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GIBBS: Well, as I said at the beginning, grounded theory is a very popular approach. And for that reason, if no other, there are lots of different versions of grounded theory. And I've mentioned some of these names as I go through that's just to recap them.

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Glaser and Strauss, Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss were the originators. They wrote the first book, "The Discovery of Grounded Theory," and several books after that as well, elucidating it in more detail.

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Strauss later on wrote with Corbin, this must have been the, let me think, it was the '80s I think that first book first came out, the mid-'80s, Strauss and Corbin. And at that stage it was a kind of split with Glaser, who carried on writing on his own about his view on things.

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More recently in the last 20 years or so, Kathy Charmaz, another American researcher, in the health, she's a health psychologist, I think, by background.

She's written a lot about grounded theory and has been pushing what's been come called the constructivist approach to grounded theory.

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So we start with Glaser, who has tried to hang on to what he sees as the core of the original grounded theory. And for him, constant comparison is the key here. A theory emerges through constant comparison.

There's no need to come with any theories. He's very much of that purist end of the spectrum, who thinks that you don't start with any theories at all.

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Although he does admit, he has written this in various papers, that at later stages through analysis, then you can start bringing in theories from outside. But for him, the theory should emerge by constant comparison.

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He accuses Strauss and Corbin of being too prescriptive. All those kind of techniques I've just been through, he doesn't like that.

He doesn't like that idea. He doesn't like having these kind of models and ideas like, you know, the context, the phenomena, the strategies, those kind of ideas that Strauss and Corbin have. He thinks that's too prescriptive.

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Constant comparison is a mechanism for developing theory, not having models and so on. But that is what Strauss and Corbin do. They suggest this much more kind of structured approach to grounded theory.

That's maybe why they're so popular because actually that's what people want. People want and like explicit instructions about how to do things. So it's become popular for that reason.

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But Charmaz, as I said, has taken up the baton in more recent years. She's still writing, in fact, had a book out on grounded theory a year or two ago, which is on the list I gave you.

And she's taking much more of a constructivist view, well, although actually even that is contested.

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She argues that both Strauss and Corbin and Glaser, or Glaser and Strauss as well, all of them are far too realist in their approach.

She argues that what they say is that, what they argue is that effectively there's a world out there that we can simply accept. There's no interpretation, it's just simply what's there.

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And of course, as a constructivist, she argues that no, the world is not like that. We construct our world, and it's the constructions that you have to grapple with in your grounded theory. Who knows what is actually there? Who cares about that?

It's the way we construe the world. It's the way we construct a social reality for ourselves, that's really key for her. So very much a modern kind of constructivist approach to things.

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Actually, it's argued that she's perhaps a bit too hard on these people. I mean, as I said earlier on, both Glaser and Strauss were influenced very much by symbolic interactionism, where the key is about interpretation.

So I think they do accept that there has to be interpretation of things.

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And perhaps what Charmaz is perhaps strongest on is the fact that actually she recognizes that that interpretation isn't something which is done in society in general, although it does happen, and Strauss and Corbin and Glaser also agree to that.

But actually interpretation is something that the researcher does, the researcher brings to it.

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And so I think the strength of Charmaz is perhaps the recognition that in grounded theory how you the researcher interpret and construct things is just as important as how your respondents do. And so recognition of that kind of reflexivity, I suppose, in research is quite important.

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So there's a lot of debate going on, and if you read the book I told you about earlier on, "The SAGE Handbook," it's full of these debates going on between the different theorists. Or if you really want to get really tetchy about it, go on to Glaser's website, Barney Glaser's website, it's full of him saying, "These idiots, they don't know what they're doing," et cetera.

In fact, some of his papers, if you read some of his recent papers, you'll find that. He's quite angry about it.

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Let me finish with, I think this is the last one? Yeah. Critiques of Grounded Theory. What's the problems with it? Well, I've already kind of critiqued this, this idea of setting aside theory of starting with, you know, it's an inductive approach. You induct the theory from the data you've got.

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It's very hard to set it aside. I mean, the argument these days is generally accepted that there can be no theory-neutral observation, that whatever we do is always embedded in a theory and an interpretation in a meaningful structure. So we can't avoid that.

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And anyway, researchers often have to build it in. If you're a researcher making bids for money or a PhD student making a proposal to a university to do a PhD, you have to mention the research.

You have to mention the literature. You can't avoid it. It's there, and you can't clear your mind from it. So it's a very hard thing to do.

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Theoretical sampling is one of the key points of grounded theory, but it does take a lot of time. And again, I think a lot of people actually don't do it. Often they call themselves grounded theorists.

People will say they did grounded theory, but what they actually did was coding.

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Theoretical sampling is often something that gets left aside. And sampling is done, you know, the sample is designed before they even start the empirical work. So theoretical sampling, it takes too long to do it.

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Other criticisms come from some people -- I'm trying to remember the names now. It's Amanda Coffey -- oh, Paul Atkinson. Atkinson and Coffey. Paul Atkinson and Amanda Coffey wrote a book about 10 years ago now on qualitative analysis.

I think an excellent book, but in there they make the point, the argument, quite strongly that one of the drawbacks of coding, any kind of coding, whether it's grounded theory or any other kind of theory, breaks up the narrative flow.

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And as we'll see in the session next week when I'll talk much more about -- sorry, not next week, next term when I'll talk about narrative, you know, the essence of a narrative approach is to get the kind of the flow of a story through the text.

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And then there's a whole issue of realist versus constructionist. I've just rehearsed this on the previous slide, so I won't go over it now.

But essentially, Glaser and Strauss, that's the G & S, not Gilbert and Sullivan. Glaser and Strauss believe the concepts and categories lie in the data and are discovered. That's why the book was called "The Discovery of Grounded Theory."

You discover the theory in the data, that's grounded data. So it's there in some sense already.

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Whereas Charmaz, researchers construct categories. So I've said that already.

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So here's some of the critical views that have been taken, not universally popular like grounded theory, and certainly some of the strongest critiques come from the constructionist end of the dimension.