to pre-empt charges of epistemological realism through contending that fracturing fosters multifarious interpretations and thereby a multiplicity of codes. Thus it may be considered a strategy for temporary suspension of immediate, face-value interpretations and more prolonged consideration of alternative meanings rather than a way of sifting data for properties.

Simultaneously, however, Charmaz' interdiction that certain phraseology from transcripts is to be preserved is a further indicator of essentialism. It posits mental states expressed in words and spoken through data, as though detracting from certain wording participants have adopted results in such states never being brought to light. Not only is this difficult to extricate from 'objectivist' styles of thinking, it suggests data somehow 'speaks'.

Categorising and the External Referent

The analytic practice of categorising, like coding, appears to continue the notion of essential properties within data. A category's formation and, moreover, its definition is aided by the researcher's drawing of distinctions between it and others. This is fostered through coding data in a way which reflects a certain quality they are deemed to possess. However, the categorising process is bent upon precepts which are less objectivist. Indeed, it is less clear whether such demarcations or boundaries of a category are assumed to exist independently of the researcher. Charmaz maintains the researcher makes connections between the constituents of categories, though must specify what it is that unifies them. This accords with the aim, originating in Classic GT, of letting data - or properties identified within them - shape the delineation of conceptual categories. However, it is Charmaz who attests to the fluid nature of these boundaries, reiterating that the researcher is encumbered merely with rendering transparent the basis - or grounds - of any connections or clusters identified.

Charmaz' emphasis upon the unity of a category's constituents and its internal consistency raises questions concerning the role of the external referent. Indeed, it seems to fade when the onus is upon drawing connections internally, that is, between data. More specifically, data coded in similar ways become clustered on the basis that they indicate something which feels, sounds or seems in any other way similar. Perceived connections or harmony between conceptual categories' internal components takes precedence.

If one rejects the idea of categories as bound by the essential qualities of their constituents it seems the onus is shifted towards something occurring in the researcher's mind. The categorising process delineated by Charmaz suggests such a departure from essentialism. Thus, for instance, once the researcher's interpretations start to unify or connect initially disparate data, it becomes easier for her to join up the dots, so to speak, across the data set. However, with such patterns in mind, she may subsequently be unable to help but 'see' certain constellations or groupings 'in the data' from then onwards. Charmaz seems not to refute this, relying perhaps upon the coded data, coded in terms of their qualities, to import the essential elements or lay the base of the categories.

The belief that categories form through the constructivist epistemic process, with the emphasis upon how certain objects stimulate ideas in the researcher's mind, is distinct from a belief in essential properties shaping categories. The later Wittgenstein made a departure from such essentialist thinking. Furthermore, noting the problems surrounding mapping language to objects in

his earlier works, he offered cautions concerning positing an external point of reference. His family resemblance argument is one such feature within his later works throwing into doubt any notion of determinates - drawn from the world - for schemes seeking to order the world.

As category formation within Constructivist GT is delineated in a way that suggests it is based upon the researcher's perception of a chain of associations between phenomena, which are not qualitatively identical yet perceived as pertaining to the same thing, there are resonances with family resemblances. For Wittgenstein, the idea of an elemental quality or persistent golden thread binding together those things grouped into the same classification is eschewed (Khatchadourian, 1968). It is more a case of there being a perceived similarity – or resemblance - between the constituents. Moreover, within Constructivist GT, the researcher has to specify, or to coin Charmaz' (2006, p.46) term, 'define', whatever it is that effectively binds a category's constituents. Thus, the realist project of mapping these perceived internal connections to something external is suppressed.

Summary of Part One

The persistence of essentialism with Classic GT, paralleling the Tractarian notion of words mirroring the world, unsettles Charmaz' assertion that Constructivist GT is non-objectivist. It is an apparent contradiction to her championing of multiple meanings comparable only to internally coherent systems within which they are generated. As such, where the grounds are has become more opaque within Constructivist GT. Further clarification is required of Charmaz' conception of language and its supposed enabling of entry into the social worlds of research participants. Moreover, disentanglement of the assumption that wording expresses 'liminal' (Charmaz, 2006, p.108) or 'tacit meanings' (p.47), micro-analytic practices and essentialism is required. The premises of her dissection of language through line-by-line coding and whether she expunges essentialism are matters examined below.

Part Two: Interpretive Coding and Participants' Wording

Charmaz clearly espouses a 'socially based conception of meaning' (Gilroy, 1996, p.104) not explicitly adopted within Classic GT. How this marries with the micro-analytic practices, especially line-by-line coding, shown above to harbour a residual objectivism from Classic GT, is the focus of this section. Although the constructivism coined in the title implies an emphasis upon meanings the researcher makes of participants' utterances, problems remain regarding the fragmentation associated with line-by-line coding. The so-called liminal meanings deemed conveyed indirectly and diffused across

multiple utterances may serve to demarcate it from Classic GT and its espousal of a corresponding picture for each word. However, the latter position is not overtly detached from.

Interpretation of the Social Life Studied

Within Constructivist GT, the researcher constructs an understanding using her interpretive capacities which involves discerning behavioural consistencies and connecting words, or phrases, with their meanings. This accords with the championed 'insider's view' (Charmaz, 2006, p.21) requiring more than mere acquaintance with rules enabling one to speak intelligibly in the social context, but immersion therein in order to comprehend subtle nuances. These are context dependent and understanding them invokes a subjective process of sense-making. These rather closed contexts are akin to Wittgenstein's 'forms of life' which he considers to provide the cultural resources fuelling sign-usage – and the rules which structure this - by actors therein. However, the subjectivity associated with the researcher's interacting in the setting and learning of the rules is, for Charmaz, to be tempered by a certain objectivity. Moreover, it is the researcher's task to decipher and document indicators of meanings held by participants. These indicators are assumed to arise from their utterances.

While Charmaz does not posit, overtly, grounds beyond words available within interview transcripts, contending that the researcher merely points to indicators or stimulators of her inferences, she advocates the holding of an analytic 'object' - participants' meanings - at arm's length. This supposedly helps the researcher to take her object as sufficiently other than herself to enable her to maintain a certain 'curiosity' over it, as Crotty (2003, p.52) would have it. However, this still appears to invoke the 'given' eschewed by the later Wittgenstein. Indeed, he takes the 'object' out of the equation, conceding that even though people may feel they refer to real things this is a mere language game supporting their conviction that they make reference to such objects. Furthermore, for Wittgenstein, the assumption that the researcher can stand outside or be cognizant of this, from a position as a neutral onlooker, is erroneous.

The more constructivist tenet implied by Charmaz (2006) which condones subjectivity is combined with the atomism betrayed within practices detailed in part one of this article. Moreover, while the researcher might feel she can say, in the spirit of constructivism, that she cannot assert her findings or interpretations with any certainty, the aforementioned 'carefulness' connected to the analytic practice of line-by-line coding undermines this. Thus the objectivism repudiated by Charmaz lingers in the background.

One possible way to dissolve such difficulties concerning such apparent contradiction within Constructivist GT, or at least the lack of complete severance from realism in a traditional sense, is to adopt Gilroy's (1996, p. 107) notion of 'Socio-Linguistic Realism'. The reason behind this connection is that a 'social' objectivism could negate the need to look to any 'thing' beyond the language of participants for grounding. Further, Gilroy interprets Wittgenstein to suggest that language, which is integral to life itself, must be examined in connection with its meaning for those who use it. Moreover, such accepted meanings need not be mapped onto a world beyond the internally coherent contexts in which they are generated. These meanings will have a certain obdurate quality therein, appearing self-evident to sign-users.

Rearticulating the shift from Classic GT as not a matter of objectivism to non-objectivism, as Charmaz asserts, but objectivism to 'social objectivism' may help in defining the grounds within Constructivist GT. Moreover, as Gilroy (1996, p.107) contends, Socio-Linguistic Realism accommodates the idea that intuition will eventually 'strike' what are deemed as 'facts'. However, these are not the 'facts' given by the world assumed within Classic GT, but knowledge at the base of social systems which serves to provide a point of reference for any fact-seeking inquiry.

There is, however, a problem concerning the manifestation of such precepts in the analytic practices espoused. They would need to be rethought in order to aid the researcher in ascertaining the way language is used in particular contexts. Further, a distinct means of analysing how language is used to achieve certain effects would be required. This would perhaps accord with the implied aim within Constructivist GT of directing analytic attention beyond a rather 'factist' conception of language within Classic GT wherein words and their meanings are assumed to be context free. Charmaz' purported liminal meanings involve the researcher looking beyond the immediately perceivable or manifest content of the words. Currently, however, in relation to the analytic practice of coding, there is no clear demarcation between discursive aspects of language within the internally coherent contexts invoked and language conceived as delivering a straightforward 'message'.

Language and Action

For Charmaz, participants' actions are founded upon meanings they hold about their circumstances. In line with her proclivity for understanding the tacit meanings or assumptions that render a certain decision perceived as a sensible one, the physical event of 'what a participant does' is not as pertinent as the meanings brought to this decision to act. Again, how this precept manifests in analytic practices is opaque. Exemplifications of line-by-line, micro-analytic coding of participants'

wording presuppose that utterances betray actions founded upon tacit meanings. However, there are few directives in terms of what may stand out as worthy of a being coded. That utterances are not deemed to report information directly suggests Charmaz deems language more than just a medium, but as a type of behaviour. By asserting her predilection for coding for action, using 'gerunds' Charmaz (2006, p.50), alongside lines of talk which may not contain overt reference to actions planned, she seems to construe language as constituting a form of action in itself.

It may be that Charmaz deems utterances and actions to constitute merely different types of deed enacted within a context, without giving primacy to one over the other. This would sit comfortably with Wittgenstein's suggestion that moves taken in a language game are all to be construed as a matter of doing, whether they are a physical action or locution. Moreover, Wittgenstein contends 'words' simply 'are deeds' (Pin-Fat, 2011, p.15) and moves taken in language could accord with other types of moves taken on, perhaps, a physical level. Wittgenstein states:

We say "The order orders *this* –", and do it; but also: "The order orders this: I am to ..." We translate it at one time into a sentence, at another into a demonstration, and at another into action. (PI p.140e, §459)

However, whether Charmaz posits components such as motivations, intentions and locutions as divisible from or outside language is unclear.

The generation of codes reflecting action, Charmaz insinuates, facilitates the generation of categories standing for actions taken and the tacit meanings propelling them. Lines of participant talk within her exemplars betray the participant, not acting physically, but rationalising – verbally - a past or future act. However, Charmaz does not explicate whether these strings of words arbitrarily assigned to lines on a page are to be construed as enacting different deeds such as rationalising. Moreover, a participant's act of rationalising itself, or more the 'language game' of rationalising, as Wittgenstein would put it, is not of interest to the researcher. It seems Charmaz is more interested in what impels - or what tacit meanings are connected with - the particular course of action or declared commitment to one.

An example would be useful here. Figure 1 provides an illustration of data arranged in short lines in preparation for micro-analytic coding. These exact lines are contained in an illustration of line-by-line coding within Charmaz' (2006, p.70) methodological text:

Figure 1. Example of arrangement of data in preparation for line-by-line, micro-analytic coding

I can't now, it upsets me too much, I have to live

one day at a time or else there may not be

any me

Here, following the implied tenets of line-by-line coding within Constructivist GT, the utterance '*or else*' provides reasoning for the supposed active strategy adopted by the speaker, namely, '*I have to live one day at a time*' which, in turn, is awarded the code '*living one day at a time*'. However, the very act of reasoning, defending one's decision, or divulging a resolution to live one day at a time and so forth, are not the actions of interest and therefore not coded as such. Rather, this utterance is taken as a message conveyed or reported to the researcher about a state or emotional response extraneous to the interview context, namely, the participant's strategy of living one day at a time. This implies a type of empathic identification which Schwandt (2000) would deem objectivist.

The discursive context of the utterance is also unacknowledged. As Wittgenstein reminds us, a decision might turn out to be a product of the dialogue. An action, decision and utterance can indeed coincide, as he exemplifies in the following:

I am asked: "How long are you staying here?" I reply: "Tomorrow I'm going away; it's the end of the holidays." – But, by contrast, I say, at the end of a quarrel, "All right! Then I'll go tomorrow" – I make a decision. (PI p.163e, §588)

Thus line-by-line coding and the interdiction that one codes for actions which could be reported, implied or connected in all sorts of ways to tacit or 'liminal' (Charmaz, 2006, p.47) meanings provides little methodological directives. The epistemological premises here are fuzzy which may contribute, arguably, to bewilderment on the part of a researcher wishing to extrapolate a guiding set of principles or rules for her analytic practices.

Language and its Relation to Experience

A further aspect potentially unsettling the allegiance between Constructivist GT and the later Wittgenstein is the presupposed emotional state constituting a referent for language. Within Constructivist GT as it stands, there is no allusion to the situated aspects of utterances and the interview scenario whereby a participant explains an emotional state or sense of a personal predicament to a listener. More apparent still is the construal of language as the route into a proffered domain of subjective experience. Little mention is made of the public act of uttering these words, or of subjective experience as merely spoken into being, commensurate with Wittgenstein's later thinking. Further, emotional states may be read into - as part of a particular language game of

reporting or sharing, perhaps – certain utterances like ‘I’m afraid’, as though denoting a ‘state of mind’ (PI p.198e, §85). Pertinently, they could be, equally, a ‘cry of complaint’ (PI p.198e, §84). Wittgenstein’s argument is that such an utterance fits into certain language games containing various moves which may or may not involve the possibility for exclaiming fearfulness, for instance.

Charmaz’ position undulates concerning whether language is the object of analysis, in the sense that nothing essential lies beneath it. Hidden depths pertaining to participants’ subjective experience are invoked by Charmaz’ reference to the researcher’s ‘opening up participants’ experience’ (2006, p.35) and ‘going deep into the phenomena’ (Charmaz, 2009, p.146). This notion of depth is ambiguous, however. Her assertion that words themselves cannot always explicate processes occurring on a psychosocial level, or the emotional experience of participants and that the researcher ‘may have entered the implicit world of meaning, but not of explicit words’ (Charmaz, 2006, p.34) presupposes an object behind language. Alternatively, it may be an idea potentially concurrent with an investigation into the practices and shared ideas about ‘emotional expression’ within forms of life.

Nevertheless, Charmaz’ insinuation is that experiences, whether or not directly stated, are something the researcher accesses, the seeds of which reside within ‘fragments’ (Charmaz, 2006, p.148). Thus Charmaz does not clearly evade the essentialism emanating from Classic GT. Such fragments could be as small as the shortest sequence of words in a line. Pertinently, purported ‘experiences’ are assumed pinned to language and preserved as though frozen within lines of transcription:

Staying close to data, starting from the words and actions of your respondents, preserves the fluidity of their experience. (Charmaz, 2006, p.49)

The fracturing approach or essentialism underpinning line-by-line coding generates potential for a focus on words within a putative unit such as ‘*it upsets me too much*’ whilst disregarding its initial use. For Wittgenstein, abstracting concepts ‘from their proper framework’ presupposes the erroneous assumption that they contain an essence (Phillips, 1977, p.30). In relation to the excerpt (figure 1), fluidity of experience would be deemed to pertain to the sequence of the talk, as though diversion from this particular order and words uttered would erase the subjective experience the researcher seeks to capture. Furthermore, a participant’s choice wording is assumed, erroneously, to possess an ‘aura’ which it ‘retains in every kind of use’ (PI p.53e, §117).

The way the grounds could still be conceived in accordance with Socio-Linguistic Realism is for the researcher to analyse emotional expressions in terms of the objects they speak into existence, albeit an object perceived to be real in the context. If this were the case then further consideration is warranted of the context in which they achieved such effects since word use and meaning to sign-

users, for Wittgenstein, are relative to such contexts. However, the discernment of such contexts, abiding by the analytic approach of Constructivist GT, is potentially riddled with problems, as detailed below.

Risk of Dislocation from 'Use'

When a word or string of words become detached from an original context, everything that went next to it which the user selected to confer a certain meaning is lost. The surrounds of a word would include other words connected with it and the circumstances in which it is uttered. If when deploying line-by-line coding one decides a combination of words like '*any me*' (figure 1) constitutes a 'piece' of data, with scant regard to the chameleon - like qualities of individual words (Ackerman, 1988), de-contextualisation becomes a problem. If the researcher persisted with fragmenting, or conceiving of data as 'pieces', then the apportioning of meaning 'units' becomes extremely complex. As Wittgenstein reminds us, each utterance is given meaning 'inside a fixed hermeneutical horizon' (Ackerman, 1988, p.49); moreover, words do not have a 'designative relationship to the world outside' (Ackerman, 1988, p.50).

There is little exemplification within Constructivist GT of how the researcher accounts for the context within which utterances achieve their meaning. If Charmaz' position disavowed a reference point beyond the internally coherent micro-contexts she seeks to understand, she would need to explicate how the researcher identifies the bounded contexts within which meaning is conferred. However, as it stands, there are few avenues in terms of analytic practices for the identification of the boundaries set, perhaps, in terms of language games. Further, there is little recognition that multiple language games might be at play all at once. Indeed, simply because lines from consecutive moments within an interview are analysed, it may not follow that only one language game was at play during such moments. Moreover, the act of the identification of language games in itself would be problematic through proffering a researcher external to such language games.

Conclusion

Wittgenstein's thinking has been used in this article to help clarify Constructivist GT's ambiguities and decipher its rules. However, the fuzziness of its epistemological stance makes such rules difficult to specify. Charmaz invites the researcher to supersede Classic GT's objectivist predilections by coding to capture participants' contextualised meanings. However, Charmaz' apparent aim to dissociate from the notion of correspondence to objects does not extend to all practices integral to

Constructivist GT. Line-by-line coding has been isolated to highlight the type of matter the researcher would deal with and the differing conceptions which could be held regarding the linguistic utterances exemplified. There are intermittent manifestations of essentialism conspicuous through the requirement to remain 'close to' data. Charmaz makes recourse to the intermeshing of actions, tacit meanings and linguistic utterances, but makes no firm commitment concerning whether utterances are to be considered deeds enacted, or conduits for expressing a mental state. It seems both could be possible, thereby potentially confounding the researcher when engaged in line-by-line coding. Further, a weakly defined conception of language may impede a confident enactment of coding since so many aspects of participants' language could be deemed pertinent.

Within this article it is suggested that to lend greater coherence to Constructivist GT and ameliorate its inner tensions, Gilroy's Socio-Linguistic Realism is deployed. The grounds posited would thus be the internally coherent social contexts themselves. Any horizon for ascertaining words and their meanings would not be external to such systems. However, this would necessitate changes to Constructivist GT's analytic practices so they concur with the idea that certain effects are brought about by language use. Charmaz' upholding of essential qualities or aura behind participants' choice wording to achieve grounding betrays her reluctance to relinquish her reach for external referents. In order to accord with Socio-Linguistic Realism, such emotional expressions would need to be analysed in regard to their generation within particular language games.

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