Theorizing with Grounded Theory: a methodological pathway for communication research[a]

Teorizar com a Grounded Theory: um caminho metodológico para as pesquisas em comunicação

F R A N C I S C O   L E I T E[b]

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ABSTRACT:

The objective of this paper, based on bibliographical research, is to inscribe a reflection on the process of theorizing, following the constructivist grounded theory methodology guidelines. It also proposes to present and discuss the type of theory that can be produced with this qualitative methodological path, highlighting its potential for writing communication research that, through structured and progressive analysis procedures, seeks to generate substantive theoretical explanations about a problem delimited in a specific area, based on data (interviews, documents, media materialities, etc.). Finally, as a practical implication, this paper provides some guidelines on conducting research with grounded theory by elucidating the "troublesome trinity" characteristic of the methodology: theoretical sampling, constant comparison method, and theoretical saturation.

Keywords: Grounded Theory; methodology; theorizing; communication research

RESUMO

O objetivo deste trabalho, direcionado por uma pesquisa bibliográfica, é inscrever uma reflexão sobre o processo de teorizar seguindo as diretrizes da metodologia *grounded theory* construtivista. Este artigo busca também apresentar e discutir o tipo de teoria que pode ser produzido com esse caminho metodológico qualitativo, ressaltando, desse modo, o potencial que ele oferece para a edificação de pesquisas em comunicação que, considerando um problema delimitado em uma área específica, busquem gerar explanações teóricas de processos sociais enraizadas nos dados (entrevistas, documentos, materialidades midiáticas etc.). Como implicação prática, por fim, são fornecidos alguns direcionamentos sobre como conduzir investigações com a *grounded theory* ao elucidar a "tríade problemática", característica da metodologia, a saber: amostragem teórica, método comparativo constante e saturação teórica.

Palavras-Chave: *Grounded Theory*, metodologia, teorizar, pesquisas em comunicação

B ASED ON BIBLIOGRAPHICAL research, this paper aims to inscribe a reflection that guides the theorizing process following the guidelines of the constructivist grounded theory methodology (GTM) (Charmaz, 2006/2014). It also attempts to discuss the type of theory that can be produced with this methodological path, emphasizing the potential it offers for the construction of research in communication that, considering a problem delimited in a specific area, seeks to generate theoretical explanations of social processes grounded in the data.

Thus, with the knowledge organized in this paper, it is hoped to inspire researchers from the field to learn more about GTM and consider it an available alternative for future investigations.

With its roots in Chicago School sociology, symbolic interactionism, and pragmatism[1] philosophy, the GTM is a set of procedures and techniques that, when systematically operated in qualitative research[2], allow the construction of a grounded theory (GT) about a specific basic social process[3]. It is relevant to emphasize that the term grounded theory names both the methodology and the product resulting from its applicability, the theory.

Kathy Charmaz and Linda L. Belgrave, reinforcing these guidelines, point out that "grounded theory is an iterative, comparative, and interactive method that begins with inductive data" (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2019, pp. 743-744) and moves on to abductive reasoning (Leite, 2015a, Charmaz, 2006/2014). In the same perspective, Ylona C. Tie, Melanie Birks, and Karen Francis emphasize that GT is a structured but flexible methodology. It "is appropriate when little is known about a phenomenon" (Tie et al., 2019, pp. 1-2). Antony Bryant (2021) complements the authors by pointing out that this methodological design can be adapted to open new doors in already explored research areas. Thus, as will be discussed later in this paper, the results of the GT investigation need to provide

> **a dense and systematic theoretical interpretation** of what happens in a certain phenomenon. In this sense, a peculiar (though ambitious) feature of GT is that it is particularly apt for the exploration, not of static phenomena, but of the processes underlying such phenomena and their dynamics, **perceived in their respective contexts**. The GT aims to bring out the social processes and the underlying psychological processes that underlie the phenomena being investigated (Tarozzi, 2011, pp. 22, emphasis added).

John W. Creswell (2007) and Tarozzi (2011), considering the international context by mutual agreement, point to ethnography, *grounded theory,* and phenomenology as the three main methodological approaches traditionally used in

[1] Charmaz elucidates that pragmatism is "an American philosophical tradition that views reality as characterized by indeterminacy and fluidity, and as open to multiple interpretations. Pragmatism assumes that people are active and creative. In pragmatist philosophy, meanings emerge through practical actions to solve problems, and through actions people come to know the world. Pragmatists see facts and values as linked rather than separate and truth as relativistic and provisional" (Charmaz, 2006/2014, p. 344).

[2] Glaser (2008) argues for and guides the possibility that GTM can also be applied in a quantitative approach.

[3] For Charmaz, "a process consists of unfolding temporal sequences in which single events become linked as part of a larger whole. Thus temporal sequences are linked in a process and lead to change. A process may have identifiable markers with clear beginnings and endings and benchmarks in between or may be much more diffuse and less visible but nonetheless evident when comparisons are made over time" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 344). Also, according to this author, what will be defined by "basic" is always an interpretation of the researcher.

qualitative research. However, Creswell (2007) also places narrative research and case study in this framework. In the Brazilian context, in dialogue with these guidelines, Maria Immacolata Vassallo de Lopes (2003, pp. 150), specifically observing communication research, points to the case study, the ethnographic research, and the documentary research, among others, as some of the most used qualitative methodological approaches. In this same framework, Luisa Massarani and Mariana Rocha (2018) reinforce the salient use of documentary and case study research in Brazilian media research.

Considering this overview, even extrapolating the central objectives of this paper, it is believed to be opportune for its rational informing and pointing out, albeit briefly, a comparative contrast between some characteristics of these main qualitative methodological approaches. Thus, for this exercise, table 1 is shared, which organizes and weighs up some contrasts between the GTM and the five methodological approaches repeatedly indicated in the works of Creswell (2007), Tarozzi (2011), Lopes (2003) and Massarani and Rocha (2018): the ethnography, the phenomenology, the narrative research, the case study, and the documentary research.

The characteristics considered in table 1 deal with the objectives of the methodological approach and examples of research questions, the type of problem that best fits the methodological *design*, the unit of analysis, the forms of data collection, the strategies of data analysis, and the possible results. However, the rationale of this comparative contrast will not be deepened in this opportunity, considering the objectives of this paper and its limited space. In addition, in a certain way, this task is already competently recorded in the literature, especially in the classic works of Creswell (2007), Tarozzi (2011), Wertz and colleagues (2011), and Morse and Field (1996). Therefore, table 1 in this text should be observed as a reference point to, objectively, throughout the reading, facilitate and exercise the perception about some traits that circumvent the distinctions, possibilities, and limits of doing research with GTM compared to the other qualitative methodologies considered.

Table 1
Contrasting features among the five main qualitative methodological approaches

Methodology (disciplinary background)	Objectives and examples of research questions	Type of problem that best fits the methodological design	Unity of analysis	Forms of data collection (used alone or in combination)	Data analysis strategies	Possible results
GROUNDED THEORY Sociology (Creswell, 2007)	- To generate a theory that interprets the processes underlying a phenomenon (Tarozzi, 2011). - To develop a grounded theory on data from the field (Creswell, 2007). - What's going on here? (Glaser, 1978); What processes...? What factors influence...? (Tarozzi, 2011).	- Grounding a theory in relevant empirical data that reveal the opinions, feelings, intentions, and actions of participants, as well as the contexts and structures of their lives (Charmaz, 2006/2014).	- Study a process, action or interaction involving many individuals (Creswell, 2007) and/ or documents, etc. (Charmaz, 2006/2014).	- In-depth interviews, elicited or extant documents (texts and or images), observation etc. (Charmaz, 2006/2014; Tarozzi, 2011).	- Analyze the data through GT codings. (Creswell, 2007). For example: initial coding, focused coding and theoretical coding. (Charmaz, 2006/2014).	- A *Grounded Theory*, that is, an interpretive theory that can integrate, synthesize, and conceptualize the empirical data. (Tarozzi, 2011). - Generate a theory illustrated in a figure (diagram and or concept maps). (Creswell, 2007). - Theory, models or structures, or conceptual schemas. (Bryant, 2017).
PHENOMENOLOGY Philosophy, Psychology, and Education (Creswell, 2007)	- To understand the meaning (or essence) that subjects assign to the lived experience (Tarozzi, 2011). - To understand the essence of the experience (Creswell, 2007). - What is it like ...? What does it mean to be/work ... (Tarozzi, 2011).	- The necessity of describing the essence of a lived phenomenon (Creswell, 2007).	- Study multiple individuals who have shared the experience (Creswell, 2007).	- In-depth interviews. (Morse & Field, 1990). - Interviews with individuals, documents, observations and arts. (Creswell, 2007).	- Analyze data for meaningful statements, units of meaning, textual and structural description, description of ''essence''. (Creswell, 2007).	- Detailed reflective description of the experience. (Morse & Field, 1990). - Description of the ''essence'' of the experience. (Creswell, 2007).

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Methodology (disciplinary background)	Objectives and examples of research questions	Type of problem that best fits the methodological design	Unity of analysis	Forms of data collection (used alone or in combination)	Data analysis strategies	Possible results
ETHNOGRAPHY Anthropology and Sociology (Creswell, 2007)	- To describe a culture or a group through its symbolic systems (Tarozzi, 2011). - Describing and interpreting a group's cultural sharing (Creswell, 2007). - In what ways does this group …? How is culture transmitted…? (Tarozzi, 2011).	- Describe and interpret the culture patterns shared by a group (Creswell, 2007).	- Study a group that shares the same culture (Creswell, 2007).	- Observations, interviews, among other sources (Creswell, 2007), e.g., documents (Morse & Field, 1996).	- Analyze the data by describing the sharing of group culture; themes about the group (Creswell, 2007).	- "Thick description" of cultures and groups. (Geertz, 1973). - Description of how the sharing of a group's culture works. (Creswell, 2007).
NARRATIVE RESEARCH Anthropology, Literature, History, Psychology and Sociology (Creswell, 2007)	- To explore an individual's life. (Creswell, 2007). - To explore stories about a certain topic to find information to understand a certain phenomenon (Paiva, 2008). - What is happening…?. What are people doing? What does it mean to them? What is it like…?' (Elliott, 2005).	- The need to tell stories of individual experiences (Creswell, 2007).	- Study one or more individuals (Creswell, 2007).	- In-depth interviews and documents (Creswell, 2007).	- Analyze data for stories, "restore" stories, develop themes, often using a chronology (Creswell, 2007).	- Development of a narrative about individual's life of an individual. (Creswell, 2007).
CASE STUDY Sociology, Law, Political Science and Medicine (Creswell, 2007)	- To develop an in-depth description and analysis of a case or multiple cases. (Creswell, 2007). - To develop a detailed analysis of a person or group, especially, as a model of phenomena (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). - How…? Why… (does some social phenomenon work)? (Yin, 2018).	- Provide an in-depth understanding of a case (or cases) (Creswell, 2007).	- Study an event, a program, an activity, one or more individuals (Creswell, 2007).	- Interviews, observations, documents, artifacts etc. (Creswell, 2007).	- Analyze data through case description and case themes, as well as cross-case themes (Creswell, 2007).	- Development of a detailed analysis of one or more cases. (Creswell, 2007).

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Methodology (disciplinary background)	Objectives and examples of research questions	Type of problem that best 5ts the methodological design	Unity of analysis	Forms of data collection (used alone or in combination)	Data analysis strategies	Possible results
DOCUMENTARY RESEARCH Sociology, History etc. (McCulloch, 2004; Mogalakwe, 2009).	- To explore and analyze documents that contain information about the phenomenon you want to study (Bailey 1994) and elucidate (Cellard, 2008). - A research is documentary when this is the qualitative approach to research. But, document analysis can also be adopted as a complementary strategy to other methodologies (Flick, 2004, 2009). - What is the criterion…? How is it used…? (Mogalakwe, 2009).	- Need for apprehension, understanding, and analysis of documents of the most varied types (Sá-Silva et al., 2009).	- Analyze, organize and categorize public, private or personal documents (Mogalakwe, 2009).	- Written and unwritten documents. (Figueiredo, 2007). - Written and iconographic documents. (Lakatos & Marconi, 2003).	- 1) *Preliminary document analysis*; socio-historical context, the authors, authenticity and reliability, nature (media, legal, etc.), key concepts, and internal logic of the document. (Cellard, 2008). - 2) *Document data analysis*, e.g.: content analysis (Platt, 1981; Pimentel, 2001), language and discourse studies (McCulloch, 2004) etc.	- A coherent interpretation, considering the theme or the initial questioning. (Sá-Silva et al., 2009). - Useful analytical descriptions; a correct understanding of how people understand or understood the situations of interest; the construction of a systemic model of an area of social life etc. (Platt, 1981).

Source: Adapted from Creswell (2007), Tarozzi (2011), and Morse and Field (1996).

Back to the central reflections of this paper, it is necessary to point out that the GTM is little disseminated and used in research in the communication field in Brazil (Bittencourt, 2017). In this context, as an exception, some rare and punctual research are observed, for example, those produced by Nilda Jacks (2000), Suely Fragoso and colleagues (2011), Francisco Leite (2015a) and Maíra Bittencourt (2017), which inform and guide the field on the opportunities for articulation between GTM and communication studies.

Jacks (2000), for example, presents a brief discussion articulating GTM (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and the family history technique to "collaborate to the debate on qualitative research, the main platform for reception studies" (Jacks, 2000, pp. 10). Fragoso and colleagues (2011), in the book "Métodos de pesquisa para internet" (Internet Research Methods), offer the chapter "Teoria Fundamentada" (Grounded Theory), in which they present and discuss GTM as a research perspective for cyberspace. In this text, the authors also show a short case study on Twitter to illustrate the rationale discussed in the methodology. Leite (2015a), in turn, inscribes a critical reflection on the sensibilities of reasoning and some specific procedures for conducting investigations with constructivist GTM (Charmaz, 2006/2014). The work of Bittencourt (2017), on the other hand, in dialogue with the text by Fragoso, Recuero and Amaral (2011), guides how to use the procedures and techniques of this methodology in research focused on social media.

Thus, aiming to complement and contribute to the efforts of these works, this article, focusing on reaching its objectives, already pointed out, organizes the construction of its rationale having as directions to explain the following questions: What kind of theory does this methodology make it possible to develop? What procedures and techniques must be met and operated for research to be recognized as a constructivist grounded theory? What are the challenges/problems involved in proceeding with this methodology? How has GTM been and can be applied in communication research?

Therefore, to situate and advance the reading of this paper, it is pertinent to strategically rescue some points about the historical, philosophical, and epistemological perspectives of the origin and development of GT. This perspective has been established for more than fifty years, with the American sociologists Barney G. Glaser (1930-2022) and Anselm L. Strauss (1916-1996).

THREE MAIN VERSIONS OF GROUNDED THEORY

In the 1960s, Glaser and Strauss gradually introduced the GTM to the scientific field and society through key publications that denoted the outlines of its methodological percepts, procedures, and techniques. Throughout this

period, they published the book *Awareness of Dying* (Glaser & Strauss, 1965), with the results of seminal research they conducted following the foundations of the methodology. Afterward, according to Bryant (2017), the researchers published the classic book *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: strategies for qualitative research* (1967), which provided direct guidance on the details and potential of the methodology for theory building. Glaser and Strauss complemented these two works with another related study, *Time for Dying* (1968). The literature recognizes this trilogy as the main foundational text of the grounded theory methodology.

> The construction of this methodology sought to combat the strong positivist line predominant in scientific research in the 1960s. In this period, qualitative research was weakening and losing ground, especially in sociology, to the sophisticated quantitative methods based on positivism, "dominant paradigm of inquiry in routine natural science" (Charmaz, 2009a, p. 18). With the elaboration of *grounded theory*, Glaser and Strauss sought to address two existing criticisms: first, that qualitative research was not appropriate for theory Generation and second, that the methods used did not have scientific credibility. (Leite, 2018, p. 137).

In this course, Charmaz (2006/2014) recalls that Glaser and Strauss proclaimed a revolutionary message, with their methodological proposal, by offering to the scientific field a path of systematic and rigorous qualitative analysis, with its logic and capability of producing underlined theories "with the close connection between theoretical and empirical research and [inscribed] in the narrow space between theory and empirical reality" (Tarozzi, 2011, p. 20). The founders of GTM also "aimed to move qualitative inquiry beyond descriptive studies into the realm of explanatory theoretical frameworks" (Charmaz, 2006/2014, p. 8).

In this sense, Glaser and Strauss (1967), Glaser (1978), and Strauss (1987) have organized and provided a "constellation of methods" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 14) for the establishment of theoretical practice guided by GTM. According to Charmaz (2006/2014), theorizing implies that researchers work by focusing on simultaneous involvement in data collection and analysis (from the beginning to the end of the investigative process); building analytic codes and categories from the data; using the constant comparison method; advancing theory development at each step of data collection and analysis; writing memos to elaborate categories, specify their properties, determine relationships between categories, and identify gaps; sampling directed toward theory building [theoretical sampling]; and conducting literature review after developing an independent analysis. These points will be taken up and explored with more attention later.

However, this last point indicated by Charmaz was considered one of the most controversial in applying the methodology. In the initial vision of its founders, especially that of Glaser, the objective of postponing the bibliographic review would be to avoid researchers from "seeing the world through the lens of extant ideas" (Charmaz, 2006/2014, p. 8). However, after the 1967 publication, Strauss expressed in his subsequent works that there was no consensus with Glaser on this and other questions of methodology. Nowadays, this orientation is seen as a misinterpretation of the initial discussions from the book *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. Roy Suddaby (2006) discusses this issue – and its variants – as a myth based on false premises. He argues that GTM should not be an excuse for ignoring the literature and prior knowledge a researcher has about the topic of his/her investigation.

As time progressed, in the mid-1990s, Glaser and Strauss moved apart and began to develop and consider different approaches to the methodology they created. Their break, notably, occurred after the publication of the book *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques* (1990) by Anselm Strauss e Juliet M. Corbin (a former student of Strauss). However, Charmaz (2006/2014) points out that before that book many doctoral students who studied with the two already felt divergences between their thoughts on how to develop research processes with GTM.

These divergences probably originated in the distinct biographical and educational paths of both founders of the methodology. At first, these dissimilarities were fundamental for the originality of the methodology's development but became problematic during the conceptual maturing of the methodological proposal. Glaser graduated from the positivism of Columbia University, while Strauss comes from the pragmatist tradition and the field research of the Chicago School. Glaser was a student of Paul Lazarsfeld, an innovator in quantitative research, and of Robert K. Merton, the proposer of the construction of useful middle-range theories. Glaser's rigorous quantitative training crosses the foundations of grounded theory. Charmaz highlights that the author's contributions to the methodology "intended to codify qualitative research methods as Lazarsfeld had codified quantitative research […]. Codifying qualitative research methods entailed specifying explicit strategies for conducting research and therefore demystified the research process" (Charmaz, 2006/2014, p. 9).

Strauss, on the other hand, had his intellectual capital shaped by the interactionist and pragmatist bases of the Chicago School, having his ideas "inspired by men like Park (1967), Thomas (1966), Dewey (1922), Mead (1934), Hughes (1971) and Blumer (1969)" (Strauss & Corbin, 2008, p. 22). In this way, Strauss contributes to grounded theory by bringing "notions of human agency, emergent

processes, social and subjective meanings, problem-solving practices, and the open-ended study of action" (Charmaz, 2006/2014, p. 9).

With the separation of Glaser and Strauss, two distinct schools of grounded theory methodology unfolded. Glaser remained attached to the classic and seminal version of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978, 2002a, etc.), where he ratifies it as a discovery methodology, which treats categories as emerging from the collected data. Charmaz points out that Glaser believes in a

> direct and, often, narrow empiricism, developed a concept-indicator approach, considered concepts to be variables, and emphasized analyzing a basic social process. Strauss (1987), separately, and together with his co-author in the 1990s, Juliet M. Corbin … further moved the method toward seeing grounded theory as a method of verification (Charmaz, 2006/2014, p. 11).

Glaser (1992) critically states that these procedures proposed by Strauss and Corbin for grounded theory would force "data and analysis into preconceived categories, ignore emergence, and result in 'full conceptual description', not grounded theory" (Charmaz, 2006/2014, p. 11). Glaser, at the time, even called for a public retraction of the approaches in Strauss and Corbin's book, bearing in mind the misconceptions it would present.

In this context, Charmaz points out that "Despite Glaser's numerous objections to Strauss and Corbin's version of grounded theory, their book serves as a powerful statement of the method and has instructed graduate students throughout the world" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 8). However, Charmaz and colleagues have recently stated that Strauss and Corbin's version "minimized grounded theory as an emergent method of discovery and instead recast it as a formulaic procedure" (Charmaz et al., 2018, p. 724).

With their distinctive postulates, Glaser and Strauss formed and inspired a new generation of researchers interested in developing investigations using GTM. Prominent among these researchers was Kathy Charmaz (1939-2020), a former student of Glaser and a former doctoral advisor of Strauss.

By reviewing, aligning, and updating the methodology approaches of her masters, Charmaz built her proposal for grounded theory with assumptions and approaches, according to her, aimed at the 21st century. With strong alignment to the postulates of the Chicago School, for her version, she argues "for building on the pragmatist underpinnings in grounded theory and advancing interpretive analyses that acknowledge these constructions" (Charmaz, 2006/2014, p. 17). Charmaz calls her approach constructivist *grounded theory* [4] and understands it as

[4] Glaser also inscribes strong criticism of Charmaz's proposal for grounded theory. For example, he points out that it is a mistake to call grounded theory constructivist, because "constructivist data, if it exists at all, is a very, very small source of GT research" (Glaser, 2002b). Some of these criticisms are addressed by Charmaz in later publications, in which she ratifies and demonstrates the potential of her perspective (see Charmaz, 2006/2014, etc.).

A contemporary version of grounded theory that adopts methodological strategies such as coding, memo-writing, and theoretical sampling of the original statement of the method but shifts its epistemological foundations and takes into account methodological developments in qualitative inquiry occurring over the past fifty years (Charmaz, 2006/2014, p. 342).

In this context, according to John W. Creswell (2005), in the contemporary, there are three main schools of methodology[5]: the emergent *grounded theory* (Glaser, 1992, [Glaser & Strauss, 1967]); the systematic *grounded theory* (Strauss & Corbin, 1990/1998; Corbin & Strauss, 2008), and the constructivist *grounded theory* (Charmaz, 2006/2014). Tarozzi (2011), in turn, classifies them as classic *grounded theory* (Glaser); *grounded theory full conceptual description* (Strauss & Corbin); and constructivist *grounded theory* (Charmaz). Tarozzi also attempts to organize a synthesis (see table 2) of the main characteristics of each of these approaches. He compares some key points that signal the structure and theoretical practice of the methodology along the three lines, such as research question; types of data; main category; and types of coding.

With the framing of these three versions, José Luís Guedes dos Santos and colleagues (2018) warn that "one of the main differences between them is the data analysis system [especially in the coding stage], which presents particularities according to each methodological perspective" (Santos et al., 2018, p. 2). These dissimilarities are briefly introduced by Tarozzi (2011), as shown in table 2[6].

[5] Critical views of the three schools, their procedures and techniques, and some of the efforts being made by various researchers to develop the methodology can be found in Bryant & Charmaz (2007; 2019), as well as in Morse et al. (2009).

[6] More thoughtful comparisons between schools are found in Allen (2010), and Santos *et al.* (2018), among others.

Table 2
Confrontation between the main schools of GTM

	Classic GTM	GTM *full conceptual description*	Constructivist GTM
	Glaser	Strauss and Corbin	Charmaz
Research questions	It is not a statement that identifies the problem to be studied. It is impossible to define it before entering the field (it starts openly from a research area).	It is a statement that identifies the problem to be studied. It allows you to restrict and manage the area of investigation.	[There may be] but the sensitizing concepts (Blumer), personal and disciplinary interests [are also indicated to start] the research.
Data types	"All is data".	Indifferent, especially observations.	Semi-structured interviews and textual analysis. Data co-construction.

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	Classic GTM	GTM *full conceptual description*	Constructivist GTM
Core category	It emerges almost magically and is sensed impromptu at the beginning or end of the research.	Bringing it out requires strong data manipulations. There is no single *core category*.	There is a prevalent *core category*.
Codification types	Theoretical substantive.	Open, axial, selective.	Initial, focused, axial[7], theoretical.

Source: Adapted from Tarozzi (2011, p. 56).

[7] Although Tarozzi (2011) indicates axial coding (proposed by Strauss and Corbin) among the types of coding in Charmaz's approach, this author relativizes its application in research, indicating it as optional. According to Charmaz, researchers who "prefer to work with a preset structure will welcome having a frame. Those who prefer simple, flexible guidelines - and can tolerate ambiguity - do not need to do axial coding. They can follow the leads that they define in their empirical materials. [...] The subsequent categories, subcategories, and links reflect how I made sense of the data" (Charmaz, 2006/2014, p. 148).

[8] Bryant warns that the use of the prefix "post" indicates movement "beyond". Critically, he also comprehends this term as "misleading or unhelpful: Post-positivism seems to be applied to positions that are still positivist, so at best the term should be neo-positivism—neo meaning 'new', as opposed to 'post' which implies some sort of distancing" (Bryant, 2017, p. 58).

Charmaz also tries to demarcate the differences between the three lines of methodology, but she classifies them as objectivist *grounded theory* (Glaser), post-positivist *grounded theory*[8] (Strauss and Corbin), and constructivist *grounded theory* (Charmaz). She is emphatic in clarifying that her version of the methodology adopts the strategies of Glaser and Strauss's (1967) classical *grounded theory* but does not connect with the epistemology of the original version.

Charmaz and colleagues also point out that the constructivist version "adopts a contrasting relativist approach that shifts the method's ontological and epistemological grounds (Charmaz, 2009) to the pragmatist tradition of Anselm Strauss" (Charmaz et al., 2018, p. 730).

Rooted in pragmatism and relativist epistemology, constructivist grounded theory assumes that neither data nor theories are discovered but instead are constructed by researchers as a result of their interactions with their participants and emerging analyses . . . For constructivists, grounded theory is a fundamentally interactive method (Charmaz, Thornberg & Keane, 2018, p. 730).

On the other hand, the classical version of the methodology, or the objectivist *grounded theory*, according to Charmaz, emerges with a strong influence from "positivism and thus assume discovery of data in an external world by a neutral, but expert observer whose conceptualizations arises from view the data. Data are separate facts from the observer and, in the objectivist view, should be observed without preconception" (Charmaz, 2009b, p. 138). Thus, "objectivist grounded theory is a form of positivist qualitative research and thus subscribes to much of the logic of the posivist tradition and to its central tenets concerning empiricism, generalizability, universality, abstraction, and parsimony." (Charmaz, 2014, p. 344).

In the post-positivist view, the literature records that Strauss and Corbin (1990/1998) also shared some objectivist precepts about data in line with

Glaser, even considering some pragmatist expressions. Still in this line, recently, Charmaz and Belgrave ratified that

> Post-positivist grounded theorists also treat data as objective but attend to its accuracy and mode of collection. Constructivist grounded theorists view data as co-constructed between researchers and research participants and locate these data within their social, historical, and situational conditions of production (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2019, p. 744).

It is pertinent to clarify that

> Strauss and Corbin's (1990, 1998) early books did not draw explicit links to pragmatism. However, after Strauss's death, Corbin (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, 2015) has revised her approach to grounded theory in ways more consistent with the pragmatist tradition (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2019, p. 743).

However, it is the constructivist approach that explicitly takes on pragmatism.

Having briefly put these guidelines that articulate, especially, the historical, philosophical, and epistemological approaches of GTM to advance with the reflections of this work, it is worth at this point to reflect on the type of theory that the investigations that adopt this methodology can achieve.

WHAT KIND OF THEORY DOES *GROUNDED THEORY* MAKE IT POSSIBLE TO GENERATE?

Glaser and Strauss, in the classic *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1967), especially in chapter IV, already clarified the existence of two basic typologies of theories that could be generated from GTM procedures and techniques: substantive theory and formal theory[9]. The possibility of generating these two types of theories is a consensus in all three versions of the methodology.

The substantive theory and the formal theory, according to Glaser e Strauss (1967), should be identified as "middle-range" theories, according to the postulates of Robert K. Merton (1957). For Charmaz, middle-range theories consist of "abstract renderings of specific social phenomena that were grounded in data. Such middle-range theories contrasted with the 'grand' theories of … sociology…" (Charmaz, 2006/2014, p. 9). Bryant reinforces that "the theoretical statements that develop from the use of GTM do not claim the status of grand or overarching theories, but rather are initially offered as substantive ones" (Bryant, 2017, p. 97) and/or formals, as indicated by Glaser and Strauss (1967).

[9] Bryant warns that "The grounded theory method should, obviously, lead to the development of grounded theories, although these may also be termed models or frameworks or conceptual schemas. This aspect of GTM is sometimes forgotten or obscured by researchers themselves when reporting their findings" (Bryant, 2017, p. 99).

Thus, formal theories are comprehensive, but not general, while substantive theories are concerned with understanding and explaining everyday situations. Glaser and Strauss further clarify:

> Since substantive theory is grounded in research on one particular substantive area (work, juvenile delinquency, medical education, mental health), it might be taken to apply only to that specific area. A theory at such a conceptual level, however may have important general implications and relevance, and become almost automatically a springboard or stepping stone to the development of a grounded formal theory . . . Substantive theory is a strategic link in the formulation and generation of grounded formal theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 79).

Charmaz (2006/2014) also clarifies that formal theories can be understood as "a theoretical rendering of a generic issue or process that cuts across several substantive [specific] areas of study" (Charmaz, 2006/2014, p. 343). Substantive theories, on the other hand, can be understood as "a theoretical interpretation or explanation of a delimited problem in a particular area, such as family relationships, formal organizations, or education [or communication]" (Charmaz, 2006/2014, p. 344).

In addition, Charmaz also presents reflections on the distinction between positivist theory and interpretive theory. According to her, positivist theory seeks "causes, favors deterministic explanations, and emphasizes generality and universality" (Charmaz, 2006/2014, p. 229). Interpretive theory, on the other hand, requires an "imaginative understanding of the studied phenomenon. This type of theory assumes emergent, multiple realities; indeterminacy; facts and values as inextricably linked; truth as provisional; and social life as processual" (Charmaz, 2006/2014, p. 231).

Charmaz (2006/2014) also points out that research in grounded theory can be developed with inclinations to the production of both types of theories, but this will depend on the line of the methodology adopted by the researchers for their investigations. For example, according to this author, the way Glaser handles the theory expresses a strong positivist association. In Strauss and Corbin's version, there are also some positivist angles, but they recognize the interpretive perspectives. In the constructivist version, on the other hand, the interpretive theoretical perspective is basilar and explicit.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) also clarify that researchers must define the type of theory (substantive or formal) that will be generated using GTM. However, they point out that researchers "unquestionably tend to avoid the formulation of grounded formal theory; they stay principally at the substantive level" (Glaser &

Strauss, 1967, p. 92). Among the justifications for this trend, the authors point to the inherently greater challenges and difficulties in working with high-level abstractions and the feeling of low confidence in working with broader research areas and their implications.

Having offered this context about the types of theories that can be discovered or built with grounded theory, considering the postulates of its three versions, in the following section, efforts will be directed to reflect on how this methodology, especially in the constructivist line, has been and can be applied in communication research. Finally, some guidelines are written on how to proceed to build theories using the constructivist grounded theory methodology.

GROUNDED THEORY IN COMMUNICATION RESEARCH

In Brazil, the studies of Leite (2015b, 2018) and Leite and Batista (2018) are examples of research in the field of communication that applied the constructivist grounded theory methodology. Leite (2015b, 2018), in his *grounded theory,* inscribed a theoretical contribution directed to the understanding of the media consumption experiences of Brazilian women (white and black) when they interact with counterintuitive ads[10] that mediatize the image of black women as protagonists. The research theorizes how these ads do or do not affect these women's perceptions and experiences with everyday racism. Leite and Batista (2018) presented a theoretical interpretation, built with the support of parental agents, about the first experiences of black Brazilian children with racism, also trying to understand, in this context, how media materialities (ads and soap operas), with counterintuitive expressions, would affect or not these experiences in the dynamics of the families' daily lives.

At this point, it is worth noting that the definition by the constructivist line of the methodology explored in this text is due to the specialization of the author, given his experiences and training done during his doctoral studies with researchers who are references in the development of this methodology, such as Kathy Charmaz and Massimiliano Tarozzi[11].

The decision of exploring the constructivist grounded theory with more attention is also justified by the strong association that Charmaz's version has with pragmatism and especially with symbolic interactionism. In addition to grounding the bases of her version, both can serve as theoretical references to direct the perspectives of the theory to be built with the applicability of the methodology.

As a topic to be better articulated and explored in future work, it is noted that the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism also integrates the set of communication theories (França & Simões, 2016). This can indicate,

[10] Counterintuitive ads (Leite, 2014, 2018, etc.) can be considered as a proposal of the professional advertising field that strategically uses content about stereotypes directed to socially minority groups in its narratives of "other/new", with the main goal of innovating and promoting its attempts to appeal to marketable consumption, violating intuitive expectations of the receivers about the discourses traditionally conveyed by advertising.

[11] Moreover, the latter was his supervisor in 2014, during the Doctoral Sandwich Abroad Program (PDSE) of the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES), at the University of Trento and the University of Bologna in Italy.

perhaps, a fruitful connection point to instigate the interest of researchers to know more about the methodology in focus, as well as favor their engagement in the construction of dialogues and communication studies using the procedures and techniques of GTM for the production of knowledge.

In this aspect, thinking about using communication theories as a theoretical reference for developing grounded theory research, for example, is useful to recall the idea of the "Theory-Methods Package" proposed by Adele E. Clarke (2005, p. 2). This author inscribes this notion to point out the strong potential of the connection between constructivist grounded theory as a methodology and symbolic interactionism as a theoretical perspective for developing grounded theory investigations. This articulation, according to Clarke, would provide researchers with a strong and adequate set of methodological and theoretical tools for the research construction process. This idea was ratified and promoted by Charmaz (2006/2014).

In this articulation, some communication theories, especially - and not exclusively - mediatization studies[12], in the socio-constructivist line (Hepp, 2014; Krotz, 2001; Braga, 2012, 2015, etc.), could accommodate Adele Clarke's proposal. This theoretical strand would conveniently fit into this "theory/ methods package" because it dialogues with symbolic interactionism and the sociology of knowledge. It also considers the "everyday communication practices... and focuses on the changing communicative construction of culture and society." (Hepp, 2014, p. 47)[13].

For example, this theoretical and methodological articulation could be observed as a powerful way to systematically investigate and theorize the dimensions and meanings of "communicative interactions" (direct interaction process between individuals) and "mediated interactions", which are observed as an interpretative and cooperative network of mutual affections (França, 2007, p. 9). This interpretative and cooperative network would be formed in society integrating, among other objects: the market, communication professionals, and people who receive media materialities (advertisements, newspapers, television and radio programs, films and so on).

In this proposition, it is possible to observe another effort to reaffirm the powerful contribution that the studies of symbolic interactionism can offer to research in communication as theoretical lenses, as well as encourage the expansion of using this reference in research in the field of communication. Thus, it aims to collaborate with the overcoming the gap pointed out by Vera França (2007, 2008), that the investigations of the field, especially the studies of media reception, should perform - what has not been done expressively yet - more carefully readings about the symbolic interactionism perspective.

[12] The debate about mediatization is currently in progress. However, a conceptual direction offered by José Luiz Braga can support the understanding of the term. He orientates that this "term indicates that mediatization can be understood as 'action' - between an institutional complex and a process. When we adopt the word 'mediatization', we are no longer talking only about the logic of the media/cultural industry, but also about actions that take place in the diffuse social environment (in its various communicational actions) – by triggering". (Braga, 2018, p. 292).

[13] Unlike the socio-constructivist strand of media studies, Hepp points to the institutional line, which until recently has been interested, according to this author, in the logic produced in the production spaces of mass communication, whose influence is described as "**media logic**" (Hepp, 2014, p. 47, author's emphasis).

França also adds that "for some years now the contributions [of] symbolic interactionism have been claimed by communication studies, but the reference to this current is still unsystematic" (França, 2007, p. 1) in the field investigations. Exemplary in this scenario, according to this author, would be the timid and remote reference in Brazilian communication studies to the thought of G. H. Mead (1925, 1934, 2006, etc.), identified as the "founding father" of this tradition.

In this context, it is pertinent to recover and point out that the research of Leite (2015b, 2018) and Leite and Batista (2018), indicated in the introduction of this topic, are also examples of investigations in the field of communication, that try to reflect these ideas and collaborate with the modification of this scenario. These studies, guided by the constructivist grounded theory methodology, productively, exercise the adoption of the "theory/methods package" proposed by Clarke (2005), articulating symbolic interactionism and media studies as a supplement to a basic theoretical reference.

However, it is also appropriate to reinforce that the "theory/methods package" proposed by Clarke (2005) does not aim to inscribe prescription and/or operating restrictions on using other theoretical references relevant to developing rational grounded theory research. This orientation, in short, should be observed only as a suggestion and an idea to denote and emphasize the powerful connection between GTM and the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism. In this sense, after that, some Brazilian and foreign research that reflect the three lines of GTM are indicated to illustrate the flexibility of this articulation.

The first example is the work of Carla Severiano de Carvalho (2022). This author, adopting the constructivist grounded theory methodology, built an explanatory theoretical study about the processes of stereotyping countries by international journalism. Specifically, Carvalho offers as a result of her research a theoretical understanding of the discursive representations of Brazil in Spain. The theoretical framework adopted in the research articulates media studies, studies on agenda setting, and critical discourse analysis. The data collection methods adopted were: document analysis of Spanish digital newspapers (ABC.es, ElMundo.es, and ElPaís.com) and interviews with Spanish journalists responsible for publications about Brazil.

As a second example, Ashley R. P. Wellman's (2018) research is indicated. This American researcher, also using constructivist grounded theory, built a theory that explores the relationship between survivors of homicides of filed cases and the media, specifically, seeking to explain how these people perceive the coverage, the treatment, and the relationship they have or have not established with the media. The theoretical framework of the research articulates victimology studies and studies on media coverage of cases of violence and

crime, among others. The research data were constructed especially through in-depth interviews with survivors of homicide.

Another Brazilian example, however, leaning towards Glaser's line, is the research of Maíra Bittencourt (2016). This author developed an investigation guided by the classic grounded theory specifically directed to the quali/quantitative perspective, indicated by Glaser (2008) in *Doing Quantitative Grounded Theory*. Bittencourt, from the area of digital communication, developed a theoretical model called "Digital Prince" which, according to her, focuses on illuminating how the categories power, hegemony, and leadership are structured in the contemporary society involved by digital networks. "This understanding can lead us to better comprehend the phenomena of this time, such as the great social demonstrations and the types of relationships that exist in social networks" (Bittencourt, 2016, p. 8). The theoretical framework adopted in this research uses various texts by authors such as Machiavelli, Antonio Gramsci, and Octavio Ianni, to think about the social idea of "prince" and "electronic prince"; Paul Lazarsfeld and José B. Toro, to think about the reception of ideas and social mobilization; and Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri, and Manuel Castells, to support the theoretical reflection on the crowd, social networks, the Internet, and mobilization processes. As information to ground its GT, the research data collection was carried out through the analysis of social manifestations, interviews, and observation.

Finally, as an example of research that adopted the GTM of Strauss and Corbin, there is the investigation of Andreas Hepp, Piet Simon, and Monika Sowinska (2018). These authors from the German context developed an explanatory theoretical study on communicative networks and the construction of mediated communities, aiming to understand what deep mediatization means for young people in their daily urban sense of community. In this investigation, the theoretical framework used involves the studies of mediatization, and the data collection focused on observations and in-depth interviews.

With the support of these short reports about communication research, especially the Brazilian ones, that adopted grounded theory and several theoretical references, this text moves on to its last topic, which provides orientation about the main procedures and techniques to sustain the exercise of theorizing with constructivist GTM.

HOW TO THEORIZE AND BUILD A GROUNDED THEORY?

The directions on how to proceed to build a grounded theory in the communication research process have already been discussed in detail in other

opportunities (Leite, 2015a, 2015b, 2016, etc.). However, in this article, briefly, these guidelines are recovered in a special direction to focus the understanding on the characteristics called, by Jane Hood (2007), as *Troublesome Trinity* of the methodology, namely: the theoretical sampling; the constant comparison method; and the focus on theory development via theoretical saturation of categories. According to Hood (2007), these characteristics would also differentiate GTM from other research methodologies. The path to constructivist GTM is not linear.

In this direction, with the definition of the research area, researchers with a position as open as possible to everything observed and felt in the field in all stages of the research can begin the grounded theory investigation. Generally, this beginning is guided by an open and generative research question, even if tentative. Empirical work can also be started from personal and disciplinary interests by defining "sensitizing concepts" (Blumer, 1954) if researchers decide to elaborate their research question later based on the experiences and data achieved in the empirical.

Herbert Blumer clarifies that "sensitizing concepts" provide researcher with a general notion of a "sense of reference and guidance in approaching empirical instances" (Blumer, 1954, p. 7). According to Charmaz (2014), these concepts can indicate a point to begin grounded theory research but not to end it. Tarozzi (2011) explains that this concept should be considered the base of ideas on which the research problems are polarized.

With this initial positioning, the next step is the beginning of data collection, or the joint construction of data with the research informants (or documents and source materialities). Charmaz defends "gathering rich – detailed and full – data and placing them in their relevant situational and social contexts" (Charmaz, 2006/2014, p. 18).

This data can be collected using a variety of instruments and sources. The intensive or in-depth interview remains the most common source for building rich and relevant data. However, other sources can be added, such as observation[14], field notes, and texts and documents to be produced or already existing (produced), such as historical texts, government records, diaries, reports, etc. Media materialities can also be data sources, such as journalistic texts, records of communicative interactions in social networks, advertisements, etc. Texts, according to Charmaz (2009a), can also be extracted, that is, researchers can ask informants to produce texts such as essays and reports, among others. However, comparing interviews and texts as sources, Charmaz warns that "interviews pose possibilities for checking a story that a text does not" (Charmaz, 2006/2014, p. 47).

[14] For Tarozzi, the peculiarity of the observation within grounded theory "is that it is focused immediately on the observation of phenomena and, above all, of the process elements defined in the research question, giving less weight to the description of the context" (Tarozzi, 2011, p. 111). Therefore, the proposal of observation is not focused on making detailed descriptions but on the production of conceptualizations of the process under investigation.

As data collection begins, the research question can be revealed in this process by answering the classic question posed by Glaser (1978): *What's going on here?* Charmaz validates that this question is fundamental to all strands of grounded theory to generate "spawns looking at what is happening at either of two levels: - What are the basic social processes? - What are the basic social psychological processes?" (Charmaz, 2006/2014, p. 34).

Consequently, with the first data collected from interviews, for example, it is recommended that *verbatim* transcripts be made. Interviews, if possible, should be captured and audio or audiovisual recorded with the formal consent of the research informants. In this regard, the researcher's analytical eye for the data should be in operation in the interview situation and the transcription process of these records.

In this route, with the data from the first transcription, we proceed to the coding steps, thus also beginning the activation of the challenges inscribed by the problematic triad of the methodology, indicated earlier. However, before moving on to understand the coding process, it is pertinent to ask: How to understand and operationalize sampling in GTM? There are two ways of sampling in GTM: the initial and the theoretical. In this sense, also considering the existing or extracted texts and documents, this sampling aims to delimit the specificities and characteristics of this *corpus*, this collection of materials and documents, to be considered for data collection and analysis[15]. This initial sample is common to many types of qualitative research.

On the other hand, the theoretical sampling is typical of grounded theory research. According to Glaser and Strauss, it can be understood as "the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyzes his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 45). Thus, "the main purpose of theoretical sampling is to elaborate and refine the categories constituting your theory" (Charmaz, 2006/2014, p. 193).

The process of theoretical sampling begins when, after the beginning and progress of data coding, the researchers have already elaborated some relevant but rudimentary categories that need more density/explanatory quality. The finalization of this process is established when "theoretical saturation" or, as Ian Dey (1999) prefers, "theoretical sufficiency" is reached for the category, or rather, for the set of categories that articulate the elaborated grounded theory. The "theoretical saturation" in GTM refers to the point that the data collected, to give density to the categories via theoretical sampling, no longer present new

properties or variations or produce stimuli for theoretical reflections that can strengthen the theory under construction.

In this context, it is worth emphasizing that the literature indicates that it is not pertinent to collect all the data and only then begin the coding and analysis steps. These processes must occur at the same time, always favoring the constant feedback and comparison between data in the search for building rich and relevant information, thus following the iterative and interactive characteristics of the methodology.

As observed in table 2, organized by Tarozzi (2011), the constructivist version of the *grounded theory* postulates three main types of coding[16] for qualitative code-making: initial, focused, and theoretical[17]. For Charmaz, coding in GTM "generates the bones of your analysis. Theoretical integration will assemble these bones into a working skeleton" (Charmaz, 2006/2014, p. 113). Thus, more than

> a beginning; it shapes an analytic frame from which you build the analysis. [...] Coding is the pivotal link between collecting data and developing an emergent theory to explain these data. Through coding, you *define* what is happening in the data and begging to grapple with what it means. (Charmaz, 2006/2014, p. 113, author's emphasis).

Initial coding is the first step in this process, as it rigorously fixes the data, considering the actions in each segment of these rather than applying pre-existing categories. The main strategies of initial coding, considering the transcribed texts of the interviews and other sources, are "word by word", "line by line" or "incident by incident". Throughout this process, intense expressions manifested by the informants can potentially be added to the work in a literal way. Such expressions are called *in vivo* codes. At this stage, it is also necessary to operate the analytic method of constant comparison, which should support and cut across all coding practices and research analysis. According to Charmaz, this method aims to generate

> successively more abstract concepts and theories through inductive processes of comparing data with data, data with code, code with code, code with category, category with category, and category with concept. In the last stages of analysis, researchers compare their major categories with those in relevant scholarly literatures. Comparisons then constitute each stage of analytic development. Grounded theorists use this method to reveal the properties and range of the emergent categories and to raise the level of abstraction of their developing analyses (Charmaz, 2006/2014, p. 342).

[16] Coding in GTM can be confused with content analysis, especially by novice researchers. To reduce these misconceptions, the work of Ji Young Cho and Eun-Hee Lee (2014) is recommended as introductory reading.

[17] To collaborate with the management, manipulation, and codification of the data collected, it is recommended, if possible, the use of software (e.g. Nvivo, WebQDA, and Atlas.ti) that supports the researcher in the process of qualitative data analysis, in the construction of diagrams and conceptual maps of the dimensions of the theory. That said, it is pertinent to point out, that throughout the coding process until the integration of grounded theory, it is recommended the production of graphic representations (with diagrams or situational maps) that illustrate the theoretical articulations built.

Returning to the coding guidelines, the second stage of the process is focused coding. In this stage, with the codes already managed in the initial stage, they are more targeted and selective. To this end, the most significant and/or frequent initial codes are used to thoroughly analyze large amounts of data. This coding requires decision-making, as it defines which data have the potential to cohere with others, thus forming a category. These decisions by researchers are guided by their "theoretical sensitivity" (Glaser, 1978), which may be developed over their research experience.

Indeed, the third stage is theoretical coding. It is a sophisticated level of coding that follows the codes selected in the focused coding. It is in this stage that, according to Tarozzi, the construction of the categories reaches fullness, and "theorization proceeds to the identification of the central categories, the key concepts around which the theory will be organized" (Tarozzi, 2011, p. 154). Still in this dynamic, we then proceed to the stage of theoretical classification of these categories to find the core category, that is, the main category that has the potential to "integrate the theory and develop it around its conceptual axes, empirically emerged" (Tarozzi, 2011, p. 154). The GT can have more than one core category.

Finally, at this point, the memos[18] that must be written throughout the research process are undoubtedly essential to support the integration and reporting of the conceptual schemes built and direct the final writing of the theory. The return to the literature that supports the connections and stimulates interpretations and conceptual developments about the theoretical perspectives built can also occur with more density at this stage. This return to the literature should happen aligned with the theoretical framework applied in the research to, thus, enhance the theorization process and the integration of the dimensions of meanings built.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The main contribution of this paper was to offer a reflective introduction that guided the process of theorizing following the guidelines of the constructivist GTM. It was also a proposal of the study to discuss the type of theory produced with this methodological path, demonstrating the potential that this methodology offers for developing communication research that seeks to generate theoretical understandings of social processes grounded in the data.

In this effort, a few communication research that applied the methodology in Brazil were indicated as exemplification objects. In a complementary way, some international studies were also pointed out. However, in the exercise of

[18] Memo-writing, according to Charmaz, "is the pivotal intermediate step in grounded theory between data collection and writing drafts of papers. When grounded theorists write memos, they stop and analyze their ideas about their codes and emerging categories in whatever way that occurs to them [...]. Memo-writing is a crucial method in grounded theory because it prompts researchers to analyze their data and to develop their codes into categories early in the research process. Writing successive memos keeps researchers involved in the analysis and helps them to increase the level of abstraction of their ideas." (Charmaz, 2006/2014, p. 343).

this text, it is fundamental to recognize that, although there are still few Brazilian communication works that use the methodology in question, this small set of studies begins to configure and offer the field through the disclosure and acceptance of its results, a frame of reference of useful and significant works that, integrally, applied and developed the rationale and rigor of the methodology. In this way, these investigations also become viable as vigorous sources for "other/new" researchers to get to know and learn, with examples of similar experiences, the making of theorizing with GTM.

Finally, it is expected that the guidelines shared in this text, although introductory and punctual, because of the limits and objectives of this work, will encourage researchers in the field to learn more and venture into future research using the methodological (and theoretical) articulation presented. GTM procedures and techniques pertinently make available an intense and rigorous research path to support the systematic elaboration of middle-range theories (substantive and or formal), which involve the understanding of experiences, events, and meanings socially produced by the interactional dynamics of people entangled by media narratives in everyday life. ◼

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