

ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Discovering how Midwife Navigators Provide Woman-Centred Care: Grounded Theory Research Framework Design

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Keywords: midwifery, navigator, woman-centred care, grounded theory, model of care.

Summary. *Background.* Woman-centred care is central to maternity and midwifery service provision. This model becomes even more important when there are underlying chronic conditions impacting on pregnancy requiring multi-specialist input; however, barriers to woman-centred care exist. These barriers are created through power differentials within systems, between models of care and between health professionals.

A research framework aims to provoke a critical analysis of relationships between human, non-human, positional and discursive elements across the micro, meso and macro level. This is required to understand how midwife navigators provide woman-centred care for women labelled 'high risk' when barriers to woman-centred care exist in health services.

Methods. This article presents a discussion on the philosophical framework that will be used to explore the perceptions and practice of woman-centred care across the micro, meso and macro level. A constructivist grounded theory research design that incorporates Clarke's situational analysis method and a critical feminist lens with Fairclough's critical discourse analysis as an overarching theoretical perspective is proposed.

Discussion. This framework was carefully considered for its critical analysis of relationships between human, non-human, positional and discursive elements across institutional hierarchies of health care. It aims to examine discourses related to woman-centred care at organisational level, practice by services and health professionals at operational level, and the perceptions of women who have been managed under the model described as woman-centred care.

Conclusion. In keeping with grounded theory, the first step to seeking out answers is to share the research design. This research framework intends to embrace the complexities of 'real world' situations, enhance reflexivity of the researcher, elucidate various perspectives in the data, work against the silence of minor voices and perspectives and move beyond the knowing subject of interviews to include analysis of discourses and power.

Introduction

Woman-centred care (WCC) as a philosophy and practice paradigm in midwifery and maternity services exists as a mechanism for increasing a woman's self-determination in terms of choice and control, overcoming service fragmentation, increasing satisfaction with care provision and to improve outcomes for women and babies (1–4). However, barriers to WCC are created through power differentials within systems, between models of care and between health professionals (2–4). Solutions to overcome barriers have mostly been conceptualised through midwifery continuity of carer models which are not accessible to all women.

Research around WCC concepts in maternity services and midwifery is not new or innovative yet women continue to describe maternity care provision as not meeting their needs, and for women labelled with a 'high-risk' pregnancy few solutions are offered. This suggests that a new theoretical and ideological research approach may be required to discover how WCC concepts can be applied effectively and equitably.

Background: Using a Combination of Theoretical Approaches to Explore a Complex Problem

This article presents a constructivist grounded theory (CGT) project research framework design that combines synergistic qualitative methods and perspectives. A complex unsolved problem may require a complex framework to add insight and

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understandings that may not come with a single method of analysis of data. This may require researchers to move beyond researcher centric unwritten rules of rigid methodological frameworks to take risks, embrace tensions between flexibility and consistency and think outside the box when developing research framework design that adequately captures 'real world' complex situations. The research study design is represented in Fig. 1 and will be discussed in further detail.

The proposed research methodology is CGT. The research design (Fig. 1) incorporates Clarke's (2005) situational analysis (5) extension of CGT as a method in data analysis with underpinnings of feminist perspectives and Fairclough's (2001) critical discourse analysis (6) understandings of power in language as an overall theoretical perspective and method in data analysis. This acknowledges the complexity of power differentials that exist in 'real world' situations.

The Feminist Lens. Grounded theory is enriched when underpinned by critical feminist perspectives (7). In health service situations, a critical feminist perspective identifies that there are social and equity issues that impact on health (8) and power

imbalances between women and health professionals and between midwifery and medical professionals in organisations (9). Constructing new knowledge by examining connections between gender and distribution of power in health services disrupts traditional perspectives and embraces rather than avoids political dimensions of health care. The feminist lens perspective focuses on the way in which language maintains gender hierarchies and emphasises the interpretation of language and symbols to derive meaning (7).

Constructivist Grounded Theory. Grounded theory has undergone a number of evolutions since its original inception by Glaser and Strauss (1967) through the writings of Charmaz (10) and Clarke (5) to offer a postmodern and constructivist approach (11). CGT seeks to find out issues of importance and explain them through abstract theory whilst understanding that individual's lives are made up of multiple realities, truths and perspectives (12). The constructivist version of grounded theory retains key facets of classic grounded theory but recognizes that the researcher plays an active and vital role in the research process, particularly in developing codes and categories (11) to construct theory rather than discover through neutral passive observation. Hence, this form of the method strengthens the basic guidelines by attending to issues such as reflexivity of the researcher and the research context. Whilst Charmaz (10) aims towards interpretive understanding of subjects' meaning, Clarke (5) goes a step further to emphasise other elements such as complications, situatedness and fragmentation (12).

Data Collection: Clarke's Situational Analysis Method in Constructivist Grounded Theory

Clarke's critique of grounded theory is that it is not post-modern enough, lacks reflexivity, oversimplifies and lacks analysis of power (13). Clarke's response was to develop the situational analysis method to understand the full inquiry by rethinking the relationship of condition and situation or as Clarke (5) would say, '[t]he conditions of the situation are in the situation. There is no such thing as context' (p. 71). Specifically, situational analysis acknowledges the situatedness of the researcher, attends to complexities in the data, emphasises discourse, non-human elements and analyses power relations (13).

Clarke's situational analysis (5) method relies on grounded theory and offers three main cartographic approaches to analyse the situation of inquiry. Situational mapping includes the macro (situational), meso (social world) and micro (positional) to lay out the elements in the research situation and the relations amongst them (5). Clarke (5) suggests

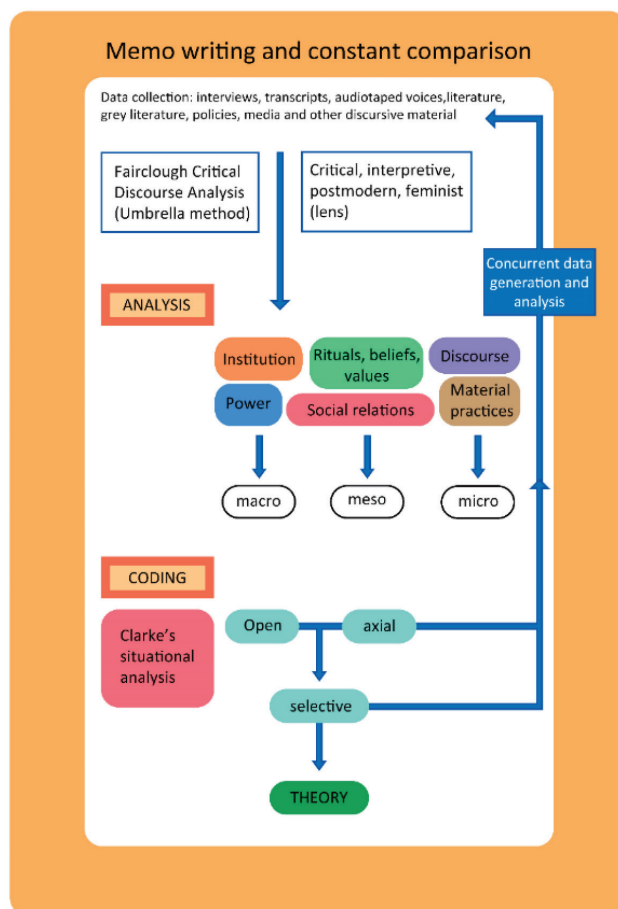


Fig. 1. The research design

that the number of maps depends on the number of contentious issues in the situation in order to understand who and what are in the situation, who and what matters in this situation and what elements make a difference? (p. 87). Initial maps lay out everything about which at least some data should be gathered to gain a tentative sense of possible relations among them (13). Social world/arenas maps lay out all the actors and the arenas within which they are engaged including organisational, institutional and discursive dimensions (13). Clarke (13) suggests that the inclusion of all actors in the situation gives voice to those that whilst present, are silenced or made invisible by those with greater power or those discursively constructed by others (p. 16). These discourses can be positionally mapped and analysed to lay out the elements, relations and messy complexities of the situation (5). The role of semiosis in social practices constitutes discourse which cannot be taken for granted, is inherently positioned and must be established through analysis (6). Using Fairclough's view that discourse is socially shaped and there is power behind discourse (6), the narratives of WCC will be explored in this research. Charon (14) states: 'It is through language that we come to understand other people, their perspectives, their perceptions, their feelings, and their behaviour' (p. 66) and is the major vehicle people transmit factualised experiences to others. Language is dependent on symbols; therefore, symbols become the basis for social reality and society (14). Discursive data follows where the data leads to represent the full range of discursive positions (13). Positional maps lay out positions taken, not taken and those absent as well as the researchers position (13). Clarke's (2005) situational analysis uses discourse analysis in combination with situational, positional and social world mapping (15). Using critical discourse analysis within constructivist grounded theory (16) is synergistic with the critical feminist lens to highlight the voices of women.

Analysis: Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis within Constructivist Grounded Theory

The existence of power inequities in maternity services between women and care providers and between midwives and obstetricians is known (9). This divide impacts women effectively leaving them with little power to make decisions about what happens to them or their baby (17). In this research framework, Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (6) will be used as an overarching theoretical perspective and method in analysis of discourse to strengthen the approach of this research (Fig. 1). Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (6) focuses on narratives in data to investigate how power asymmetries are

established, reinforced through language in society and interface with social structures such as health services. Post-modern research with its roots in philosophers such as Foucault (18, 19) suggests that there is no one truth about the world as there are many realities and takes a critical stance to go beyond simply interpreting to examine how issues of power, oppression and justice are embedded in everyday practices in social institutions such as hospitals. Challenging usual and taken for granted assumptions and views of the world is needed to meet the aims of this research as it goes deeper, is more critical and considers the multiple truths constructed through texts (6). Discourses represent a social action and how things are or how they could be and the interconnected webs between them (20). Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (6) method provides a theoretical perspective on language as an element of social processes at different levels including the context of the situation, the institutional context and the wider societal context or culture to gain full understanding of the situation akin to Clarke's (5) macro, meso and micro approach (Fig. 1). Fairclough's critical discourse analysis approach considers the political and social implications of discourse and their relationships within institutional power and ideology.

The Analysis Process. Clarke (5) suggests that early maps in situational analysis are used for 'opening up' the data and confronts the problem of where and how to enter the data within a grounded theory framework. This is an analytic exercise to get the researcher moving around and create familiarity with data (5). This early approach with simultaneous memoing places researcher assumptions and pre-conceptions on the table and into the maps early where appropriate (5). Harvey's (21) dialectical view of social process which includes discourse, power, social relations, material practices, institutions and rituals and beliefs or values will guide early mapping entry points (Fig. 1). Fairclough (6) suggests that Harvey's (21) elements, although distinct, provide a good understanding of existing reality including how discourse connects with other aspects and the effects different elements have upon each other (6).

Purposive sampling starts data collection with concurrent data collection, analysis and returns to the field depending on where the data leads, essential elements of CGT. The first maps are situational and will lay out all the human, non-human, discursive, historical, symbolic, cultural, political, and other elements (22). The maps work against usual simplifications to make visible the complexity of the situation (22). Secondly social worlds/arenas maps lay out the actors and arenas in which they engage. This offers a meso-level interpretation of multiple and potentially contradictory social organizational,

institutional, and discursive dimensions and boundaries (22). Thirdly positional maps articulate the full range of discursive positions taken. Laying out discourses in a one-dimensional map turns up the volume on quieter voices and identifies those which are absent (22). Data collection in this way engages with macro-level forces and its intersection and effects through the meso-level whilst in the same project examines issues at micro-levels in relation to the meso level.

CGT requires the researcher to move back and forth between data collection and analysis (23). Concurrent data generation and analysis provides focus early, suggests leads that might not have been considered initially and enables emergent leads pertinent to the research to be followed. Initial coding focuses on actions and processes (16). Coding will be line by line at first as a heuristic device for learning about the social world and to ensure that analysis is grounded in the data (23). Codes that stand out that seem to speak to data begin the selection process.

First is open coding in which data is labelled as initial codes and is mainly descriptive (23). These may emerge frequently in the data. As coding progresses, the researcher will integrate initial low-level codes into meaningful units (23). Clarke's situational mapping conceptual framework is used in the first phase of open coding (Fig. 1). A messy map moving towards a more ordered map states the elements. Lines are drawn from one element to another. Questions are posed about each connection and different and opposite viewpoints considered to establish tentative linkages between elements. CGT then uses returns to the field for further data collection which is progressively focused and informed by emerging categories and theory (23). CGT constantly checks constructed codes against each other and against raw data (16). At the same time, axial coding is performed to make connections to each other to construct a core category. Selective coding then derives a theory through connections made in axial coding (Fig. 1).

Theoretical sensitivity moves the researcher from a descriptive to analytical level. Later stages of analysis require the analyst to reflexively interact with data and codes to integrate these into categories with a higher-level of abstraction, analytical rather than descriptive that interpret rather than simply label (16, 23). The resultant categories are more meaningful than raw data and initial codes (16). Constant comparative analysis, theoretical sampling and theoretical coding identify, refine and integrate categories which emerge from the data and evolve during the research process (23). Constant comparative analysis builds up categories but also breaks them down again into smaller units of

meaning so to recognise the complexity of the data (23). Theoretical sampling checks emerging theory against the data to refine and saturate increasingly analytical categories, that is, continuing to sample data until no new categories emerge (23). Through looking at the data from different standpoints, the researcher actively engages with the data and develops codes that through constant comparison can be tested against the data. It is not known where data may lead and data collection continues until theoretical saturation, or as per Clarke (5), nothing analytically useful is being collected.

Memo-writing is an important part of CGT (Fig. 1). The researcher maintains a written record of why codes and categories were chosen and relationships between them to justify, provide reflections and provide information on the research process as well as theory development (23). In this way, uniquely to grounded theory, memos are always incorporated in the final theory.

Rigour. Triangulation through combining situational analysis and critical discourse analysis will provide a more comprehensive holistic picture of the phenomenon by using several 'lines of sight'. Internal dialogue through memoing enables the researcher to look at the data to closely examine how a childbearing woman is portrayed within society, how she fits within the power struggles within organisations, how she is able to exert her power and understand why it is that her voice is or is not heard. Ramalho, Adams, Huggard and Hoare (24) suggest that CGT differs in that the researcher has an influential role in the research process and cannot stand outside data analysis. The groundedness instead comes from the researcher's commitment to actively analyse what they observe from the data and constructing a theory through methodology (24). As such, the researcher does not eliminate subjectivity but allows the data to be prioritised over assumptions and previously acquired knowledge to engage critically with it (24).

Discussion

Approaches falling outside the traditional boundaries of method often generate critique of incongruence between methodology and method or lack of rigour, even when it is understood the pure forms may not adequately 'fit' the research problem. In order to conduct research that produces meaningful findings, methodology and methods are needed that seek to best understand the issues or situation. Research around complex situations that are not linear or set may require a research framework that incorporates synergistic methods to reveal what is happening in the 'real world'.

There may be concerns for inconsistency or lack of coherence in this research framework known

as ‘method slurring’ due to the use of multiple lenses and methods; however, Holloway and Todres (25) suggest that it is possible to transcend these tensions. Formulating a question that considers the complexity of human action and interaction, maintaining coherence and consistency within the approach, memo writing and constant comparison between data and emerging theory consistent with the research aims enables the theory to be traceable throughout the research (25). Given theoretical ideas elicited through coding and categorising data may change, the approach must be flexible and the researcher open-minded (25). Strauss and Corbin (26) suggest that researchers should stay within the general guidelines of grounded theory but use techniques and procedures flexibly according to the realities of their studies (p. 295). As such, viewed through a feminist lens, supplementing constructivist grounded theory with Clarke’s (5) situational analysis approach and Fairclough’s (6) critical discourse analysis as an umbrella theoretical perspective and method will be used in this research (Fig. 1). Many elements are shared between the approaches with the overlap of epistemology. Using Holloway and Todres (25) concept of appropriateness rather than method for method’s sake, combining situational analysis and critical discourse analysis to make sense of the social world will draw out information and discover unconscious hidden discourses of social, organisational, individual and wider social order levels. This will provide richer data and a more robust theory as to what is happening, a positive contribution to both theory and research.

Whilst woman-centred care is a term used in midwifery and maternity care, the principle of person-centred care is a central tenet underpinning nursing and health care. This research framework is transferable to nursing sciences research to better understand how to provide person-centred nursing care when organisational policies and practices create barriers to adopting this philosophy into nursing practice. This research framework can be used to develop evidence to support nursing professional competence, evidence-based service provision, quality and safety within health care and enable health care professionals to translate the philosophy of person-centred care into care practices.

Conclusion

To explore gaps ‘in the real world’ between the

rhetoric of WCC in maternity services and what women report is happening on the ground, this article presents a constructivist grounded theory project research framework design that combines Clarke’s situational analysis method with Fairclough’s critical discourse analysis and critical feminist lens overarching perspective. This research framework (Fig. 1) enhances reflexivity of the researcher and moves beyond the knowing subject of interviews to include analysis of discourses and power. It is time to honour women and through research find a way for maternity services to provide WCC equitably within hierarchical and bureaucratic health institutions.

Conflict of interest

No conflicts of interest associated with this publication have been identified.

The primary author is employed as a midwife navigator.

Ethical Statement

Ethics for this project have been submitted to CQUniversity Human Resources Ethics Committee and Qld Health Human Ethics Committee. This project will not proceed until final approvals have been provided.

Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article. This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors

Author Contributions

Naughton: conceptualisation, methodology, writing-original draft preparation, visualisation. Harvey: conceptualisation, writing-review and editing, supervision. Baldwin: conceptualisation, writing-review and editing, supervision.

Acknowledgments and Disclosures

This work underpins the midwife navigator evaluation which is part of a larger overall project of the nurse navigator initiative of the office of the Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officer, Queensland, Australia. The main author is currently employed as a midwife navigator. The authors acknowledge and thank the contributions made by Chris Hoffensetz in refining the graphics in Fig. 1.

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Received October 2020

Accepted February 2021