

## **Grounded theory in management studies in Brazil: among the plurality of strands, improper uses and mistaken understanding?**

### **A grounded theory nos estudos em administração no Brasil: entre a pluralidade das vertentes, usos indevidos e entendimentos equivocados?**

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## ABSTRACT

This work aims to present results of a bibliometric analysis of articles that cited the grounded theory in one of the main vehicles for the dissemination of academic production management in Brazil: the annals of the National Meeting of Postgraduate Programs in Management from the years 1997 and 2014. Additionally, we sought to conduct a critical analysis of 54 articles found. The results seem to indicate that grounded theory in management studies in Brazil transits, in general, in the process characterized by the plurality of strands, misuse, approaches superficial and mistaken understandings.

**Keywords:** Bibliometrics; Qualitative Methods; Grounded Theory.

## RESUMO

Este trabalho tem por objetivo apresentar resultados de uma análise bibliométrica dos artigos que citaram a *grounded theory* em um dos principais veículos de divulgação da produção acadêmica em administração no Brasil: os anais do Encontro Nacional dos Programas de Pós-graduação em Administração, entre os anos de 1997 e 2014. Complementarmente, buscou-se conduzir uma análise crítica dos 54 artigos encontrados. Os resultados parecem indicar que a *grounded theory* nos estudos em administração no Brasil transita, de forma geral, em vias caracterizadas pela pluralidade das vertentes, usos indevidos, abordagens superficiais e entendimentos equivocados.

**Palavras-chave:** Bibliometria; Métodos qualitativos; Grounded Theory.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The initiative to develop bibliometric surveys on areas involving the administration in Brazil is not new, the first works are dated of the early 1990s (Bertero & Keinert, 1995; Machado-da-Silva, Cunha & Amboni 1990; Vergara & Carvalho, 1995). Since then, many researchers have been poring over the scientific production of a particular field in order to map the knowledge generated, build state of the art in that area as well as view points or gaps in the existing literature explains phenomena only partially. It can be found, to name a few, bibliometric studies in the field of organizational studies (Rodrigues & Carrieri, 2000); in the field of finance (Camargos, Dias & Silva, 2011); in information technology (Rasera & Cherobim, 2010); marketing (Pinto & Lara, 2008); human resources management (Tonelli, Caldas, Lacombe, & Tinoco, 2003).

On returning his eyes to the area of teaching and research in administration, an unwary researcher can check that are still incipient or unusual in the field of administration in Brazil to use some qualitative research methodologies. Among them, figure grounded theory. Although the first work that presented the methodology for the academic world has been published nearly half a century (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), can be emphasized that little is applied the methodology in management studies in Brazil and even less is known about its applicability, its potential, its scope and even its limitations.

In this sense, this study aims to fill this gap from two goals. First, make a bibliometric analysis of articles that cited the grounded theory in one of the main vehicles for dissemination of academic research in business administration in Brazil: the annals of ENANPAD (National Association of Postgraduation and Research in Administration) between 1997 and 2014. One could question the originality of this venture based on the existence of two published studies that also destined efforts to map the use of grounded theory: Jacobus, Souza and Bitencourt (2012), which proceeded to the analysis of 45 articles that used grounded theory and were published in international journals in the administration of the area; and Mendonça, Remonato, Maciel and Balbinot (2013) who dedicated themselves to quantify issues regarding the use of grounded theory in Brazil between 2001 and 2010. However, we

tried to give "a step further" than studies traditional bibliometric. In addition to focus the analysis solely on ENANPAD the proceedings over a longer period, we sought to essentially conduct a more qualitative analysis of articles. It is precisely at this point that adheres the second objective: to conduct a critical analysis of articles published on grounded theory in order to have an overview of how the Brazilian researchers the management field have been using the methodology.

The reasons for conducting the study are supported by the following points. First, the publication of the study results may serve for beginning researchers better understand the grounded theory, as well as how the methodology has been used in Brazil. Second, the study can provide to shed light on the direction of improving the methodological quality of studies in administration in our country. In addition, the study may also contribute to show questions, inciting reflections, enlarge the methodological horizons, and deconstruct some myths and prejudices regarding the grounded theory.

To achieve the proposed objectives, the work was divided into four other sections besides this introduction. The first section provides a reasoned discussion on different authors about the history, origins, nature and other issues involving the methodology. The second section aims to address the methodological procedures employed for the study design. Then, in the main section of the paper presents the quantitative results of the analysis and, especially, the qualitative analysis of the items that made up the corpus of the research. Finally, the final considerations are discussed with a special emphasis on building speculative nature of reflections on the future use of the methodology in Brazil.

## **2 GROUNDED THEORY: A PLURAL METHODOLOGY?**

The intention to include a section of the work was not to present grounded theory, even as other works in the national literature already took care of it (Ischikawa & Santos, 2001; Bandeira-de-Melo & Cunha, 2006), or to discuss its application in field research (Pinto & Santos, 2012), but try to build a short ontological review of the methodology (or style of doing research) to assist researchers to have contact with questions that seek to reflect on its history, its origins and as its nature and current aspects.

It is important to emphasize that grounded theory was "born" with the publication in 1967 of the book *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, authored by Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss. In this seminal work, the two authors sought to articulate, organize and present the research strategies that built on their joint work in the 1960s on the experience of death (dying) in US hospitals. It is worth considering that lived a historical moment in which the qualitative research tradition had been gradually losing ground in universities. Thus, the work of the two authors came just fill a gap between what they termed "empirical research theoretically disinterested" and "theories empirically disinterested". So, prevailed in the social sciences of the time an entire effort only "validate" existing theories, and little was being done to build new theories (Charmaz, 2006). The standard model of social sciences in the 1960s was based on hypothesis testing. Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss offered researchers a way beyond this model to propose a style of doing research inductively, from the data, without the direct interference of the great theories (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007a).

It is appropriate to consider that Glaser and Strauss had different backgrounds and their trajectories exerted influence both the development of the basics of the methodology and subsequent divergence between them (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007b). On the one hand, Glaser has always been linked to the sociological approach of the School of Columbia University, where he graduated, which has a considerable tradition of analytical rigor of positivist brand. On the other hand, there is the eminently pragmatic tradition and linked to field research, characteristic of the Chicago School, origin of training Strauss (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007b; Tarozzi, 2011).

This apparent difference between them seems to take four epistemological premises, to some extent conflicting, to build a theoretical framework and epistemological of grounded theory as proposed and discussed by Tarozzi (2011). The first would be the quantitative sociological paradigm (direct influence of Glaser formation) that brought to grounded theory the idea of finding a theory as well as the notion of systematic formalization of methods and procedures, and the need for rigor. The second premise would be the philosophy of pragmatism (influence of Strauss) which helped to bring the notion of theory and practice, as well as statements about the power of an intervention theory and processing practices. The third premise, perhaps the most striking of them is related to the symbolic interaction. This

sociological approach stems from studies of George Herbert Mead, who is considered one of the first most influential thinkers (Fine, 2005). The theoretical basis of symbolic interaction, which seems to have influenced the idealization of grounded theory, part of the idea that both society and the social reality is socially constructed through interaction. Also, it is important to emphasize the issue of the processes underlying meaning networks that characterize the social world. Finally, phenomenology could be considered a direct antecedent of grounded theory, since it can give a clear theory of individuals experience. On a more sociological view of phenomenology, Wolf (1980) believes that the most important role of phenomenology is concerned by the received notions, culture; suspend it, and with it, figuring out how things themselves appear to us in reality. Similarly, the phenomenological notion of placing in suspension is of great significance for sociology, since it does not accept the received notions and rises issues concerning them (Wolf, 1980).

After nearly half a century since the publication of the seminal work of Glaser and Strauss, grounded theory has been used and adapted (used and abused) by different disciplines: sociology, psychology, nursing, anthropology, computing, medicine, education, and more recently in administration (Goulding, 2002, 1998; Mills, Bonner & Francis, 2006a; 2006b; Charmaz, 2006; Clarke, 2005). Mills, Bonner and Francis (2006b) identify also the use of grounded theory in a wide variety of researches with different ontological and epistemological orientations. The authors cite research constructivist orientation, feminist, postmodernist critique and pointing this process of "dispersion" as a kind of "spiral of adaptation / development". Addressing specifically the field of organizational studies, Locke (2001) points out that grounded theory has been used in both modernist character work, as developed under the interpretative paradigm works and also works in line with postmodernist principles. Denzin (2007) also supports multiple versions of grounded theory: positivist, post-positivist, constructivist, objectivist, postmodern, situational and computer-assisted, which led to Bryant and Charmaz (2007b) to consider the grounded theory as a family methods or a large "tent" in which they could fertilize and socialize with relative harmony, different approaches and aspects.

In order to "map" and trying to synthesize the position of authors who have sought to systematize the plurality of grounded theory (Heath & Cowley, 2004; Goulding, 2002; Charmaz, 2006; Walker & Myrick, 2006; Tarozzi, 2011) it seems to

be possible, albeit with some degree of arbitrariness, proposing four strands "predominant" for grounded theory, as can be seen in Table 1.

**Table 1 - Approaches of grounded theory**

APPROACH	MAIN AUTHORS AND PUBLICATIONS	MAIN FEATURES
Glaseriana	Glaser & Strauss (1967); Glaser (1992); Glaser (1998)	The glaseriana approach is closer to a positivist research, since it points to an "external" reality, aims to be "discovered" the data by a neutral observer. Glaser's insistence on letting the theory "emerging" and avoid the presence of the researcher, "forcing" a different theory of what is in the data, is a reflection of this view.
Strauss-corbiana	Strauss & Corbin (1990); Strauss e Corbin (1998)	In this approach, the authors proposed a number of methods and techniques, in particular relating to the collection and analysis of data. In other words, grounded theory tends to be more structured, "accessible" and preoccupied with the operationalization of the research, it has an arsenal of procedures and practices that are important to enable the implementation of a good job in short time .
Constructivist	Charmaz (2000); Charmaz (2006)	The constructivist approach put priority on the study of phenomena and seeks both data and analyzes built from the experiences and relationships shared with the study participants. In the same sense, a constructivist study seeks to understand how and why the participants construct meaning and actions in specific situations. The theory depends on the researcher's vision; that is, he is not and can not be out of context under investigation.
Situational Analysis	Clarke (2003); Clarke (2005)	Grounded theory settles in a post-structuralist framework with strong influence of Michel Foucault. The "novelty" of this aspect is in the insertion of the discursive practices that make up the social reality. It presents some "innovations" in the form of analysis procedures by incorporating the construction of analytical maps.

Source: Adapted from Heath & Cowley (2004); Goulding (2002); Charmaz (2006); Walker & Myrick (2006); Tarozzi (2011).

Complementing all this discussion, it lay hold of comments promoted by Suddaby (2006) to point out misconceptions, misunderstandings and misuse of grounded theory (as Table 2). Suddaby paper started from the finding that grounded theory has been used in a generic way and that, not infrequently, some authors to cite grounded theory without being familiar with qualitative research and without having an inkling of what is to be the basic procedures for its implementation in empirical research.

**Table 2 - Common Misconceptions regarding the application of grounded theory**

MISCONCEPTIONS	COMMENTS
Grounded theory must not be an excuse to ignore the literature	A common error is related to the view that grounded theory requires that the researcher from the field without any a priori knowledge of the research.
Grounded theory is not the presentation of incomplete data	It is common to find relevant and timely research, well written, but focused on report findings that are obvious or trivial, certainly by the fact that researchers have devoted little attention or time analysis.
Grounded theory is not testing existing theories, content analysis or word count	It is not rare to find research in which the authors try to use grounded theory to test hypotheses. In other situations, the researchers simply report interviews content analysis and / or word count of a speech.
Grounded theory is not a routine application of pre-determined technical	Grounded theory is based on an interpretive process and not logical-deductive. The researcher should keep in mind the concept of "theoretical sensitivity" to balance the tension between mechanical application techniques and the importance of interpretative insights.
Grounded theory is not perfect	There seems to be a gulf between the theorists and practitioners of grounded theory. This tension can be healthy as long as the researchers avoid fundamentalist and orthodox trends with regard to methodology.
Grounded theory is not easy	To achieve a study based on grounded theory a good deal of experience is required. Besides this, it is important hard work, creativity and occasionally a healthy dose of luck.
Grounded theory is no excuse for the lack of methodology	It is essential in a study that is based on grounded theory a description of the methodology and its most important components.

Source: Adapted from Suddaby (2006)

Once presented a discussion pertaining to some fundamental points related to grounded theory, it is important to describe the methodological procedures adopted in the paper to achieve the proposed objectives.

### 3 METHODS

The methodology used in this study was based on desk research method, involving the collection of scientific articles cited grounded theory published in Brazil in the annals of ENANPAD (National Association of Postgraduation and Research in Administration) between 1997 and 2014.

To elaborate this paper, we used the following procedure. All the annals of the period were consulted looking up, by means of reporting and search tools, the terms "grounded theory" and "teoria fundamentada" in Portuguese. Found in total 54 articles were included in the corpus of the research. From there, two stages of analysis were undertaken. First, the articles were analyzed marked by a form containing several criteria in order to verify the basic elements of an investigation, reflecting the scientific quality of research. The variables were adapted from the

guide proposed by Hoppen, Moreau and Lapointe (1997), supplemented by the study of Perin, Sampaio, Froemming and Luce (2000) and the classification of research methods of approach presented by Gonçalves and Meirelles (2004): year of publication of the article, area of submission of paper, number of authors, type of article, the research approach, the research nature, methodologies, epistemological and theoretical basis of grounded theory, data types, method of collection, number of respondents, type of data analysis, use of software for data processing, presentations of results (study of limits, recommendations for future research and recommendations for companies), grounded theory approach, elements discussed in the article and, finally, references grounded theory cited. After the analysis, the data was tabulated and processed by SPSS and Excel software. In the second phase, it led to a critical analysis of articles, trying to discuss how the Brazilian researchers in the administration field have been using the methodology in their research.

The next section of work is concerned to present, in detail, the results of bibliometric analysis conducted, as well as qualitative analysis of articles.

### 3 GROUNDED THEORY IN STUDIES IN ADMINISTRATION IN BRAZIL

#### 3.1 Bibliometric analysis

Table 3 shows the distribution of articles published in the issue of grounded theory in Enanpad's from 1997 to 2014. It may be noted that 54 articles were part of the corpus. Moreover, there is a growing trend of articles in recent years, although it is also possible to see peaks in some periods as in 2013 and especially in 2010.

**Table 3** - Frequency of articles by year of publication

Year	N	Percent	Year	N	Percent
1997	0	-	2006	2	3.70%
1998	3	5.56%	2007	4	7.40%
1999	0	-	2008	4	7.40%
2000	0	-	2009	2	3.70%
2001	1	1.85%	2010	11	20.37%
2002	0	-	2011	3	5.56%
2003	0	-	2012	3	5.56%
2004	3	5.56%	2013	7	12.96%
2005	6	11.11%	2014	5	9.26%

Source: The authors (2015)

The classification of articles for academic division, Table 4 shows that the Division of Teaching and Research in Administration stands out with the highest number of publications - 12, which corresponds to 22.22% of the corpus. It is also worth considering the large number of publications in the Organizational Studies Division.

**Table 4 - Classification of articles by academic division**

<b>Academic Divisions</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Teaching and Research in Administration and Accounting	12	22.22%
Administration of Information	7	12.96%
Marketing	6	11.11%
Organizational Studies	8	14.81%
Strategy	7	12.96%
Human Resource Management and Labor Relations	6	11.11%
Operations and Logistics Management	5	9.26%
Management of Science, Technology and Information	2	3.70%
Public Administration	1	1.85%
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: The authors (2015)

It appears, from Table 5, the significant frequency (77.78%) of empirical articles in this corpus.

**Table 5 - Frequency of articles by type**

<b>Type</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Perc.</b>
Theoretical	12	22.22%
Empirical	42	77.78%
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: The authors (2015)

From Table 6 it can be said that the authors of theoretical papers belonging to the corpus, mostly took care to contemplate epistemological discussions involving the grounded theory as well as its origins, characteristics, applications, methods among others.

**Table 6** - Analysis of theoretical articles regarding the epistemological discussions of grounded theory

		<b>N</b>	<b>Perc.</b>
Epistemological discussion	Depth	3	25.00%
	Trivial	4	33.33%
	Absent	5	41.67%
Discussion of <i>grounded theory</i>	Depth	11	91.67%
	Trivial	1	8.33%
	Absent	0	0%

Source: The authors (2015)

In analyzing Table 7, it is possible to note that most of the articles are used in qualitative methods (approximately 90%). While there may be some controversy about this, grounded theory tends to have greater adherence to qualitative approach.

**Table 7** - Frequency of articles by research approach

<b>Approach</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Perc.</b>
Qualitative	38	90.48%
Quantitative	3	7.14%
Quali-quanti	1	2.38%
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: The authors (2015)

Table 8 shows the results regarding the frequency of articles by research nature. As might be expected, most of the articles (66.67%) can be classified as exploratory.

**Tabela 8** - Frequency of articles by nature of research

<b>Abordagem</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Perc.</b>
Exploratory	28	66.67%
Descriptive	14	33.33%
Causal	0	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: The authors (2015)

Unlike the theoretical papers, the results regarding the epistemological discussion of issues of grounded theory in empirical articles proved to be quite

different. Based on Table 9, it can be said that all the articles do not devoted any space to epistemological discussions. In relation to the discussions involving grounded theory can be seen the following results: 28.57% of the articles in grounded theory is explained only superficially and in more than 57% the explanation of the methodology is missing.

**Table 9** - Analysis of empirical articles regarding the epistemological discussions and grounded theory

		N	Perc.
Epistemological discussion	Depth	0	-
	Trivial	0	-
	Absent	42	100.00%
Discussion of <i>grounded theory</i>	Depth	6	14.29%
	Trivial	12	28.57%
	Absent	24	57.14%

Source: The authors (2015)

It was analyzed in articles the kind of methodology. It is worth noting that almost half of the corpus - 20 or 47.62% - made use of the case study method. In the rest of papers, it was not possible to identify the methodological choice.

Regarding the collection method, 78.57% of the analyzed studies used depth interviews. One of the issues for consideration of the items was the number of respondents in empirical research. The results showed a wide dispersion of data, because the amount ranged from 5 to 185. It is worth noting an important result: in 16 articles (corresponding to 38.10% of the corpus) was not found any information about the number of interviewees, which is a weakness in the preparation of methodological aspects of a paper.

On the question regarding the type of analysis of qualitative data, Table 10 shows that the vast majority of the authors of the articles analyzed opted for content analysis (66.67%). Only in two articles were found information that the discourse analysis was used as a technique for analyzing qualitative data. Another result which shows weakness in the methodology of articles has to do with the amount of 12 articles (28.57% of the corpus) that made no mention of the technique used to analyze the data. Moreover, in most articles there is also no clear indication of how the tests were conducted, as well as statements about what methodological current followed by the authors of the articles are not evident.

**Table 10** - Techniques used to analyze data

Techniques	N	Perc.
Content analysis	28	66.67%
Discourse analysis	2	4.76%
Not mentioned	12	28.57%
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>100,00%</b>

Source: The authors (2015)

Data shown in Table 11 allows us to affirm that researchers still use the little qualitative analysis software available, since in 64.29% of papers were no such information about this. However, in other articles, authors pointed out the use of the software Atlas ti (30.95%) and Nvivo (4.76%).

**Table 11** - Use of software for data analysis

Software	N	Perc.
Not used / not stated	27	64.29%
<i>Atlas ti</i>	13	30.95%
<i>Nvivo</i>	2	4.76%
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: The authors (2015)

Table 12 highlights the items analyzed, regarding the presentation of the results, did not allocate space for important issues when it comes to a good scientific work. Nearly two-thirds of the articles did not mention limitations of the study and half did not provide recommendations for future research.

**Table 12** - Analysis of empirical articles regarding the presentation of results

		N	Perc.
Study limitations	Yes	16	38.09%
	No	26	61.91%
Recommendations for future research	Yes	21	50.00%
	No	21	50.00%
Recommendations for companies	Yes	24	57.14%
	No	18	42.86%

Source: The authors (2015)

The analysis of Table 13 reveals a given the interesting and worrying time regarding the use of grounded theory in administration studies in Brazil. Just over 30% of the corpus clearly pointed out in the article the approach / shed used at work. The other part of the work presented the methodology broadly and not appointed efforts to discuss which approach / dimension of grounded theory was used.

**Table 13 - Approach / aspect of grounded theory**

Approach	N	Perc.
No / not stated	29	69.05%
Strauss-corbin	8	19.05%
Charmaz	2	4.76%
Glaser	3	7.14%
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: The authors (2015)

The work also sought to know the references most used by Brazilian authors who have published articles on the grounded theory. Figure 3 lists the three most cited references by the authors. One can see that the book that gave rise to the grounded theory is the most referenced, followed by the two editions of the book "Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory procedures and techniques" written by Strauss and Corbin in 1990 and 1998 respectively. From the year 2010 appear the book references to Strauss and Corbin published in Brazil in 2008.

**Table 14 - Main references used in the researched articles**

PUBLICATION	AUTHORES	YEAR
The Discovery of Grounded Theory: strategies for qualitative research	Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss	1967
Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory procedures and techniques - 1ª edição	Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin	1990
Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory procedures and techniques – 2ª edição	Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin	1998

Source: The authors (2015)

It is worth noting some comments about this analysis. First, it was observed that some items, despite claiming to have used the grounded theory does not cite any reference methodology. This seems to be in a worrying fact that exposes a weakness of the work. Second, some others cite only a national landmark - the article

published by Bandeira-de-Melo and Cunha (2006) in the book "Pesquisa Qualitativa em Estudos Organizacionais". Also it was revealed that some authors resorted to author references that although describe and discuss grounded theory in their work, they are not considered "authorities" in the subject. Third, there is little or no mention of other sources of more recent authors like Kathy Charmaz, Karen Locke, Adele Clark and Ian Dey.

#### **4 Critical Analysis of Articles**

Based on the bibliometric analysis presented above, some issues need to be debated concerning the use of grounded theory in management studies in Brazil. At first, it may be noted that a good part of the articles only quotes grounded theory at some point of the paper, sometimes to provide methodological support to the data analysis phase. It is fairly frequent citation of grounded theory to encode data to support the content analysis of the discourse of respondents. As the work of Strauss and Corbin in its various editions offers qualitative research practitioners a set of procedures that assist in the task of systematizing the analysis of data using three types of coding: open, axial and selective (Strauss & Corbin, 2008), many researchers are tempted to quote the "label" or "credential" of grounded theory to give greater credibility to the work. Often gets the impression that some researchers treat the grounded theory as synonymous with qualitative research, which seems to be a mistaken view.

Other cases observed in the analysis of the articles are illustrative. In more than one study, the authors cite grounded theory, most often in the methodology section, but do not reference any author. This is also a common situation: many papers cite grounded theory and underpin their decisions based on qualitative research of authors who are not experts in the methodology. This practice highlights a methodological weakness of the work, since the Brazilian authors show little willingness to consult the classics. The excuse that there are no references to grounded theory is irrelevant, as they are currently available several publications and numerous papers that address differentiated discussions of methodology. Problem is still the citation of grounded theory by an author who made use of the methodology only at the stage he considered exploratory of your research to refine some of its constructs that were later tested as part of a theoretical model through advanced

statistical techniques. There is also widespread confusion surrounding the concept of exploratory and descriptive research in many of the papers analyzed.

Taking the discussion forward, other situations encountered in the analysis also seem to be problematic. In one of the studies, the authors emphasized that used grounded theory without even quote an author, seeking to highlight issues that did not relate to the categories previously listed in literature review. In another article, authors, through statistical analysis, proposed a theoretical model consisting of several constructs and said using grounded theory to create the model because of the methodology to value the data and enable the production of new theories. More mistaken was still using grounded theory by authors of a work that used the concept of constant comparisons (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to "compare constantly" quantitative results (obtained through statistical techniques) between two distinct groups interviewed in a survey.

The bibliometric analysis showed some points that were ratified in a more detailed analysis of the articles. Lack in the work, albeit in a superficial way, a discussion concerning the epistemological basis of grounded theory. Some might question this point assuming that the work is of empirical nature should devote more effort in the analysis of the data. While this explanation is plausible, in the case of grounded theory, the non epistemological positioning of the work authors especially with regard both to the science of vision and of human nature as to the way the study was designed can leave gaps in the understanding of results, since the research process directly affects the results. It was readily apparent that the vast majority of papers, even those who, in fact, used the grounded theory, does not mention, let alone justifies what is the most adherent strand to their research objectives. This finding seems to confirm the idea that the authors who lay hold of grounded theory to know little or only superficially.

Moreover, given the diversity that elements, in general, can be used in a research of grounded theory (theoretical sampling, theoretical saturation, constant comparisons, open, axial and selective coding, conditional models, memos, charts, audits and others), at this point, lies the large gap in papers analyzed. There is a complete lack of information about using or not these elements both in the section of methodological procedures as in the description of the results of the work. Regarding the criteria analysis for the quality of the generated theory, even the most consistent work with the methodology, the authors chose not to discuss these issues.

Thus, this analysis seems to indicate that the grounded theory in administration studies in Brazil transits, in general, in the process characterized by the plurality of strands (which is not all bad as the international literature also emphasizes that matter), uses improper (as pointed out and discussed by Suddaby (2006), the problem is also common in other parts of the world), superficial approaches (which is problematic because it can trivialize the essence of the methodology and scope for future generations of researchers) and mistaken understandings (which it seems to be the privilege only of grounded theory, but several other research methods). Thus, it is possible to sketch some comments from conclusive nature about the work that will be developed in the next section.

## 5 Final Considerations

Upon reaching the section of final considerations, it is not needless to ask some questions that in addition to relevant, appear to be essential. Initially, to look into the issue of grounded theory can be stated that the methodology - or a style of doing social research, as some like to emphasize - should be understood as an alternative perspective for studies in administration that has gained notoriety and in that trend, claiming legitimacy. Grounded theory can be understood as an alternative perspective, it is still unusual in the management field of work as evidenced in the bibliometric study. In the same vein, as has gained notoriety in recent years, the number of publications involving discussions about the methodology has been increasing gradually. And lastly, claiming legitimacy and perhaps at this point would lie the big question that paper results seem moot. However, as emphasized above, grounded theory in management studies in Brazil transits, in general, in the process characterized by the plurality of strands, misuse, superficial approaches and wrong understandings. This finding reinforces the idea that meets the defending much of its critics, that grounded theory still seems to be a "black box" or a "virgin continent" to be explored. And even more problematic, it has typical characteristics where everything is allowed and valid. While it is clear and fully accepted that the methodology has undergone many changes, and received numerous contributions of its principal authors, and more recently, students of these authors, it here to advocate respect to a whole different fields of researchers from the body such as sociology,

psychology, nursing, anthropology, computing, medicine, education, and more recently, administration. It is not to be purist and fundamentalist, adopting an orthodox and uncompromising position that there is only one way of working with grounded theory, but defend a minimum careful with your key points to contribute to its legitimacy.

When returning the goals for work in the introductory section of this paper, it can be noted that two objectives were fully achieved, since the bibliometric analysis with a more critical analysis of the articles led to outline a "picture" of how grounded theory has been used in administration studies in Brazil taking into consideration one of the main vehicles for dissemination of academic research in this field in our country. Clearly some limitations of the work are implied. The first has to do with the adopted cut. Articles published in Enanpad were analyzed over the past 18 years, excluding the thematic meetings organized by the institution. Also left out of the articles published in Brazilian journals. Another limitation is related to the degree of subjectivity inherent in the critical process of evaluating articles.

Results of work will also contribute to unveil some issues and ratify those already identified in other studies. First, there seems to be evidence that, overall, little research has and is studied even less epistemological and methodological issues in the field of administration in Brazil. As already emphasized elsewhere in this work, a study of grounded theory, there is an inseparable link between the research process and the results. So, it is essential that the researcher demonstrate how come the results of work, especially in those studies that followed the interpretative aspect. In addition, as emphasized by Suddaby (2006), the application of grounded theory is not something simple, since it requires the development of a range of research skills. This seems to compose an opportunity and at the same time, a need for postgraduate programs in order to invest more efforts in the methodological training of their students, future researchers. By the editors of journals, it seems to be interesting the initiative to promote discussions about epistemological and methodological issues. The reviewers, it would be the task of "educating" the authors with advice which may, in fact, improve the quality of the work and concurrently contribute to the education of their peers.

At the same time, the results also bring other points for reflection, which seems healthy, because once the researcher completing a job with more questions than when started, this confirms that the study achieved its objectives. So what is the

association between grounded theory and qualitative research? The outlook presented in the article regarding the use of grounded theory is identical when compared to other qualitative methodologies? The metaphor of grounded theory as a "big tent" brings more contributions or polemics into the field? The various aspects of grounded theory assist in consolidating or contribute to its trivialization? These and other emerging issues may select themes for future studies and in the same sense, serve to invite other colleagues to share their questions, dilemmas, difficulties and anxieties experienced in using this (yet) complex research approach - grounded theory.

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