

# Constructive Grounded Theory in the Search for Meaning on Global Mindedness: a Novice Researcher's Guide

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## Abstract

This article follows the author's own journey as a novice grounded theorist reflecting on the choices and challenges faced at each stage of the research process. The purpose of the research study itself was to explore the concept of global mindedness and to assess the existing awareness and interpretation of the global mindedness construct from within the domain of the coaching profession. Global mindedness is a theoretical construct and an abstract concept; constructive grounded theory was considered an appropriate methodology to use because it allows for the exploration of the lived experience.

**Key Words:** Grounded theory, constructive grounded theory, novice researcher, research design strategy, global mindedness

## Introduction

Researchers have much to consider when planning and structuring their individual projects in order to address the identified research question. They are challenged to combine research approaches and methods in a creative way to achieve the best possible strategy for moving forward. The choices to be made are both strategic and interlinked. The research paradigm guides both the design and the choice of methodology, which in turn acts as a framework for the selection of particular research methods, an appropriate sampling strategy and the data analysis techniques.

To a novice researcher, the need to justify these major choices throughout the research process can be somewhat daunting and challenging. The purpose of this paper is to follow each step of my own journey as a novice grounded theorist, to reflect on the choices and challenges I faced at each stage of the research process and to offer some practical direction for others who may be contemplating constructive grounded theory for their qualitative research studies.

## *The Research Problem*

My experience began with a research question that was exploratory in nature. Its purpose was to explore the concept of "global mindedness" from within the domain of the coaching profession and to investigate how an understanding of the nature and processes of global mindedness might help the coach better support clients in today's complex and fluid global business environment.

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I was drawn to the conceptual nature of the research problem itself, which essentially searches for meaning and understanding. Although global mindedness is an abstract concept, it is a word now frequently used within business and management circles to imply some sort of preferred state of mind. Nevertheless it is often referred to and described as being some sort of an entity, an asset, something which one needs to acquire, to have, to be in possession of. I was curious to find out what 'it' might be, fuelling a deeper exploration of the concept and how others might perceive it. In this research study I wanted to invite others who shared my curiosity to join me in this exploration of the global mindedness concept, to put it under the microscope for closer examination and to scrutinize this theoretical construct from a variety of different perspectives that may or may not have been considered before.

### ***Defining the Research Aims***

An initial review of the literature across different disciplines (Olsen & Kroeger, 2001; Wright & Clarke, 2010; Javidan *et al.*, 2011; Gupta & Govindarajan, 2002; PwC, 2011; Levy *et al.*, 2007; Abbott & Rosinski, 2007; Dekker *et al.*, 2005; Rhinesmith, 1993) explored the established definitions of global mindedness, including its dimensions, possible influencing factors and common emergent research themes and revealed a gulf in perception of the concept across different disciplines.

The literature available on this topic highlighted a fragmented field of study that still lacks an integrative overarching descriptive model and has no common language to describe integration of findings. This absence of clarity has led to conceptual ambiguities and contradictory findings. Attempts to define the construct are mainly confined to business management and development literature and there is a dearth of studies across other disciplines that lead to diverse perceptions of the concept and inconsistency regarding its core properties. With this there is also a cultural versus strategic approach to the construct and a nature versus nurture debate regarding whether international experience or personality type might influence the development of a global mindset. With regard to operationalizing the global mindset construct, only a limited number of empirical studies have been undertaken to date, mostly within an international business and management setting, at individual, group and organizational level (Levy *et al.*, 2007). Most have taken a quantitative research approach using self-report questionnaires and their findings have included a suggested framework or model.

This brief review of the literature provided much needed clarity for my own research aims, which became twofold: to address the gap in qualitative research by undertaking a qualitative, interpretive, constructive grounded theory approach to the search for meaning and also to respond to the call from Levy *et al.*, (2007) for further theory building and empirical work on the global mindset construct to be conducted in more diverse settings.

The coaching population was of most interest to me in this study because to date there has been little qualitative research into the global mindset construct within this important grouping. I decided that a study within the field of cross-cultural coaching using semi-structured, recorded, focus group interviews with coaches, would allow me not only to address the current lack of a qualitative research approach overall, but also to apply it to a new field.

### ***Establishing the Research Approach***

The choices made about the overall research design strategy were guided by my own ontological perspective, which embraces the idea of multiple realities. This underpinned my desire to explore and report on the concept of global mindedness from the multiple perspectives of the participants involved in the study using an interpretative, constructivist, qualitative research methodology approach. I bring a social constructivist worldview to the study through my belief that in

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seeking an understanding of the world in which they live and work, individuals develop varied and multiple subjective meanings of their experiences (Creswell, 2007).

The research problem shapes the choice of methodology used and as culture is mostly hidden from its own participants (Hall, 1976), it was my view that an interpretative, constructivist, qualitative methodological approach was appropriate as it allows for the exploration of cultural complexities and perspectives from the perspective of the participants themselves, a process described by Hofstede & Hofstede (2005, p. 4) as “understanding from within”. My role as the researcher in this process was to address the complexity of these multiple perspectives by listening to the views of the participants and the meanings they assigned to them within the context of their own lived experience. I considered constructivist grounded theory methodology an appropriate framework in which to address the conceptual nature of the research question itself, which essentially seeks out meaning and understanding.

A grounded theory methodology ‘seeks to inductively distil issues of importance for specific groups of people, creating meaning about those issues through analysis and the modelling of theory’ (Mills *et al.*, 2006, p. 8). An inductive, interactive, comparative, and iterative method of enquiry such as this enables the exploration of the lived experience and offered an appropriate way of addressing my research task which focused on uncovering the individual meanings people attach to the concept of global mindedness and, within those, its relevance in their lives. It is also an appropriate methodology to use when a theory is not available to explain the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). As global mindedness is a theoretical construct I felt that a grounded theory approach could most effectively be used to tease out the participants understanding of a concept which they may never have thought about before.

At this early stage I was pleased to have successfully established a research strategy that provided a good fit between my own ontological perspective, the research paradigm and an appropriate research methodology. Now, with an appropriate framework in place, I could turn my attention to the practical issues of collecting and working with the data. The road ahead appeared straightforward. However, as Glaser (1978) cautions, grounded theory research is a many-faceted process, which requires time and theoretical sensitivity (the process of developing the insight with which the researcher comes to the research situation) to move between the data and theory and back again (Backman & Kyngas, 1999). Also contrary to my initial expectations, I was not adequately prepared for the various methodological stumbling blocks that would have to be negotiated along the way.

### **An overview of Grounded Theory**

From the outset, the novice researcher would do well to acquaint him/herself with both the historical and technical debates that surround grounded theory and the theoretical positions which underpin them and be able to relate them to their own particular research question (Neal, 2009).

The traditional form of grounded theory research was developed in the 1960’s by sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss and their first book, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1967) was the first published account of how qualitative researchers actually work with their data (Charmaz, 2006). Grounded theory is defined as a qualitative research design in which the inquirer generates a general explanation (a theory) of a process, action, or interaction shaped by the views of a large number of participants (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). A grounded theory is inductively derived from the process of study therefore a grounded theory study does not start with a theory but ends with one. The

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new theory is one that did not exist before and is very specific to the context studied as it emerges from that particular study as a result of the researcher's immersion in and manipulation of the data (Locke *et al.*, 2010). Grounded theorists hold that theories should be 'grounded' in data from the field, especially in the actions, interactions and social processes of people (Creswell, 2007) and grounded theories "offer something beyond a descriptive response to the question 'What's going on here?' by providing a systematic explanation for both why and how it does go on" (Locke *et al.*, 2010, p. 192).

Glaser and Strauss's seminal *Discovery* text (1967) was a major force in igniting the 'qualitative revolution' (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p.ix) but subsequent ensuing and lengthy debates between the two authors with regard to their respective philosophical perspectives has since taken grounded theory in divergent directions (Charmaz, 2000, p.8).

Traditional grounded theory was founded on the premise of critical realism and so ontologically is regarded as being postpositivist in its intent (Annells, 1997). However grounded theory methodology has since moved away from this positivist approach and has been adapted to fit with various ontological and epistemological positions (Mills *et al.*, 2006) such as constructivism (Charmaz, 2006), post modernism (Macdonald, 2001) and situational analysis (Clarke, 2005). These adaptations are reflective of the various moments of philosophical thought that have guided qualitative research (Lincoln & Denzin, 2000) and have resulted in the availability of many methodological books and articles which encourage researchers to adopt and adapt grounded theory guideless in order to conduct diverse studies (Charmaz, 2006).

In my view, the methodological discourse that has existed between grounded theorists causes initial confusion for novice researchers like me who seek much clearer guidance and direction with regard to the proposed steps of a rather complicated research process. The grounded theory approach itself can also create misunderstandings and confusion because the research process does not follow the expected chronological stages of traditional research practice and this can be problematic for the novice researcher in shaping the research process as a whole (Backman & Kyngas, 1999).

Charmaz (2006, p. 5) states that according to Glaser and Strauss (1967; Glaser, 1978; Strauss, 1987) the defining components of grounded theory practice are:

- Simultaneous data collection and analysis
- The construction of analytic codes and categories from data and not from preconceived logically deduced hypothesis
- The use of the constant comparative method at each stage of the analysis
- The advancement of theory development during each step of data collection and analysis
- Memo writing to elaborate categories, specify their properties, define relationships between categories and identify gaps
- Sampling aimed toward theory construction
- Conducting the literature review *after* developing an independent analysis

In particular it is the issue of where to place the literature review in grounded theory research that has long been debated, disputed and misunderstood (Charmaz, 2006). Glaser & Strauss (1967) advocated that researchers should begin the research process with an open mind and delay the literature review until after completing the analysis so as to avoid importing and imposing prior knowledge and preconceived ideas onto the data. However this can be particularly challenging for the researcher because as Cowley (2004) states, hardly anyone enters a field completely free from the

influence of past experience and reading. Also for the novice researcher, an initial review of the literature at the beginning of the study can actually be very helpful in narrowing down the topic of research and setting the stage for their own study.

### ***The Constructive Grounded Theory Approach***

Kathy Charmaz, originally a student of Glaser and Strauss, advocates the use of basic grounded theory guidelines with twenty-first century methodological assumptions and approaches. She views grounded theory methods “as a set of principles and practices, not as prescriptions or packages” and emphasizes “flexible guidelines, not methodological rules, recipes and requirements” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 11). I was drawn by Charmaz’s social constructivist perspective, which “emphasizes diverse local worlds, multiple realities and the complexities of particular worlds, views and actions” (Creswell, 2007, p.65) and also recognizes that “the ‘discovered’ reality arises from the interactive process” (Charmaz, 2000, p. 524).

The constructive grounded theory approach assumes that data and theories are neither emergent nor discovered but rather are ‘constructed’ by both the researcher and the research participant (Allen, 2010; Charmaz, 2006). It recommends an eight stage process for working with data which involves line by line and focus coding, early memo writing using focused codes, advanced memo writing, theoretical sampling, saturation and ordering memos to discover the argument (Charmaz, 2006).

In my view this more flexible approach, which recognizes that interaction between the researcher and the participants is necessary in order to understand the meaning of the experiences shared during the research process (Charmaz, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985), was best suited to my research question which explores the complexities of cross-cultural issues, the abstract nature of the global mindset concept and the meanings the participants assign to these issues which are framed within the context of their own lives.

The flexibility of the grounded theory method also appealed to me, because it would allow me to be led by the data. This meant I could focus my attention on data gathering from a large number of participants all engaged in one particular field setting and then, depending on where the data led, to sample across different areas of coaching practice or other related professions either within the same field setting or in other field settings in order to approach theoretical saturation.

However, my own attempts to heed Charmaz’s advice to view grounded theory methods as flexible guidelines and not methodological rules (Charmaz, 2006) were to be challenged at every step of the research journey from data collection through analysis.

### **Data Collection**

My first challenge was to gain access to a specific coaching population (cross-cultural coaches). An international conference represented the ideal setting for both immersion and data collection purposes as it provided a large gathering of like-minded individuals from a similar cultural setting. In my view such a group would also facilitate the interaction between researcher and participant as advocated by Charmaz (2006) and would allow for theoretical sampling. This is a flexible and responsive approach to data collection which is concept driven whereby “concepts are derived from data during analysis and questions about those concepts drive the next round of data collection” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p.144). I determined that this sampling method would not only enable me to target the coaching attendees at the conference but also, if necessary, would provide me

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with both the access and flexibility to continue sampling from other population groups within the same conference setting in order to investigate the relevant concepts from different perspectives.

Two conferences that were of interest to me as potentially appropriate sites for data collection were scheduled to take place almost concurrently. Both shared a mutual agenda relating to global mobility. These events were the Families in Global Transition conference (FIGT) in Washington DC and the European Relocation Association conference (EuRA) in Palma, Majorca. Both events offered up the diverse settings advocated by Levy *et al.*, (2007) for further theory building and empirical work on the global mindset construct by facilitating the gathering of a large group of globally minded individuals, in one place and for a fixed period of time, all of whom were actively involved in the issue of global mobility.

The delegates at each event were experienced international professionals who deal with global mobility and transition issues, such as educators, psychologists, academics, expatriates, relocation organizations, leadership trainers, cross-cultural trainers and cross-cultural coaches. The conference setting itself also facilitated the gathering of additional supporting data by allowing total immersion in the field for a period of time in order to make systematic observations of the settings and the events under investigation. Both organisations generously sponsored my attendance at their respective conferences and made time available time within their conference agendas to enable me to recruit and conduct my focus groups.

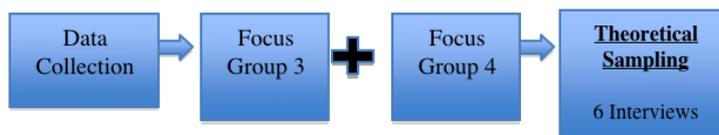
### **Data Collection Stages**

Focus groups and individual interviews were used to collect data during three separate data collection stages conducted over a four-week time period. During this time a total of five focus group interviews and eight individual interviews were conducted in North America, Europe and the United Kingdom.

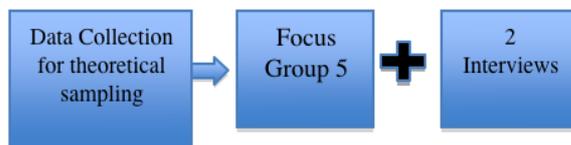
#### **STAGE 1: FIGT CONFERENCE USA**



#### **STAGE 2: EuRA CONFERENCE, PALMA**



#### **STAGE 3: UK COACHES**



**Figure 1: Data Collection Stages**

Thirty-five professional individuals were interviewed and a total of 10 nationalities were represented. Collectively these focus groups represented a cross-section of coaching approaches,

experience and expertise that would enable me to establish whether different understandings or gaps in knowledge might exist between these differing groups of coaches regarding their understanding of what global mindedness means to them and how it may influence their approach to coaching.

### ***Construction of focus groups for data collection***

The social constructivist perspective advocated by Charmaz (2006) emphasizes that the discovered reality arises from the interactive process and in my view focus groups could provide the type of stimulating, interactive and creative environment necessary for interaction between the researcher and the participants to understand the meaning of the experiences shared in the process. The focus groups represented a cross-section of coaching and training approaches, experience and expertise and in this regard I was hopeful that the focus groups would ultimately serve their intended purpose in providing a perspective on a 'community of practice' and shared perceptions and assumptions.

I followed the suggested guidelines of Krueger and Casey (2009) for developing effective focus group questions. Three overarching questions guided the focus group discussions. They were designed to stimulate a conversation between the participants and thus create a more relaxed and spontaneous atmosphere to enable them to take the discussion to a deeper level:

- 1) What is global mindedness to you - what meaning does it have for you?
- 2) How do people get to be globally minded?
- 3) What is its relevance to coaching and within the organizational context – should all coaches have a more global approach to their coaching?

I adopted a flexible approach to the moderation of each focus group session by always allowing the discussion to flow and take its own course even if that meant that the respondents did not necessarily address my principle questions in the right order or that the conversation went off topic. My role during the interview process was that of both a facilitator and a guide.

### ***Pilot Focus Group***

I conducted a pilot focus group on site in the conference setting itself. The purpose of the pilot was to check my choice and timing of questions for comprehension, flow and response and completion within the time frame as well as to check the sound quality of the audio recording within the interview setting.

At this point I recognized an important flaw in my research design: in a conference environment I had less control over the setting than I had anticipated. Delegates are confined to a predetermined timetable of daily scheduled events and this restricts the amount of time available to participate in a focus group discussion if it has not already been scheduled into the conference timetable. I therefore had to be mindful of how the pressure of time on delegates might impact on both the quality and quantity of data gathered and I had to adopt a creative approach with regard to negotiating the participant recruitment, timing and location issues when conducting a focus group discussion within a conference event setting.

### **Constructive grounded theory analysis methods**

All the interviews were audio taped and personally transcribed and the transcriptions were a verbatim account of the interviews. Transcription is a time consuming process and constructive grounded theory methodology advocates that the researcher should engage in simultaneous data

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collection and analysis and should start analyzing data from the beginning of the data collection (Charmaz, 2006). I had not factored this important requirement into the research design and realized that there would be no time available to transcribe and begin the process of analyzing the data whilst on site in the conference setting. In an attempt to address this important issue I followed Charmaz's advice and adopted a flexible approach. I listened back to the audiotapes at the end of each focus group interview and recorded initial reflection notes in a research journal noting particularly the group dynamic, discussed topics and the similarities and differences between the accounts. All the interviews were personally transcribed at the end of each data collection stage, (Figure 1), checked against the audiotapes for accuracy and analyzed.

### Main procedural steps

Grounded theory methodology advocates remaining open to all possible theoretical understandings by developing tentative interpretations about the data through the process of coding and the development of nascent categories. The process involves returning to the field to gather more data to check and refine major categories (Charmaz & Henwood, 2007). I followed Charmaz's constructivist grounded theory guidelines for working with the data which advocates an eight stage process of initial coding, focused coding, early memo writing using focused codes, advanced memo writing, theoretical sampling, saturation and ordering memos to discover the argument (Charmaz, 2006).

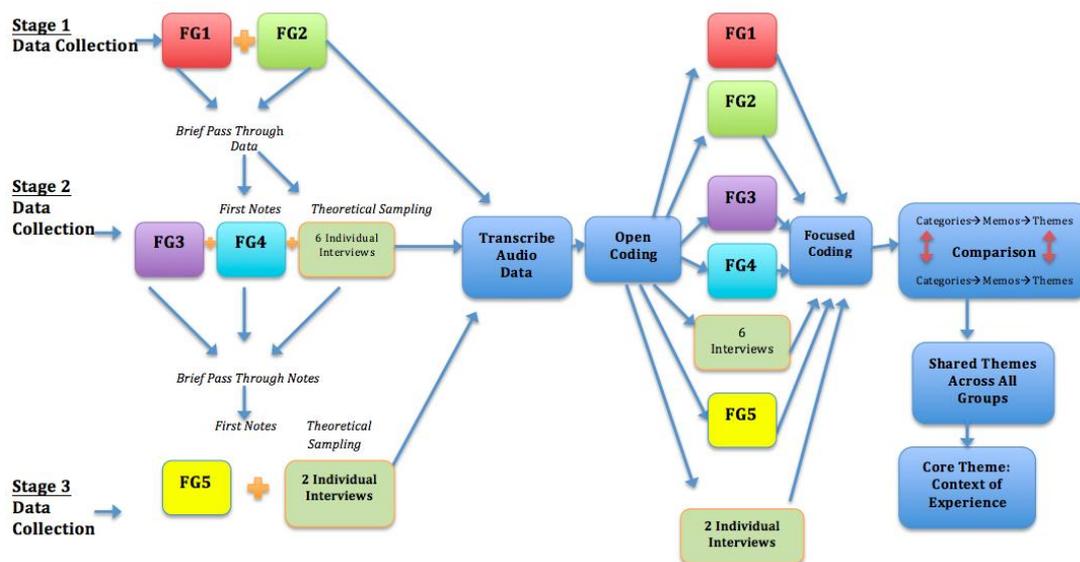


Figure 2: Main Procedural Steps

### Line by line coding:

At the end of each data collection stage the transcripts were coded line by line, a process described by Corbin & Strauss (2008, p. 160) as "fracturing the data", in order to examine the words used by the participants to describe their world view – their experiences and the feelings, meanings and assumptions they attach to those experiences. Throughout the initial coding process I moved quickly through the data and constantly compared data with data. In doing so I was careful to apply what Henwood & Pidgeon (2003, p. 138) describe as "theoretical agnosticism" to the process in adopting an open, agnostic and critical stance towards the data and not the participants. I highlighted words and excerpts of interest to me and assigned initial short gerund codes to them. Charmaz (2006)

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advocates the use of gerunds (using verbs as nouns) to build a sense of action into the coding from the start of the coding process. This line-by-line active coding keeps the researcher close to the data, preserves the fluidity of the participant's experience and gives the researcher new ways of looking at it. It allows complete immersion in the data, which in turn provides an insider's view.

#### *Focus coding and memos:*

Through focus coding I examined all the words used by the participants to describe their worldview, their experiences and the feelings, meanings and assumptions they attach to those experiences. The most frequent and significant codes were selected and then raised to tentative categories. This process involves memo writing which, according to Charmaz (2006, p. 72), is the pivotal step between data collection and the draft because "it prompts you to analyze your data and codes early in the research process". Once the focus codes for each individual interview transcript had been established I began to write early memos to myself about each focus code. I adopted an informal and conversational free-writing style in jotting down whatever thoughts came to mind about the focus code in an attempt to tackle the question 'what's the bigger story – what's happening here in the data?' This process uncovered the tentative categories and provided the focus for further data collection in the form of theoretical sampling that continued until all the properties of the categories were saturated.

#### *Theoretical sampling and development of core categories:*

Theoretical sampling began at the end of the first data collection stage after my analysis of the transcriptions from the first two focus groups. I then became aware that by restricting my data gathering sample to only those individuals engaged in the cross-cultural coaching profession at the FIGT conference, I was limiting myself to hearing only those voices from the coaching perspective and in doing so I was only seeing half of the bigger picture. More data gathering was needed from other valuable sources to shed more light on some of the important emerging categories coming out of this first stage of analysis. In particular I needed to hear voices from the organizational perspective, from the education and training perspective and I needed to theoretically sample for other influences that might impact on the development of global mindedness. This led to individual interviews with global business auditors, change management consultants, cross-cultural trainers and international educators at the EuRA conference.

I continued with theoretical sampling at the end of the second data collection stage after analysis of the EuRA conference transcripts to explore an emerging category relating to global mindedness from a strategic perspective and this led to individual interviews with leadership consultants and global business management consultants.

A final engagement with theoretical sampling took place at the end of the third data collection stage after analysis of the UK focus group transcripts to explicate the emerging categories relating to the impact of global mobility on identity development and the profile of the future coaching client. This led to two final interviews with a cross-cultural trainer and an intercultural researcher before data collection was complete.

During the final stages of data analysis, whilst in the process of ordering my memos to discover the argument, I attended a one-day workshop on using grounded theory methods with a social constructivist approach, conducted by Kathy Charmaz herself who was visiting and lecturing at Cardiff University in the UK as part of a European lecture tour. It was indeed a privilege to receive first hand instruction from Kathy Charmaz who offered practical guidelines for handling data analysis and provided a deeper understanding of the logic of grounded theory as well as strategies for

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generating theory and increasing the theoretical power of a study. The workshop was timely and extremely helpful as it enabled me to stand back and review the main procedural steps that I had already taken in analyzing my own data to the advanced memo stage and also highlighted where I could now return to the data to apply some further analysis in order to confirm the core categories.

During the three-stage process of data collection, analysis and theoretical sampling, I obtained further data from which to explicate all the emerging categories. I continuously engaged with the data in looking for connections between the categories across all the transcripts within each data collection stage to uncover any emerging core categories. To do this I adopted Clarke's (2005) situational approach to analyzing the data by constantly comparing different groups, different people, different accounts and different experiences. In doing so I was able to influence the direction of the theoretical sampling and I developed a bank of titled advanced memos to record my thoughts and ideas regarding related categories, relationships as well as both expected and unexpected findings. I finally reached saturation point when no more new themes were being raised. I was then able to order my advanced memos into six key categories and these all related to one core category 'The Critical Experience' that consistently appeared across all the data. Further discussion of the constructed themes is not relevant to this paper. However the core category 'Critical Experience' became the focus of a second literature review relating to the constructed themes which then enabled me to discover my argument.

### **Challenges in the analysis phase**

Working with data is a time-consuming process for grounded theorists because in order to fully engage in the process the researcher must acknowledge that "rigour and credibility should stem from full and reflexive interrogation of the data in order to allow theory to emerge" (Goulding, 1999, p. 18). As the prime instrument in this study (in the role of the interactive researcher) I had to constantly acknowledge my own subjectivity and monitor how that functioned in the research context (Locke *et al.*, 2010). Reflexivity issues had to be attended to throughout, and I was constantly mindful that my own personal experience and opinions should not infect the data gathering and analysis process to avoid any bias in the result. However I also had to acknowledge that as an interpretative study, it is my interpretation of what respondents have said and therefore had to be cautious of the fact that my own interpretations are influenced by my own experience, values, beliefs and hidden assumptions and that this can influence the research design.

Charmaz advises researchers to view grounded theory methods as flexible guidelines and not methodological rules (Charmaz, 2006), yet the strategies necessary in order to 'see' the data can be somewhat challenging for the novice researcher. The process requires the researcher to analyse the data from the beginning of data collection and to make systematic comparisons throughout the inquiry in order to integrate and streamline data collection and analysis.

As researchers we are called upon to interact with data and the emergent analysis, to construct inductive theoretical categories, to move beyond inductive logic and check emerging theoretical ideas by collecting focused data. I believe that a crucial challenge to the novice researcher can be the tension created in maintaining the necessary flexibility within a given process, particularly when the process itself is somewhat ambiguous. It is important that the researcher recognizes and anticipates the effort required in this and does not underestimate its potential impact.

The challenge of dealing with this uncertainty and ambiguity was to test me at every stage of working with the data. Examining all the words used by participants to describe their worldview, their experiences and the feelings, meanings and assumptions they attach to those experiences involved not

only several readings but also the ordering and organization of a very large quantity of transcribed notes. This was time consuming and tiring and although it initially enabled me to 'hear' the data it was sometimes difficult to 'see' how the codes connected across the data and to clarify which of the most frequent and significant focus codes should be raised to tentative categories.

A lot of time was spent completely immersing myself in the data, writing down my thoughts and ideas in memos in order to see the bigger picture. This was a frustrating and somewhat chaotic experience as I grappled with my own needs in balancing the desire to seek order in chaos with the requirement to tolerate uncertainty and ambiguity and to also find direction. The challenge facing the novice researcher is to be able to see both the detail and the bigger picture at the same time. Charmaz aptly describes this process as "taking comparisons from data and reaching up to construct abstractions and simultaneously reaching down to tie these abstractions to data" (2006, p. 181). Yet I was concerned that in my quest for the bigger picture I might miss some essential details or connections between the categories. Some categories emerged early whilst I was still gathering data but patience was needed to ensure that premature conclusions were not drawn at this stage.

The final and often most difficult part of the constructive grounded theory analysis process is the integration of data. Here I was faced with the challenge of pulling all the analytic research threads together by connecting all the themes contained within my memos in order to construct a plausible explanatory framework about what global mindedness means in the cross-cultural coaching context. I needed to establish the core category and to then see how the other categories linked to it. The clues were in the data but the art was in making the scheme work by finding the missing pieces of the jigsaw, the gaps in the logic, and working and reworking the scheme until the analytic story felt right (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Again this was an uncomfortable process because as a novice researcher I was not confident about the emergent theory. Although the generation of theory takes place around a core category (Glaser, 1978), I was nevertheless unsure how the concepts and complex relationships integrated into an explanatory theoretical framework (Tan, 2009). At this stage Suddaby's perspective (2006, p. 636) provided some clarity and focus:

The purpose of grounded theory is not to make truth statements about reality, but, rather, to elicit fresh understandings about patterned relationships between social actors and how these relationships and interactions actively construct reality

Writing is also a crucial phase of the grounded theory analytical process and this, like the analysis, is emergent (Charmaz, 2006). During the writing stage the researcher has to step back and disengage from deep immersion in the complexity of the generated data in order to see the bigger picture and this process of disengagement for the novice researcher can be an uncomfortable and challenging experience. I was drained from an exhausting immersion in the analysis. Nevertheless I still had to find energy, confidence and belief in the value of my analysis in order to articulate the main argument and deliver a clear analytical story. I also felt the burden of responsibility on my shoulders to ensure that the voices and dilemmas of the participants were not only heard but also faithfully articulated during the rendering. I also needed the confidence to find my own voice in the writing in order to "explicitly claim why my grounded theory makes a valid contribution" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 156). Charmaz states that as with the grounded theory analytical process "writing qualitative research is an ambiguous process" (2006, p.155) but stresses that the novice researcher must learn to tolerate this ambiguity and uncertainty and trust the process in order to find direction.

## Conclusion

Charmaz's emphasis on constructivism loosens grounded theory from its objectivist foundations (2006). However, although grounded theory methodology has since moved away from a positivist approach and has adapted to fit with various ontological and epistemological positions (Mills *et al.*, 2006), nevertheless the historical methodological discourse surrounding this research strategy continues to cause initial confusion for inexperienced grounded theorists.

Unwittingly, novice researchers can enter the previously uncharted waters of research methodology and almost immediately be required to engage in a steep learning curve when considering which appropriate social research approaches and strategies might provide the best fit for their embryonic research topics. The requirement to justify these major choices made throughout the research process can be somewhat daunting and this leads novice researchers to seek much clearer guidance and direction with regard to the proposed steps of a chosen research process.

The aim of this paper has been to guide other researchers through the methodological stumbling blocks of my own research journey as a novice grounded theorist so they may anticipate their own bumps in the road. I have also shown how crucial the decisions made about the initial research design can be in terms of their impact on the research process.

My own experience during the analysis phase may provide valuable information for the novice researcher with regard to the challenges they might face whilst working with the data. Charmaz's constructive stance positions the grounded theory process as being fluid, interactive and open ended. She states that "the strength of grounded theory methods lies in their flexibility and that one must engage the method to make this flexibility real" (Charmaz, 2006 p.178). I believe that this is the biggest challenge facing novice researchers who engage in grounded theory research - the need to manage the tension that is created as a result of the effort required to maintain flexibility within a required process.

Novice grounded theorists must be prepared to surrender themselves to the analysis process and this can be very time-consuming. This necessary immersion in the data can also be a frustrating and chaotic experience because it requires the researcher to negotiate and manage the tension that exists between the need to find direction and the necessity to tolerate ambiguity.

I would argue for grounded theory as a powerful qualitative research methodology because the outcome of the research is socially constructed and it allows for the exploration of meaning and experience. Constructive grounded theory provides a more flexible 21<sup>st</sup> century methodological approach to using basic grounded theory guidelines and Charmaz's *Constructing Grounded Theory* (2006) is a useful and practical guide for the novice researcher. But the grounded theory process asks much of the researcher who must learn to tolerate ambiguity, to trust the grounded theory analytical process and to surrender to this process (Charmaz, 2006). At the same time the novice researcher also receives much in return because the experience of learning to deal with uncertainty itself allows the journey through grounded theory to become a truly transformative one.

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