



## checklist

- Inductive researchers seek to build theory from data rather than test existing theories.
- Grounded theory involves an iterative process characterised by an ongoing interplay of data collection and analysis.
- Through theoretical sampling, grounded theorists attempt to focus data collection on themes which have emerged from earlier data analysis.
- Grounded theorists develop theory through the detailed coding of data.
- Codes are gradually refined and eventually integrated and reduced through a process of constant comparison of the data pertaining to them.
- During the process of constant comparison, memos are used to record hunches, possibilities and ideas.
- Existing theory and research are drawn on only once the process of theory generation is at an advanced stage.
- Grounded theory has been criticised by some for being overly prescriptive, for lacking explanatory power and for overestimating the possibilities of researcher neutrality.
- Many qualitative researchers use selected features associated with grounded theory, without adopting the approach in its entirety.



## project

This mini project is designed to help you work through the process of carrying out open coding, as outlined in section 6.3.2.

Below is an excerpt from an interview conducted as part of a recent study on alternative subcultures and harassment (Garland and Hodkinson, 2014). The interviewee identifies as a goth and is talking about his experiences of being threatened in public places.

Your task is to open-code this extract. Remember, the idea of open coding is to go through data line by line, developing a relatively high number of fairly specific codes that help make sense of what the extract is about.

After you have finished your coding, you should discuss your experience of the process and the list of codes you developed in small groups. In your discussions, consider the following questions:

- What are the similarities and differences in the way each of you coded the extract? Think about which of the details in the extract you coded as well as how you categorised them.
- Did any of you have repeated instances of the same code at different points in the extract? If so, did you develop or change the code (or other codes) as more instances emerged?
- Was your coding descriptive or analytical, would you say? Would it be possible to reduce some of your initial codes into broader, more explanatory concepts?
- How did you find the process of open coding this data extract? What worked or didn't work and what have you learned about the benefits and/or problems of this meticulous approach to the interpretation of qualitative data?

The next stage, should you have the time to continue, would be to see if you can reduce some of your specific initial codes into broader concepts with greater explanatory power and, having done so, to begin to think through how the different concepts might relate to one another.

## Project data extract

A: 'I was living in [town] and I got my first leather trench coat ... and some lads drove past in a car, stopped, got out and started insulting me and threatening me. Again, so I'm about fifteen/sixteen at this point, and these four lads have gotten out of a car and they're all around me in a circle: 'you freak, you dress differently, you're weird!'

I got home and I felt really threatened, so I spoke to the Police ... And they sent an officer out to take a statement and, I kid you not, his first comment to me, after I'd explained what had happened was, 'have you ever thought about not dressing this way?' And he just couldn't understand it ... why do something that's going to attract attention, you know, why put yourself out there? Why don't you be more normal, be more like them? That's normal, they are considered normal. It is considered normal for people to behave that way to goths. We are seen as the outsiders. The masses, the majority, the normal people are the ones who criticise us and who don't understand us and who think it's fine to insult and use violence, you know. Chavs, people hate them, but they're normal, you're used to seeing them.

Q: Do you think they are seen as normal, because they take quite a lot of flak, don't they?

A: They do, they do, because they go out of their way to attract that attention, you know, they provoke people, they are antisocial. We're not but we come in for more flak from everyone ... because we are so different. Chavs are an annoying but accepted part of mainstream culture, we aren't. And as a result, fear, suspicion, mistrust, misplaced aggression and violence, that's what we get. And that's it, it's always that way. 'Well, why don't you stop being that way, why don't you be normal?' And the response is always, look at the way normal people treat me, my friends! Why in God's name would I ever want to be normal? After every time I am harassed, I am more convinced that I am doing the right thing, I am who I want to be.

Q: So it makes you feel stronger?

A: Absolutely, it validates me, because what's the alternative, be like them? That's normal, that's, they're normal, no thank you very much. I'll stay the way I am and I'll take the flak.

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