

## Editorial for special section: Grounded theory in qualitative research

Item Type	Article
Authors	Fleet, Doreen;Reeves, Andrew;Taylor, Paul;Gabriel, Lynne
Citation	Fleet, D., Reeves, A., Taylor, P., & Gabriel, L. (2023). Editorial for special section: Grounded theory in qualitative research. <i>Counselling and Psychotherapy Research</i> , 23(4), 871-873. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1002/capr.12677">https://doi.org/10.1002/capr.12677</a>
DOI	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1002/capr.12677">10.1002/capr.12677</a>
Publisher	Wiley
Journal	Counselling and Psychotherapy Research
Rights	CC0 1.0 Universal
Download date	2026-05-11 09:31:18
Item License	<a href="https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/">https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/</a>
Link to Item	<a href="http://hdl.handle.net/10034/628220">http://hdl.handle.net/10034/628220</a>

## **Editorial for special section: Grounded theory in qualitative research**

Doreen Fleet Andrew Reeves Paul Taylor Lynne Gabriel

Woods (2003) indicated a rise in the popularity of using grounded theory in qualitative social science research, describing it as “a meteoric rise” (p. 4). The crucial question is, how can we account for this resurgence of using grounded theory in such contemporary qualitative studies? Tolhurst (2012) argued how “grounded theory methods hold a position of high esteem” within social science, suggesting how the apparent rigour in grounded theory may be a contributing factor accounting for its popularity with qualitative researchers. Today, grounded theory is an increasingly used method in qualitative studies within counselling and psychotherapy.

There are various approaches to grounded theory, and three primary approaches include Glaser's (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) classical grounded theory, Strauss and Corbin's (1990) postpositivist position and Charmaz's (2014) constructivist perspective. There are similarities between all three approaches in that they “use similar procedures and vocabulary, yet there are also important differences amongst them” (Singh & Estefan, 2018, p. 1).

Glaser viewed the researcher in an objectivist way, a neutral enquirer, aiming to minimise the researcher's personal bias. Strauss and Corbin did accept the inevitability of researcher influence and established a systematic approach to be adopted during analysis, minimising subjective researcher bias. In contrast, Charmaz (2014) viewed interpretation and human interaction as essential to acquiring knowledge, viewing research as a collective process between the researcher and participants.

This special section aims to inform the readers how taking a grounded theory approach in qualitative research can contribute to theory within counselling and psychotherapy. The six papers that make up the special section vary in how grounded theory was adapted for each study. In addition, they offer their rationales for decisions made, with all authors sharing their findings and their theoretical frameworks established.

Contemporary public debates are explored, including theoretical sampling, the evolution of grounded theory involving pragmatic theoretical saturation, the dual role of counsellor–researcher when adopting grounded theory, decoloniality and how this method can promote inclusivity, diversity and social justice in research.

The first paper by Fleet and Reeves, “Adapting Strauss and Corbin's grounded theory to clinical case study research in the field of counselling,” considers how Strauss and Corbin's grounded theory (GT) can be adapted to clinical case study research within counselling and psychotherapy. The article argues that GT has much to offer research within this field, providing a structure through which new ideas and concepts can be developed and tested. The reader is guided through the process by drawing on case examples from a more extensive multiple-case study; in addition to establishing theoretical understanding, the article provides important practice insights for the counsellor and psychotherapist.

Second, attention moves to the concept of decoloniality. Blunden's article, “A grounded

theory of improvisation in therapy: Lessons from decoloniality," is a reflective paper, using a case example of theorising the category of improvisation to deliberate decolonial use of literature in GT. The researcher shares their own process of decolonial thinking towards this category, with a perspective change occurring once they attempted to delink by applying a decolonised lens. The researcher argues for a critical-reflexive stance towards existing theory when aiming to establish more vital, convivial and emancipatory theories.

This third article by Wiklund et al., "Living (dys)regulated and alienated young masculinity – young men's embodied experience of mental health disorders and suicidality," investigates the embodied experiences of young men who experience mental disorders and suicidality. Semistructured interviews were completed with 13 young men who sought help with their mental disorders and suicidality.

Constructivist GT was adopted, and one core category of "living (dys)regulated and alienated young masculinity" was established. Other related categories include "battling with the emotional body," "suffering in social silence", and "balancing embodied darkness and distress."

How participants managed their embodied and emotional suffering is viewed as a complex and dynamic process in the context of masculine and social norms, alongside insufficient social support. The researcher acknowledges the value of utilising broad approaches to understand young men's mental health and suicidality, which is relevant for therapists and other healthcare professionals.

The fourth study by Maurya et al., "Evolution and process of spiritual awakening: a grounded theory study," also adopted constructivist GT to explore, examine and develop a theory of spiritual awakening. The participants interviewed were published authors and eminent spiritual teachers. The aim was to establish a model that was relevant for therapists and counselling training programmes. The spiritual awakening evolution (SAE) model established identified a cognitive shift during spiritual awakening with four components, including:

- a shift from small self-focussed identities and conditions to a broader sense of self;
- a shift from past- and future-focussed orientations to the present- moment awareness;
- an opening heart and loving presence with a higher sense of love, kindness and compassion towards everyone and everything; and
- a shift from outward focus to inward focus with an expansive embodied way of being.

The researchers communicate how addressing a client's spiritual needs is a significant feature of culturally competent counselling, and Maurya et al. point out how therapists need to be prepared. Such preparation will involve education about the nature of the SAE model and how clients experience the process of spiritual awakening. The researchers argue how such an understanding of the phenomenology of SA will contribute to multicultural competence and reduce the risk of therapists pathologising clients related to sacred, transpersonal and mystical experiences.

Davies et al.'s study, "'Being human': a grounded theory approach to exploring how trainers

on clinical psychology doctorate programmes decide whether or not to disclose personal experiences of psychological distress to clinical psychology doctorate trainees” aimed to explore the processes and factors involved in trainers deciding whether to disclose personal distress experiences to trainees, generating factors of relevance across counselling, psychotherapy and psychology training courses. In-depth interviews were conducted with trainers on doctorate clinical psychology programmes, and constructivist GT was adopted. Findings indicate that participants valued disclosure both personally and professionally.

However, trainers were aware of the dangers of disclosing their personal experiences to themselves and trainees. Participants reported how they were cautious in how and when they disclosed. A series of criteria were adhered to so that disclosures were safe and helpful. The researchers established a theoretical framework to guide trainers in the decision-making process of whether to disclose or not, which is relevant to trainers delivering teaching on counselling, psychotherapy and psychology training courses.

The final article by Becker-Neu and Rohr, “Ten principles of counselling: Grounded theory in a mixed method research project” is an extensive mixed methods study that utilises Charmaz's GT, providing a systemic-constructivist research paradigm suited to the aims of this study. The research established 10 general principles for qualified counsellors incorporating attitudes and interventions. In addition, it is asserted that these principles could be incorporated into teaching counselling trainees in preparation to deliver effective therapy for clients once qualified.

For example, the first principle of clarifying context and goals also involves the possibility that goals can change and should be discussed again later in therapy. The second goal of accepting suffering (feelings and needs) involves therapists offering empathy, appreciation and congruence to help clients explore their feelings and needs to help them cope with high levels of suffering. The researchers identify eight other principles, and it is argued that all 10 together provide a new theory for counselling and a basis for qualified counsellors and counselling training programmes.

Collectively, these papers promote an understanding of how GT can be adopted for qualitative research within counselling and psychotherapy, demonstrating how the different methods of GT have been applied in the various studies featured. The papers convey how GT can be attuned to inform and advance key professional, social and societal challenges, including training. They demonstrate how an emancipatory and decolonising approach can contribute to advancing our understanding of theory and practice.

Importantly, they provide key contributions to advancing contemporary perspectives on human spirituality and psychology and the innovation of counselling approaches through the medium of a GT- GT-informed lens.

Correspondence

Doreen Fleet, University of Chester, Chester, UK.

Email: [d.fleet@chester.ac.uk](mailto:d.fleet@chester.ac.uk)

## REFER EN CE S

- Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing grounded theory* (2nd ed.). Sage.
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Aldine.
- Singh, S., & Estefan, A. (2018). Selecting a grounded theory approach for nursing research. *Global Qualitative Nursing Research*, 5(1–9), 233339361879957. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2333393618799571>
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Sage.
- Tolhurst, E. (2012). Grounded theory method. *Sociology Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 13(3), Art. 26.
- Woods, L. (2003). Grounded theory explained. *Nurse Researcher*, 11(2), 2.