



GROUNDING THEORY REVIEW

An international journal

Stern & Porr (2011) Response to Reviewers

Phyllis Noranger Stern, DNS, LLD (hon.), FAAN

December 2011

Grounded Theory Review, Vol 10 (Issue #3), 87-91

The online version of this article can be found at:

<https://groundedtheoryreview.org>

Originally published by Sociology Press

<https://sociologypress.com/>

Archived by the Institute for Research and Theory Methodologies

<https://www.mentoringresearchers.org/>

Stern & Porr (2011) Response to Reviewers

Phyllis Noranger Stern, DNS, LLD (hon.), FAAN

To Dr. Simmons

At the outset we want to thank Dr. Simmons for his review of *Essentials of Accessible Grounded Theory*. Our goal with *Essentials* was to demystify grounded theory to afford the reader a solid grasp of traditional grounded theory. Dr. Simmons is notably a grounded theory expert and scholar, and we are pleased that he took the time to review our monograph. While there are supportive insights shared in Dr. Simmons' review, we should address those claims that do not resonate with our intentions.

Response to Claim #1

Dr. Simmons remarked:

As Stern's (1994) observations and insights suggested, constructivist versions of grounded theory emerged and spread in part because grounded theory was often being taught by teachers who themselves had a superficial, distorted understanding of the methodology

We do not use the term “constructivist versions of grounded theory” within our monograph. We believe constructivist epistemology bears little application and would only serve as a source of confusion to someone brand new to grounded theory methodology. Grounded theory emerged and spread not “because of distortion by teachers” as Dr. Simmons claims, but because methodology evolves, and as co-developer, Glaser, often stated, grounded theory is meant to be modified, adopted and adapted by researchers representing diverse disciplinary traditions.

Response to Claim #2

Dr. Simmons remarked:

The Grounded Theory Review (2011), vol.10, no.3

Essentials contains more confusing and subtly inaccurate content than a book written for neophyte grounded theorists should. Although I think it is a noble effort with useful information, it contains material that is at variance with classic grounded theory

Our work is substantiated by Glaser's writings, the work of Strauss and their mentees/protégés. We endeavored to ensure that the monograph's content would not in any way contradict the seminal works. The canons of Glaserian grounded theory were introduced and explicated with due diligence. We presented, for example, four fundamental principles (discovery never verification, explanation never description, emergence never forcing and the matrix operation) that Glaser (1994) asserts are key to every successful grounded theory project.

Response to Claim #3

Dr. Simmons remarked:

In Chapter 1, they use the general term "grounded theory" without clarifying whether they intended for the book to be about classic or other versions of grounded theory.

We chose to incrementally introduce esoteric terms as needed in keeping with a simple and accessible format. Early on, though, we mention "traditional" grounded theory. And as Dr. Simmons had stated, we made it clear, when it was appropriate (on page 37) that we had drawn "primarily from *Discovery of Grounded Theory* (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and *Theoretical Sensitivity* (Glaser, 1978) to lay out, as accurately as possible, essential groundwork and procedures for formulating explanatory theory."

We also use the label "Glaserian" in Footnote 2 wherein we state, "In this book we have chosen to stay close to the classic work (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978) as much as possible, or what Stern has coined *Glaserian* grounded theory, the Julliard of solid qualitative research." Admittedly, we wondered how useful this would be to the neophyte. Would one expect that the neophyte is familiar with the terms classic, classical, Glasserian, or Strausserian?

Response to Claim #4

Dr. Simmons remarked:

However, in other locations in the book they legitimize and even encourage actions that are clearly outside the boundaries of classic grounded theory. For example, in Chapter Two, "Brief History of the World (of Science)," in their section titled, "Your Theoretical Lens" (pp. 30-33), they discuss, legitimize and encourage importing "theoretical lenses" and "explicit interpretive frameworks."

Clinicians and academics bring to qualitative inquiry a disciplinary theoretical lens in terms of why people act the way they do. Today's grounded theorists, especially with our advanced understanding of human behavior, are often examining not new topics, but new aspects of topics or human phenomena, and what emerges are nuanced explanations of human adaptability in select, and often, complex situations. "For example, a psychologist may conceive of transition from employment to retirement as a developmental task; a social worker may consider it a stressor; and, a physical therapist may see it affording time to establish an exercise routine. If each professional explores the topic as researchers their theoretical contributions will be equally beneficial but dissimilar because they will have approached the entire research enterprise according to their unique tradition, interests and context." A grounded theorist will make it explicit what she is looking *at* in terms of observed behaviors, but does not, and this is the difference, does not bring preconceived suppositions as to what she is looking *for* in the data. The grounded theorist allows "the data to speak" and in so doing the process of adaptation emerges.

Concluding Comments

Dr. Simmons has provided us opportunity to pause and reflect, and we maintain that our monograph-sized book informs the neophyte of the essentials necessary to conduct a grounded theory study.

To Dr. Andrews

Thank you for your thoughtful review of *Essentials*.

The Grounded Theory Review (2011), vol.10, no.3

You've given us advice and direction as we move forward with our project of explaining Glaserian grounded theory—no easy task.

It's reassuring that you *got it*. I'm especially glad that you think Appendix A was worth including: I thought it would either be helpful, or it would bomb.

I've agreed to write a chapter on Glaserian grounded theory for Cheryl Beck's forthcoming book, *Routledge International Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Cheryl's idea was that each chapter might start with a literature review. Funnily enough, such a lit search is impossible, because authors fail to distinguish between classical GT, and variations on the theme—it's only purists like you and me who give a rap.

Author:

Phyllis Noerager Stern, DNS, LLD (hon.), FAAN
Professor Emerita, Indiana University
Purdue University Indianapolis School of Nursing
E-mail: pnstern@comcast.net

References

- Glaser, B.G.(1978). *Theoretical Sensitivity*. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B.G., Ed. (1994)*More Grounded Theory Methodology: A reader*. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B.G. & Strauss, A.L. (1967). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago: Aldine.