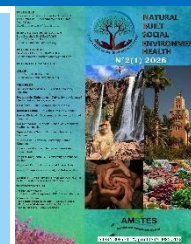


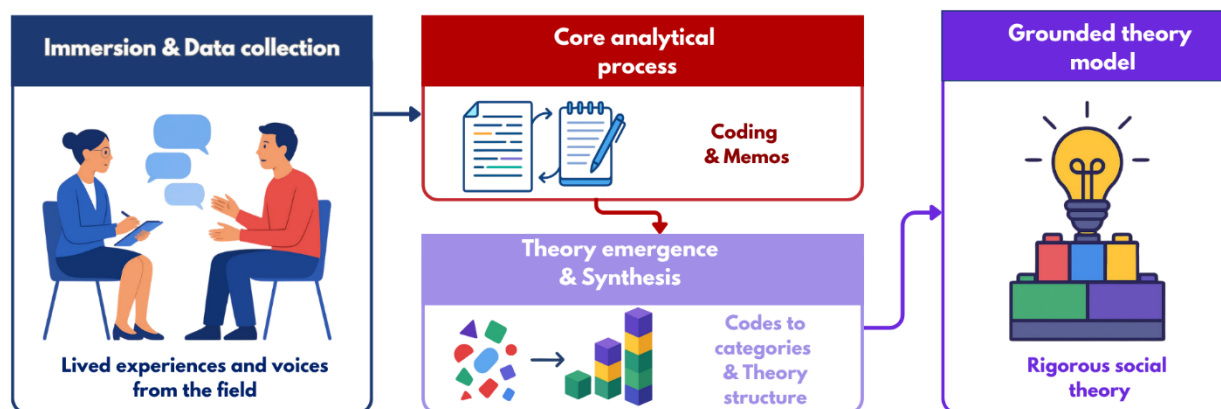


## Natural Built Social Environment Health

ISSN 3085-461X

[www.nbseh.org](http://www.nbseh.org)

### BOOK REVIEW



**Grounded Theory in Action: Voices from the Field**, edited by Gregory Hadley and Antony Bryant, **authors:** Babchuk, W. A., Lynch-O'Brien, L. I., Friese, S., Unterpertinger, E., Thornberg, R., Horton, P., Forsberg, C., Engward, H., van Veggel, N., Allison, J., Mahmood Zada, A., Urquhart, C., Miller De Rutté, A. M., Bachynski, J. C., Costa, I. G., Long, A., Keane, E., Grant, M. J., Gibson, B., Morgner, C., Redway, A. M., Kemm, R., Cooper, K. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, UK, 2026, 192 pp., £85.50 (hardback), ISBN: 978-1-03532-190-2.

The pioneers of artificial intelligence, such as Alan Turing and John McCarthy in 1956, began questioning the possibility of designing machines “capable of thinking”. Today, since the revolutionary launch of ChatGPT by OpenAI on 30 November 2022, we face an uncontrollable technological force, appearing under different names, through several inventors and several major powers, made available to the general public, for both the very young and the very old alike, across all categories. Several already see in it a form of refuge in the face of human failing. Others fear a progressive erosion of human experience, of human knowing-how-to-be and knowing-how-to-do, deepening this “desert of ourselves”.

And as the current algorithmic era seems to weaken certain human dimensions across many fields, we now need the means to move forward with greater security, through research strategies centred on human experience and social dynamics, in order to ensure a form of

rebalancing. This book makes a worthy contribution. This research proposes a strategy of listening, understanding lived human experience and reconstructing meaning. Grounded Theory thus appears as a form of remedy against faults in this algorithmic era, founded upon automation, speed, prediction and standardization.

I have often considered that these types of published academic research escaped classical methodological frameworks, and this has led me to focus on their deeper nature. I refer to works that emerge from reality, are rooted in lived experiences, and seek less to measure than to understand. I am thinking particularly of those qualitative studies exploring the psycho-social dimensions of quality of life among patients affected by breast cancer, or those concerned with the psychological impact of caesarean delivery, describing emotions, suffering, reactions to diagnosis, and family and social dynamics. Others investigate the effects of heavy treatments, such as chemotherapy or radiotherapy, on everyday life, or give voice to more silent experiences, including trauma linked to sexual abuse among adolescent girls and the need for therapeutic support to sustain their mental health and well-being.

Such research is indispensable. It addresses highly sensitive human dimensions within the system, draws upon diverse social phenomena in order to construct theories that are both useful and applicable, deserves particularly careful attention, and requires, for its implementation, an adaptive approach, constructed by the researcher in close connection with the context, the field, and dynamic data capable of evolving throughout the course of the research itself. *Grounded Theory in Action* fills this gap by proposing a genuine structuring of these approaches, which are often perceived as intuitive.

Grounded Theory was developed by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in 1967 (p. 37) [1], and this approach provides a methodological response that also makes it possible to explore mechanisms of adaptation, strategies of resilience, and the social interactions constructed around complex situations, allowing explanatory models to emerge directly in relation to their contexts and specific challenges. The originality of this book lies in the way it renders the approach accessible, intelligible, and above all applicable. The work emphasizes that this emergent approach, far from being informal, rests upon a rigorous and reproducible logic capable of transforming data derived from reality into a solid and scientifically defensible theory. Even today, this theory remains insufficiently mobilized as a structuring methodological

framework, or is applied without fully mastering its principles, despite the fact that these principles remain essential for the production of rigorous and fruitful results.

I have often attempted to compare these types of research with my own practices. I frequently mobilize multidimensional data analysis tools, as well as data mining tools, which make it possible to “fish out” hidden information from a gigantic data matrix. This approach relies upon algorithmic and quantitative logic, where patterns emerge from calculations and correlations, and it is something entirely different. But, the logic of Grounded Theory recalls that several major scientific ideas were born from careful attention paid to reality and observed phenomena, as illustrated by the famous intuition associated with Isaac Newton observing the fall of an apple [2], or that of Joseph M. Juran, who, by connecting himself to everyday events and the industrial world, developed the idea of applying the principle introduced by the Italian economist Vilfredo Pareto and his 20/80 rule [3].

The quantitative and qualitative approaches sometimes appear to overlap, and both seem to be triggered through a connection with the field, its “Voices”, and the researcher’s “intuition”. In the genesis of quantitative research, even before the formalization of hypotheses and protocols, the researcher often passes through a phase of observation, connection with the field, and perception of emerging issues. Reality therefore appears to precede measurement, as though certain quantitative approaches found, at their origin, an initial anchorage in experience and environment.

Grounded Theory nevertheless remains a highly distinct method, transforming lived experiences and field data into a structured theory through its precise tools of analysis and interpretation (pp. 69–79). After the phase of immersion and observation in the field (pp. 37–45) come data collection through sampling, interviews (pp. 48–59), line-by-line analysis of statements, comparison of responses, the development of analytical notes, and eventually the hierarchical organization of responses into categories (pp. 103–113). The theory then begins to emerge.

Other associated tools are integrated, particularly coding (pp. 92–102), which makes it possible to extract the invisible fibres contained within discourses, testimonies, and the whole body of observations. Each of these elements must be assigned labels. When a patient declares, “I no longer recognize myself after the operation”, this may be coded as a loss of identity, or an

alteration of body image. Coding therefore fragments meaning and facilitates understanding. Susanne Frieze and Erika Unterpertinger (pp. 23–33) warn us against an excessive dependence on CAQDAS tools in qualitative research, at the risk that the machine may begin to think in place of human beings and orient their decisions.

The researcher then enters a more reflexive phase, mobilizing other tools in order to understand the phenomenon better. Several interviewed cases may describe the same feeling in different and distinct ways, which then becomes necessary to clarify. Other analytical mechanisms subsequently frame and reinforce this specificity. Alongside “coding”, “memos” also intervene, stimulating the birth of theory. Memos do not constitute free opinions, but rather analytical reflection tools linked to the data and the field, even if each author possesses a writing style of his or her own. They consist in refining reflections, establishing links between concepts, as well as between causes and effects (p. 116). Once the first significant elements of the studied phenomenon have been identified, the approach may call upon theoretical sampling, targeting the strata or specimens likely to provide an even more precise and specific understanding of the phenomenon under study.

During the official launch of the French strategy on artificial intelligence, Emmanuel Macron presented, during the event entitled *AI for Humanity*, organised on 29 March 2018 at the Collège de France, following the publication of the report by Cédric Villani, four major strategic pillars [4]:

- a.) strongly support scientific research;
- b.) develop laboratories, universities and innovation centres;
- c.) attract high-level researchers, engineers, students and experts;
- d.) make France attractive to international talent in the field of AI / IA.

The practice of Grounded Theory particularly supports scientifically framed research on ethical, political and societal levels, in direct resonance with the first and fourth pillars of the strategy presented during *AI for Humanity*.

At a time when AI is silently damaging essential human functions, standardizing human knowledge and behaviour, “Giving meaning to artificial intelligence” [5] also means reconnecting our research to lived experiences, making it attentive to reality, respectful of human experiences and firmly oriented towards understanding. Thus, the human and qualitative

sciences seem naturally to be becoming more necessary than ever. *Grounded Theory in Action* may frame approaches that seek to reintroduce essential human dimensions.

*Grounded Theory in Action* reminds us that understanding the human being, listening to lived experiences and reconstructing meaning from reality perhaps remain among the most essential scientific functions to preserve.

This practical reference work, overflowing with concrete examples and fascinating case studies, directs our attention towards the way in which we produce and value knowledge, as a scientific posture in its own right.

The book also offers elements for a useful checklist for good editorial practices. This book encourages us to adjust the author guidelines and to integrate Grounded Theory (GT) as a methodological reference, because it can deeply structure scientific, editorial, and ethical quality.

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**How to cite this article**

Boutaleb, N., 2026, Book Review - **Grounded Theory in Action: Voices from the Field**, edited by Gregory Hadley and Antony Bryant; authors: Babchuk, W. A., Lynch-O'Brien, L. I., Friese, S., Unterpertinger, E., Thornberg, R., Horton, P., Forsberg, C., Engward, H., van Veggel, N., Allison, J., Mahmood Zada, A., Urquhart, C., Miller De Rutté, A. M., Bachynski, J. C., Costa, I. G., Long, A., Keane, E., Grant, M. J., Gibson, B., Morgner, C., Redway, A. M., Kemm, R., Cooper, K. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, UK, 2026, 192 pp., £85.50 (hardback), ISBN: 978-1-03532-190-2. *Natural Built Social Environment Health* 2(3), 181-186. <http://www.doi.org/10.63095/NBSEH.26.658274>

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