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Working Through Preconception: Moving from Forcing to Emergence

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Abstract

Much has been written about grounded theory and the processes of theory generation. Less is written about managing the problem of preconception, which has the potential to undermine the openness and emergence that are fundamental to classic grounded theory. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the practical realities of managing preconception, and to draw attention to less well recognised factors that contribute to forcing. The topic interest, tactical innovation in rugby, is introduced. Researcher motivation and the management of preconception are discussed. The example used is the theory of developing, which explains how rugby coaches in New Zealand manage the problem of winning games. The research demonstrates how the novice grounded theory researcher who is prepared to follow the method and trust the process can produce a rigorous grounded theory that makes a meaningful contribution to rugby coaches, players and their administrators.

Introduction

Grounded theory research begins, as all research does, with a general area of interest (Glaser, 1978, 1998). Grounded theory is unique, however, in that the research problem is unknown at the beginning of a study and will be defined in the early interviews by participants rather than the researcher. Ideally, the researcher begins a study without any preconceptions. This means that there should not be any expectations about what might be happening in an area of interest. If the researcher is to be open to the problems and solutions that participants use to manage particular situations, he or she must put to one side personal and professional values, beliefs, knowledge, and experience (Holton, 2007). Grounded theory stands out from other methodologies, as there is an expectation that the researcher does not pre-empt participant understanding and assume that he or she knows what is going on in the topic area. It is this issue of managing preconception that makes the difference between forcing a theory in a particular direction, following existing knowledge, or explaining the hidden patterns of social behaviour (Glaser, 1992).

This initial positioning challenges novice researchers, who may have been taught that typically, research begins with a review of the literature (McCallin, 2006). The traditional view of research design is that the research problem is defined from the literature (Robson, 2011). Robson also acknowledges that "in real world research literature provides a background resource rather than an essential starting point for research" (p. 50). However, literature is a resource that needs to be treated with caution in the current environment where researchers and participants work more closely together. Literature has much to offer those wanting to know more about the key concepts in an area. Whether concepts are relevant or meaningful for people managing problems in a particular situation is another matter altogether (Glaser, 1978, 1998). While a novice researcher commonly, and sometimes necessarily, begins a study with preconceptions, if he or she follows the

grounded theory method, forcing gives way to emergence. The real challenge for the researcher is to be prepared to let go of preconceptions:

> As a grounded theory grows it undoes forcing as moot....pet concepts, pet theory bits, and pet preconceptions just disappear as discovery enhances the drive to keep moving with what is going on. Grounded theory has such impactful conceptual power, that forcing becomes “silly” and preconceptions are given up without notice (Glaser, 1998, p. 99).

Moving beyond preconception, however, is not as easy as it sounds. Few researchers enter the field as vague and passive beings. The nature of research demands focus, motivation and commitment, which come from many sources in the everyday world.

Researcher Motivation

The project began in a roundabout way. The researcher (KK) received scholarship support for a Master’s research study from his rugby club. Access to the scholarship began when a faculty member (GD) invited the student to consider becoming a postgraduate researcher. At the time the prospective student was the manager of a team at the rugby club. Consultation between the potential student, the faculty member, and the rugby club identified a common interest in tactical innovation in rugby. Tactical innovation was provisionally and pragmatically conceived as a new, revised, or freshly conceived and/or applied tactical method, designed to take an opponent unawares. The pitch was that understanding tactical innovations within invasive ball sports was limited. This beginning situation illustrates well that "the researcher does not set the agenda [for research] in isolation but acts in partnership with a variety of client groups" (Robson, 2011, p. 50).

The timing of the research is worth mentioning in that several factors affected preconception. The research was of special interest at the time, because New Zealand was preparing to host the Rugby World Cup. The faculty member was interested in the topic due to the gap in the academic sports literature. The prospective student was presented with a new academic and vocational opportunity. Although he had not previously considered research as a vocation, being invited to research his long-standing personal life-cycle interest (Glaser, 1978) was an opportunity not to be missed. However, the sequence of events for this real world research project meant that right from the beginning forcing and pre-conceiving occurred. Essentially, the student was awarded the scholarship to study tactical innovation in rugby. He was to be supervised by the faculty member who was an experienced quantitative researcher. At that stage everyone - the student, the supervisor and the rugby club - thought that the research would produce knowledge about how tactical innovation occurred. The next step was significant: the student still had to complete a Master’s research paper so enrolled in a qualitative research course.

In the qualitative research course he discovered a smorgasbord of social science methodologies. Right from the beginning, grounded theory stood out. Whilst the researcher chose grounded theory, grounded theory also chose the researcher. Choice seemed to be related to the researcher's temperament, personality traits, and previous life experiences. Glaser (2010) notes that "motivation to use grounded theory is linked with research age, career development, and chronological age" (p. 3). Glaser suggests that it is not uncommon that a grounded theory researcher notices a natural affinity with the method. In this instance the researcher was familiar with analysing data and conceptualising emergent explanations in another discipline. Previous experience with Biblical and Systematic Theology had demanded an inductive-deductive reasoning process, which is similar to grounded

theory. This personal history of conceptualisation was critical. Glaser observes that "the grounded theory researcher must have three important characteristics: the ability to conceptualise data, an ability to tolerate some confusion, and an ability to tolerate confusion's attendant regression" (2010, p. 4). In addition, grounded theory seemed to offer "a total package" (p. 3). There was an initial methodological fit in the desire to uncover patterns of behaviour that accounted for the social processes underlying tactical innovation in rugby. The promised final product of grounded theory - a conceptualised explanation with scope, density and parsimony, which fitted, was relevant, and had workability for participants in the substantive field - was a desirable research product outcome.

Once the methodology was sorted the research proposal was prepared. Again, of necessity, preconception was emphasised. The research interest had to be framed in a particular way to gain approval from a key faculty academic committee. Despite the dictates of grounded theory to remain open to participant problems, the researcher was required to preconceive, to justify a gap in academic knowledge, and to signal the potential practical benefits of research outcomes. Xie (2009) discusses this issue and suggests that it is not uncommon for research students to have to write what she calls “a compromised GT proposal” (p. 35). Accordingly, approval was sought and given to research a preconceived problem and grounded theory was presented as an ideal methodology to understand what was happening in the area of interest. The framing therefore reflected Glaser’s pragmatic advice to, “give [influential committees] the forcing that they want and start the study. Then let the grounded theory emerge without forcing, while doing the research. Soon what is being discovered will unforce the study. Preconceptions will be neutralized by what is being generated” (Glaser, 1998, p. 90).

At that point a grounded theory researcher (AM) was appointed to the research team. There were discussions about the implications of using the method and what would be required, but as is typical of grounded theory there is a delayed action learning curve (Glaser, 1998). This means that researchers very often do not understand the full meaning of becoming a grounded theorist until the process is finished. In spite of the problems the student was well positioned to begin the project. Indeed, Roderick (2009) advises novice researchers to “seek expertise, engage in community, just do it, know self, and balance challenge and support” (p. 49). That advice proved helpful.

Managing Initial Preconceptions

From the time grounded theory was chosen, and well before any data was collected, the novice researcher faced an inherent paradox. Although a researcher may be tempted to pre-conceive and force the direction of a study, Glaser (1998) prescribes contrary dicta, which must be strictly followed, if emergence is to occur. This causes some tension, because most researchers are motivated to work with a topic of interest, which is a usually a professional interest. That was so in this study and could not be ignored. The student had received a scholarship to study tactical innovation. If this had been an open grounded theory study from the beginning the substantive area would have been rugby tactics.

Preconception was emphasised further because the researcher began the study believing that coaches were primary movers of innovation and change. At the time it was difficult to suspend that type of thinking. New Zealand was well into the throes of the Rugby World Cup build-up. Everyday rugby was discussed, and all aspects of the game were analysed publicly and subjected to media scrutiny. There was an intense interest in innovative tactics due to the fact that New Zealand had not won the World Cup for many years, and the public wanted to know what was happening to rectify the situation. In

particular, coaches were thoroughly scrutinised. They were the ones who were responsible for introducing something new and surprising into the game so that their team had an on-field advantage over their opponents. The way coaches did that was largely unknown. The researcher believed that it was a hidden pattern of behaviour.

Although professional and possibly public interest motivated the researcher, he certainly understood that he must not force the study direction to conform to the received view of the world. With the support of his grounded theory supervisor, he readily questioned his pre-conceptions. Perhaps because of his previous theological background, he was comfortable constantly comparing data and conceptualising in a way that was congruent with the content and contours of the data alone (Glaser, 1998). A distinctive feature of the methodology is that only that which is grounded in the data earns its place in the theory – hence 'grounded' theory. This was achieved by analysis and re-analysis to ensure that conceptualisations were both grounded and emergent. Similarly, emergence was fostered as the researcher searched for the patterns in the data, and avoided interpretations that followed the original preconceptions and existing patterns of thought (Glaser, 1998).

It was clear by then that preconception was a significant issue. It did not just disappear. As stated, preconception was apparent in the decision to interview coaches initially. The researcher had a long-standing history of studying the game, playing, managing, and writing about it. He recognised the power of players but believed that coaches were the more likely tactical experts. Thus he targeted coaches who worked in remunerated representative rugby, where the most capable players and coaches were to be found. The pre-understanding was that tactical innovation was more likely to occur there, as time, resources, and financial incentive supported it. Forcing continued during the early interviews. Interviews began with open-ended questions all of which focused on tactical innovation. Examples of these questions include:

- Tell me about the circumstances which led you to consider [tactical innovation] as a possibility.
- Was it a necessity, and if so, why? If not, why did you consider it?
- Do you remember when you first thought of [innovation], and how it came about?
- What things/factors influenced your thinking?
- What was the process by which you thought [tactical innovation] was a possible option, rather than, say a recognised tactic such as [tactical option]? and
- What was the process by which you first determined if [tactical innovation] was really a viable option?

Looking back, the questions were too specific and forced the direction of the study. Fortunately for everyone, it quickly became apparent that tactical innovation was a "professional problem" (Glaser, 1998, p. 116). The supervisor picked this up when she read the interviews. She noticed that the participants talked about winning and questioned the researcher's emphasis on innovation when it did not seem to be important to the participants. From that point on, tactical innovation was used as a beginning talking point. The researcher was also assisted by the participants, who were not particularly interested in talking about tactical innovation anyway. They preferred to talk about other topics that were meaningful for them. They were especially keen to talk about winning games and competitions.

The Main Concern and Resolution

The main concern was identified after the ninth interview. Although it was evident that coaches wanted and needed their teams to win and to perform to their utmost ability, the main concern identification was not straightforward. It is possible that it was affected by all the hype about winning the World Cup, which was in the media at the time. While this was a general contextual issue that would not usually affect data analysis, the daily discussions of rugby were everywhere and were difficult to avoid. In hindsight this atmosphere may have contributed to forcing. Another problem was that there were two concerns - winning and performance. At times these two concerns varied in that it seemed that a short-term gain in one aspect compromised the other. In the early stages of analysis the main concern was identified as achieving winning potential and performance potential. This of course was descriptive. The researcher understood that the main concern needed to be conceptualised (Glaser, 2001). In an effort to give it comparative scope, depth, and parsimony it was re-labelled as realisation of winning performance, which was eventually refined to winning. Once the main concern was clarified it was much easier to let pre-conceptions go and focus on finding the resolution.

During the seventh interview the phrase “mental engineering” came up during an interview. It was emergent, in that it was a potential pattern of behaviour that coaches use to solve the problem of winning. While tactical innovation had been left behind, in hindsight it was possible that data were forced towards the mental engineering resolution, because time for the research was running out. Mental engineering became the focus of data analysis from that time onwards, until just before the writing up was completed. The formulation appealed to the researcher. It reflected the perceived complex inter-relationships between categories, and allowed one category to inter-connect and then leverage off another, creating a new team dynamic. That interpretation of course may have been linked to the original desire to explain what was happening in innovating. Nonetheless, the notion that no one category acted as a starting point was appealing. It fitted well with the idea that grounded theory should include an explanation of the inter-relationship between categories (Glaser, 1998).

Memos helped detail theoretical development. They confirmed that mental engineering was becoming formalised. For example, three categories were identified, which meant, up to six possible team engineering inter-relationships were possible: prospecting [later changed to innovating, as discussed later] to influencing, influencing to prospecting, prospecting to implementing, implementing to prospecting, influencing to implementing, and implementing to influencing. Illustrations of each inter-relationship were also worked through in memos. For instance, the setting up of systems (implementing) contributed to the creation of an implicit agenda (influencing). But, the utilisation of analogies and other illustrations, such as mental engineering, is not within the valid scope of grounded theory and illustrates another swerve, possibly subconsciously, into forcing. The categories already represented a conceptualisation of the data. Interestingly enough, attempts to force conceptualisation about the inter-relationship between those categories tended to dissolve the distinctive concepts that were quite clear in the data. As Glaser (1978) argues the method is self-correcting.

As constant comparison continued into the writing up, emergence strengthened. The researcher gained confidence in following emergence and became accomplished at recognising forcing. For example, he realised that the way he interpreted the interrelationships was over-complicated. However, over-complication was not necessary. A grounded theory needs to be understood and recognised by its participants. In particular, it was noted that mental engineering was not commonly used by participants, whereas

developing was common right across the data. Glaser (1998) of course argues that in order for the theory to be grounded, and reflect the concerns of the participants, it is advisable to utilise their terminology where possible. Ongoing interviews showed that mental engineering and its attendant connotations did not exhibit grab or have a ready acceptance with the participants. While one coach had used the term others did not connect with it at all. To have insisted further would have forced the data. Obviously, mental engineering needed to be replaced, preferably with terminology that came from the data.

Further analysis drew attention to the process of developing that occurred everywhere. There was no doubt at all that once it was noticed that it was an over-riding pattern. Little notice had been taken of this concept before, perhaps because it is rather innocuous in everyday language. Developing simplified the theoretical explanation by providing scope to explain the interrelationships between the categories. Furthermore, the tenth interview participant referred to resource development. However, analysis and sensitivity to emergence suggested that this was an inexact conception, as the data confirmed a rugby team is both the recipient of resource development, and also a resource in and of itself. Further thought about mental engineering suggested that misconceived inter-relational emphasis was the result of an initial failure to properly separate out the concepts in the data, and then inter-relate them again within a framework of developing. In retrospect this occurred because the researcher focused on participants' descriptions. While the breaking up and conceptualising of the data was in accordance with the methodology, core category identification is critical to theory development, as it integrates the main concepts into a coherent whole (Glaser, 1978).

Identifying Innovating

Similar issues were encountered with the emergence of the category of innovating, which was about assessing opportunities to secure potential advantage that supports developing. In an attempt to compensate and avoid forcing the tactical innovation professional concern, the emphasis on innovating that was discussed in the interviews, was underplayed. Eventually, innovating was adopted late in the write-up. Originally, the emphasis was on identifying, which really did seem bland. Once innovating had earned its place in the analysis identifying became a property of innovating. Memoing was useful to work through the options and try out different interpretations before making a final decision about labels. The final product of that round of memoing was prospecting, which remained a category until late in the writing up. Prospecting certainly had grab (Glaser, 1992). The term captured aspects of the search, inquiry, and unexpected find and identification that accompany coaches' analysis. However, at no stage did any of the participants volunteer prospecting as a suitable descriptor. In other words, the researcher had gone beyond the data and moved into forcing, as opposed to allowing data to emerge from participants (Glaser, 1992). Indeed, during theoretical sampling one participant expressed a concern that prospecting be confused with the gold-mining process. This highlighted the possibility that prospecting was acting as a description or an analogy, rather than fulfilling a conceptual function.

Only very late in the writing up did the term innovating earn its way into the grounded theory, as a result of its continual appearance in the data. However, whereas the initial data gathering utilised the assumption that innovating was a new, revised, or freshly conceived and/or applied tactical method, designed to take an opponent unawares, innovating was redefined within the theory of developing as: anything that has the possibility to change a team so that team function is different. The purpose of innovating is to secure a potential advantage over opponents. Specifically, this meant that whereas innovating was initially defined in narrow terms of original tactics, in the theory of

developing tactical originality became a much smaller aspect within the entire category. So the emergent findings confirmed Glaser's advice:

> The researcher must always keep in mind not to force the data with particularism. His job is to find out what is going on by looking at the patterns that emerge from many people. Thus his own particular problem embedded in an interest gets transcended to a grounded theory, which can then be brought back to help him understand the area of interest and his particular problem (Glaser, 1998, p. 49).

Identifying Influencing

A similar wrestle occurred with the category influencing, which was about securing buy-in from others by structuring and persuading those who could support developing. A field note made immediately after the fourth interview reinforced an emerging paradox: coaches sought to exercise control, in order for team players to have an environment in which to freely utilise their skill and judgment. Initially, the properties of influencing were controlling and creating the environment to support influencing. However, freedom to rethink analysis is central to theory development, and allows the analyst to rework thinking and initial descriptions (Glaser, 1978). Analysis of the data showed the recurrence of influencing, which, along with the properties structuring and persuading, captured the conceptual nuance and extent of the category.

Complicating understanding of influencing was the explanation of the indicators of the properties that were wide-ranging. Data analysis suggested an outward-oriented sphere of control that included senior players, co-coaches, and confidants. This group was easier to persuade, and were a source of mutual influence on coaches. Beyond the inner group, influencing also extended to the team and included referees, administrators, opponents, media, and the public as well. Memo and records of the organisation of open codes within influencing immediately prior to writing up suggest that influencing was such a broad category that it probably required further data collection for refinement. It is possible too that the researcher got caught up in the constraints of full description that limit conceptualising (Glaser, 2001).

Part of the problem was data highlighting the personal and introspective reflection underpinning influencing, which coaches were required to exercise when developing. It was evident that effective influencers model openness and flexibility to their teams. Also, in the writing up it was clear that coaches had less capacity to secure buy-in from those on the outer-sphere of their influence than was originally thought. Despite this, the properties of influencing remained the same, whether influencing close confidants within the inner team circle, or distant ancillaries. There was another problem in that openness was previously located within innovating. While participants discussed some aspects of personal introspection and character development, following that through was beyond the immediate scope of this grounded theory study. Those leads were therefore put to one side and the focus remained on understanding how influencing fitted into a theory of developing. Not surprisingly, the final write up of influencing, whilst reflecting that coaches exercise a wide and diverse sphere of potentially mutual influence, concentrated on the content and extent of category development, rather than the sphere of influence, which was seen to be different. This shows how reworking weeds out theoretical problems such as "needless redundancy, clarifications of confused or mixed analysis, trimming and adding illustrations...unit focus and conceptual style, and other needs of sections and subsections" (Glaser, 1978, p. 136).

Identifying Implementing

The emergence of the third category, implementing, was more straight-forward during analysis. Implementing was about developing the resource reliability that was needed for developing. Implementing was evident before the tenth interview. Fortunately, participants referred directly to implementing. Along the same lines, data also confirmed implementing was a category that focused, applied, and gave concrete expression to the other categories of developing. For this reason, enabling was considered as a possible descriptor during a round of memoing. However, constant comparison during writing up clarified the extent of the implementing, and its inter-relationship with innovating. In particular, there was fluidity in the locating of the point of decision, which developed a potential innovation into an actual implementation. Initially, deciding was placed within innovating. This caused some theoretical difficulty, as the more abstract reflective aspects of innovating emerged. In addition, there was an increasing realisation that much innovative possibility was provisional until inter-related with team-interactive influencing. As a result, it became clear that the decision to enact was an aspect of implementing. The initial misplacement was useful though, since it highlighted that deciding was the point of inter-relationship between innovating and implementing. Although the final theory of developing had three categories there was a time during analysis when four categories were considered.

Development as an Analyst

As analysis proceeded the researcher became accomplished at letting preconceptions go. He became so open to analytical possibility that he needed to be drawn back to complete the job in hand. For example, when sorting memos he noted that balancing stood out. Was this a fourth category? Or perhaps it was part of implementing? The balancing of options and resolving of paradoxes was found at points within the data. Dichotomies and dilemmas suggested that coaches needed to address both physical and mental aspects within developing; institute structure yet maintain fluidity; give expression to individual talents, but fit that within team requirements; on-field vs. off-field needs and abilities; initiating or responding to events; analysis as opposed to task; reinforcing established patterns juxtaposed with the need to innovate; and rugby as an art or a science. However, the balancing possibility was eventually discarded as a fourth category on the grounds that it represented a difficulty in the free initiation and direct inter-relationship between categories.

It is possible that if more data were collected balancing may have earned a place in the theory of developing. Subsequent reflection and reading after the writing-up raised the possibility that balancing may have been a theoretical code. Even though the option of theoretical coding was not used in this research due to time constraints, balancing is well recognised as a theoretical code (Glaser, 2005). Glaser argues that balancing is a step beyond the dichotomy or trichotomy of complex decisions: “Balancing is handling many variables at once in order to start an action, keep an action going or achieve a resolution. One gets an equilibrium between all the variables” (Glaser, 2005, p. 29).

Even though this research went no further than substantive coding, balancing is not the only theoretical code offering insight into the findings of this research. Amplifying causal looping, a derivative of the causal theoretical code family (Glaser, 2005), provides another explanation of the analysis possible in the theory of developing. “As consequences become continually causes and causes continually consequences, one sees either worsening or improving progressions or escalating severity” (Glaser, 2005, p. 9). There seems to be resonance between this theoretical code and the theory of developing. Elements of the free

leveraging off of one category to any other category, in order to enhance the progress of team developing, seem to exhibit an amplifying causal loop.

Implications for Practice

Despite the initial and unavoidable forcing this research has had a happy ending. The thesis was completed successfully (Kwok, 2011). The researcher was able to regard the research process as a leaning opportunity, one to open up the mind to different ways of looking at the world. More importantly was his open attitude and his willingness to study the method and apply it in a scholarly way. The researcher's initial motivational concern for tactical innovation still remained, but as per Glaser's advice, "[the grounded theorist] is not afraid to relinquish whatever...pet theories maybe...led to their interest. Giving up... preconceptions [does] not kill...drive: rather discoveries enhanced it" (Glaser, 1998, p. 49). Even more importantly for the issue of methodological rigour, the researcher's, "own particular problem embedded in an interest gets transcended to a grounded theory, which can then be brought back to help him understand the area of interest and his particular problem" (Glaser, 1998, p. 49).

Of particular interest is how the research was received by the rugby club. A presentation of findings was well received. Coaches present thought the theory "made sense" and explained what they did everyday. The director of rugby of the club, who has had many years of experience as a player and coach at the highest representative international level, thought the theory of developing provided a ready-made template that could be used to manage rugby coaching better throughout New Zealand. The next step is for the researcher to utilise his connections in the rugby community to disseminate his findings further to test how they are received, and revise accordingly. The aim is to develop the theory into a user-friendly format that can fit within existing national coach education structures. Perhaps a subsequent option is for the researcher to write a book about coaching, with applicability not just for rugby, or invasive ball sports, but also for managers in dynamic competitive and creative environments with affinities with sport such as business and the performing arts.

What this Paper Adds

This paper illustrates that there are multiple hidden challenges that influence emergence and may contribute to forcing of data, which impacts theoretical development. Glaser has written at length and argued against the use of prescribed coding models, over-conceptualisation, the influence of the received view of the world, the researcher's worldview, not to mention the researcher's life cycle interests, all of which contribute to forcing the data (Glaser, 1978, 1992, 1998, 2005). Glaser encourages researchers to stay open, to trust in the research process. Indeed, Christiansen (2008) argues that the suspension of pre-existing understandings minimises the researcher's assumptions about what a study is really about. In practice though, putting assumptions to one side is much more difficult as has been seen in this paper. Many students begin research with an interest, perhaps a life-cycle interest or a professional interest (Astrom, 2006). It can be difficult to put this to one side, to recognise the central importance of openness that also grows and develops over time (Gynnild, 2006).

Interestingly, several new points in the forcing-emerging debate stand out. Firstly, forcing may have political origins, in that research interests proposed by others may be carefully chosen, as a particular view of the world is promoted, implicitly or explicitly, often ingenuously. Documenting how innovative tactics are developed in the world's most

successful rugby team is seemingly reasonable, if not naïve. This suggests that forcing and openness present themselves in much more subtle disguises today. Secondly, forcing may be economically driven. It is very difficult to stay open to what participants want to talk about when scholarship money has been awarded to study a particular problem. Thirdly, forcing may be influenced by the researcher's intellectual confidence and competence, both of which impact on the researcher's willingness to trust in emergence. Fourthly, competent supervision from a trained classical grounded theorist is essential to pre-empt forcing. Finally, the social context has some influence on forcing and may counteract emergence, as what is considered "normal" is present in everyday behaviors as they are portrayed in the media.

Limitations of the Study

This was a small scale Master's research project. The time-line for completion was short. Thus the study was contained to some extent. Theoretical sampling that would have extended the theory further was not possible in the time-frame. Even though the number of participants was small the coaches were all experts in the field and very articulate about their work. This supported the notion that it is not the number of participants that matters but the depth of their discussion which is significant. Finally, while the research is presented as a theory of developing with further data collection and sampling, perhaps the inclusion of players, developing may be subsumed as a category in a broader theory of sports coaching.

Conclusion

This paper has explained how the methods of grounded theory were applied in the research process to generate a theory of developing. The problem of preconception was discussed as was its management. This demonstrates the rich promise that awaits those who are prepared to trust in emergence. Grounded theory represents a powerful and unique research methodology. Even the novice grounded theorist can commence the research endeavor with the knowledge that original and potentially significant findings are likely. In addition, the core processes to master/be mastered are essentially the formalising of everyday problem-solving skills. They have also been explained in detail in various works for two generations. If potential grounded theorists have equipped themselves with the necessary foundation, one thing remains: to give grounded theory a go. Various pitfalls and false turns almost inevitably await. However, if the methods of grounded theory are faithfully employed, the researcher and the emerging theory are strengthened all the more.

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