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Choosing Grounded Theory

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Choosing Grounded Theory

Barney G. Glaser, PhD, Hon. PhD

This book deals simply with choosing classic grounded theory (CGT) as the methodology to use mainly for doing the dissertation. CGT stands alone as a separate method, not as a competitive method in conflict and controversy with all the QDA (qualitative data analysis) methods jargonized as a type of GT. The PhD candidate (herein called novice) simply chooses the method that he/she wants as best fit for him. This reader provides a myriad of CGT properties to consider in choosing it as the method to use. There will be no competitive arguments with other methods offered here. It is designed to have CGT chosen on its merits for the user, not better or worse.

Other GT methods are just different, not better or worse. So to competitively compare them violates the Glaser purpose here to no advantage. Privately many novices may choose CGT over other methods for personal reasons, such as preferring emergence, autonomy, coding and no preconceptions, etc. but the choice is private, not better or worse. Also CGT is not to be mixed with other methods. The choice of CGT is solo pure.

This reader focuses on choosing, not doing, CGT. There are many articles, readers and books on "how to" do CGT, but only a few articles on why choose CGT before doing. Only a few articles exist that help the novice formulate his decision to use the CGT version for his dissertation. The novice will have to formulate his decision on which version of QDA or GT to use, usually to a degree that will convince a committee of his choice. This reader will help this decision formulation in many ways I will discuss below. The large volume of GT readers and articles publishing generated grounded theories support the choosing of CGT for the dissertation.

In comparing methodologies this reader is not designed by conflict to discredit or malign other methodologies, it is designed to show how CGT stands on its own as a very legitimate methodology to use. Thus CGT is a no better or worse than other methodologies. CGT is just worthy of use as designed and not to be changed by misunderstandings of its procedures or by imposing other method procedures on it. Nor do the CGT procedures have to be argued for, especially by a novice. It should be simply chosen for how it is applied and its resultant worthy product as shown throughout the work in journals and books. Thus novices can "just do it"; that is do CGT without being questioned on its procedures or the worthiness of its generated theory. This reader answers for the novice the typical committee question — "Why choose CGT?" — by reference to the appropriate chapter(s) herein and shows the chapter to the committee and or his supervisor.

This reader prints several articles available on choosing CGT. There are many GT/QDA versions of qualitative methods, and the novice will have to form a personal decision on which to use and then will have to usually convince a committee of his choice. If his choice is CGT over the other versions, it is usually necessary to argue this choice to his

committee. Which committee is usually as yet QDA oriented among senior faculty. And the committee has the social structural strength to put strong pressure on the novice to use a QDA approach and to not use CGT.

This problem is increasing given the worldwide spread of CGT with the result of many novices calling for help in explaining choosing CGT as well as initially doing the research. The novices need to formulate for themselves why they choose CGT for doing a dissertation since it is so fateful a life choice. And they often need help from a mentor in arguing and convincing a supervisor and a committee steeped in QDA procedures that do not apply to CGT.

This reader supplies many reasons to choose CGT that the novice can use personally to assure his attraction to CGT. But also under one cover, this reader contains many "why" articles by well known CGT researchers. Thus the novice PhD candidate can just show his supervisor and committee this legitimating CGT reader and let them read for themselves the "why" CGT, since most superiors have read little or nothing about CGT and read some wrong arguments confusing the CGT version with other so called GT versions.

A major goal of this reader is to anchor in the work of experienced GT researchers and senior academics the decisions of choosing to use CGT for the dissertation. I emphasize choosing, not doing CGT, in this reader since there are many articles and books on doing GT and CGT, but just a few scattered articles on choosing CGT for the dissertation methodology. There are many journals and readers showing over 100 grounded theories that are good examples of doing products. But how the authors go about choosing CGT methodology for doing their product is most often left out. How to choose is not offered in most articles.

The attraction of CGT is great and spreading worldwide. I can tell from the sale of Sociology Press books. Choosing to use methodology for dissertation is very fateful in time, expense of life, professional belonging and future in academic work. Mastering the arguments in this reader will be very helpful for making "Why" CGT choices and then convincing others of this choice, especially senior PhD committee members, not in tune with CGT. This reader will especially help the beginning novice who wants to use CGT for his dissertation but is not sure how to argue for his decision and how to explain to self and others his personal decision and commitment. In this reader we confront the academic merit of choosing CGT over other GT versions or simply QDA, and it is the merit of CGT in contrast to other methods or versions called GT that the novice has to argue about to supervisors and PhD committees. I trust this reader will help their travail.

It is the academic legitimacy of the CGT product that has to be approved by senior members of PhD committees. As CGT spreads throughout the world the increase in novices captured by the grab of CGT autonomy and discovery and attraction to what is really "going" on is increasing also. And then to be ok'd by a PhD committee to use CGT is a travail they are not yet trained for and often fail to achieve. This reader will help the novice solve this problem and have the legitimacy to use CGT in anticipation and before doing the dissertation by an educated choosing to use it.

This reader is not meant to scientize choosing to use CGT. It is not meant to get the novice to scientize an argument for his choice beyond his training level. He or she just chooses without winning or losing the rhetorical wrestle. There is no answer to best methodology based on rigor and other scientific requirements. This reader is just meant to show to seniors that the choice of CGT has well founded scientific principals and is quite legitimate as set forth in its procedures. It should convince the "worried" or doubtful novice or senior and committee of the merit of CGT procedures that have yielded hundreds of published CGT theories.

Choosing CGT may appear like an immediate firm decision, but actually its firmness varies with the learning curve of the researcher and usually increases with the conceptualizing experience when doing CGT productively. However, several aspects of the learning curve can disillusion the choice of using CGT. Some are unfavorable impressions of autonomy. The initial confusion that comes with conceptualizing is lack of experienced mentoring, giving constant negative advice all pressuring to use routine QDA procedures of description.

Tolerating the initial stages of the learning curve as it proceeds and having a supportive knowledgeable mentor, however infrequently, and joining a CGT network etc. all on the other hand firm up and support the decision to use CGT. As confusion starts changing to emergent conceptualizations CGT procedures start to make good sense relieving impressionistic initial decisions. The decision to choose CGT firms up solidly and becomes less sabotagable by others. Of course the novice always has the option of retreating to standard QDA or a non GT jargonized version if the learning curve becomes too much to bear. More frequently the opposite occurs leaving behind the over collecting of QDA for the growing excitement of an emerging CGT. So choosing CGT can be complex and takes time and can yield doubts as well as excitement on the way to a grounded theory PhD dissertation.

The initial draw to choosing CGT for a dissertation is expressed nicely by Hans Thulesius, MD, PhD, a very experienced CGT researcher. He says: "Classic GT draws the attention especially to novices who are attracted by the promise of being able to develop by discovery theory directly from the data and not having to deal with existing theoretical assumptions in a field that has started to interest them. So choosing CGT becomes a matter of fit. The researcher reads about the CGT method and recognizes a fit with his/her way of thinking about how to work scientifically."

Most novices starting with CGT that I have met and coached in doing CGT have chosen this method based on the impressionistic impact of CGT when initially reading about it. This starts the CGT learning curve, which competes better and better over time with other GT versions. It is important that the novice be in a PhD program that allows the time to support the curve.

Novice CGT researchers are increasing in numbers through the world as CGT is spreading. Senior CGT researchers who mentor novices are constantly being asked the following type of questions, to quote Angel Zamani of Iran, "It would be highly appreciated if you would kindly help me persuade the committee that it is worth it to explore the main

concern of a population.” Dealing with committees is a big problem (see section on committees below). My trouble-shooting seminars dealing with such doing questions are jammed. Unanswered doing questions or answers that do not satisfy the committee put the choosing decision for novices in jeopardy in favor of QDA method. A firm why choose CGT provided by this reader will tend to end this instability for many novices.

This reader will help receive for novices the following good news like the following from Angel: “The good news is that the proposal got approved by the committee at last. Instead of applying some of their superficial changes, I gave them a paper authorized by you explaining why CGT is not constructionist.” This reader will also answer this question and much more. It will help resolve problems like that expressed by Tommy Hund: “My supervisor even dominates my direction in doing data analysis alone by constant requests for discussion about it. It undermines my confidence in doing analysis alone. What should I do?” Enough said. I can quote many novices’ letters to me about supervisor pressure problems. This reader will, in essence, speak for the novice with authority to the dominating supervisor.

I now turn to four topics in some depth touched upon above: mentors, committees, rhetorical wrestle and choosing patterns.

Mentors

There is a growing worldwide network of grounded theorists for CGT many of whom have become peer mentors. Finding them has become easier through the GT Institute yet many from many foreign countries are still looking for mentors. This growth continues and users of CGT increases despite the confusion in choice brought on by the multi-GT versions wrestle. Given the autonomy from the strong hold on conjectural extant theory is a property of CGT that continues to attract many new CGT users. Add to autonomy the prospect of discovering a theory clinches the decision to use CGT for many novices. This decision is backed up by my method books, which are a form of written mentoring.

Mentoring can take many forms and all are going on as we read this. And competence in doing CGT research is thereby increasing from this mentoring. Minus mentorees seldom do as well as the mentored novice. One reason being that they are easily subject to wrong advice by supervisors who do not know CGT. Looking to the literature for some advice is a bit dangerous as much GT literature is in fact not CGT but just jargonized as GT. All methods have mentors of some sort, so the novice CGT researcher should be careful in the choice of mentor. It is important that the CGT mentor have had CGT research experience since learning the inductive CGT approach is highly experiential.

Also the novice should choose a mentor who provides psycho-social support during using CGT, which is necessary to handle the initial confusions as well as the free floating poor advice by others. Breaking with a mentor in order to give up on CGT is very real also, if the mentoree novice cannot take the CGT as too confusing or the mentor gives poor, not helpful advice. Mentoring and being a mentoree takes continual work, often years.

Mentoring works if the parties both work at it. It is not one sided. Mentoring is binary. Peer mentoring works well also; that is helping each other.

The best mentors are those who are more advanced in their own CGT research and thus have the experience the mentoree needs as well as knows the psycho-social support they need. Thus it is wise for novices to join CGT networks in which people help each other. This other oriented help and empathy is surely grounded in somewhat recent CGT experience. Moment mentoring, complementary mentoring and multiple mentoring are increasing on the internet as CGT spreads in use throughout the world. Collaboration emerges and minus mentorees are rescued when needed. The GT Institute helps foster these relationships as needed.

In some countries CGT is way out of step with senior supervisors pushing preconceptions and QDA descriptive requirements. So novices in these countries must go global and seek a mentor in another country where CGT has blossomed. Ireland is one such country. Many seniors from Ireland support correct CGT. Novices bloom with excitement under such mentoring and easily turn to peer mentoring to fellow other novices still caught in local QDA. Mentorees find that a little teaching of others teaches oneself. Yet until they have finished generating a grounded theory, peer mentors can be a bit premature in advice as they have not yet fully experienced CGT completeness. Premature peer mentoring is frequent based on the excitement of the emerging experience resulting in firm decisions to choose CGT for the dissertation. Student peer mentoring meetings stimulate moment mentoring which confirm yet again the choosing of CGT.

Most minus mentorees are quite alone, but survive it because of their natural affinity to the autonomy, openness and their ability to conceptualize, which is a great draw to choosing and doing CGT. Choosing CGT comes naturally. Their only choice to recant may be down the road under the pressure of a senior supervisor requiring routine QDA procedures. Peer mentoring others based on the powerful grab and expression of CGT properties yielding discovery keeps the CGT decision confirmed when facing QDA pressures to recant at the same time. Also mentorees require a level of maturity to handle the initial confusion and autonomy that comes in starting a CGT research. Most novices soon to become mentored are 30 years old or older, with many in their 40s and 50s. Also mentors can at times yield to other QDA versions jargonized as GT and may shift their research advice a bit e.g. start pre-conceptualizing, or engage in worrisome accuracy. Mentorees should be alert to these shifts.

Simply put novices finally choose CGT because they have found a good mentor. If they cannot find one, they likely do not choose CGT or give up their choice already made. For many it is too scary to work CGT alone and feel they are doing it correctly. When alone, confusion takes over and they become lost and QDA is retreated to for safety.

Mentoring is a needy process. Premature choosing CGT is "grabby" but when confusion sets in there is a cry for help. When none is found the decision for CGT becomes unstable. A student wrote me "I am a student in South Africa. Do you know of someone in Africa or the Middle East that can help me? Physical accessibility is not necessary. The internet is only connection I need." Another student from Iran wrote me a long paragraph

about the ineffectiveness of her local mentor and said, "But in order to avoid toxic mistakes I am in desperate need of professional help." So even positive supervisor help may not be enough if the supervisor is not practiced in doing CGT and many are not. This reader should help in not drifting back to QDA for want of needed training in doing CGT. The desperate need for good mentors is increasing as CGT spreads.

One source of mentor candidates are those novice who did not know CGT and learned it with doing the CGT learning curve and then succeeded in their dissertation defense. They often become excited to share their experience like an accomplished mentor to motivate novices to fully decide to choose CGT for their dissertation research. Their energy and excitement and success foster an attitude that can convince other novices to choose CGT and support the initial confusion, autonomy and conceptual challenges. The newborn mentor easily mentors the learning curve he was just in thus is able by example to help firm up the decision of the new novice.

Being a minus mentor is not easy and can easily result in not choosing to use CGT. And there are many minus mentorees in the world. Good mentors are hard to find since CGT is so individually autonomous. And whatever mentors may appear they can easily give unknowingly altered, modified GT advice because of the impact of the multi GT versions. Misunderstanding the CGT methodology comes easy in the face of QDA rigor and rules for complete descriptions that are hard to forgo but necessary for choosing to use CGT. The long and lonely minus mentoree research has its benefits if the only available mentor is not fully CGT accomplished. Since minus mentorees usually have no knowledge of the meaning of CGT vocabulary, it is easy for them to choose the wrong mentor. Then it is easy for them to be forced into preconceptions, forced interviewing, not allowed to memo, etc. This strangling has a positive outcome if the mentoree subsequently finds an experienced CGT mentor. Then the mentoree becomes thrilled to at last become liberated and autonomous and yielding to the emergent, which strongly confirms the decision to use CGT

I have engaged in many moment mentorings. A request for one conversation with me can resolve some confusion and clinch the decision for choosing CGT. Some are desperate as the time to decide method can be scheduled by the school or PhD committee. Many travel afar around the world to discuss their decision with me. The quest for solid advice is very strong and sometimes funded by the novice's school. I am used as the legitimator when going to one's supervisor or committee. Frequent topics are type of data collection and literature review that are causes of confusion and need to be stated clearly. They need to be mentored by me to be procedurally trusted.

My well-known troubleshooting seminars have convinced many novices to make a firm decision to choose CGT for their dissertation. At the seminar they listen to others solving similar research problems and they get help with their problems. They network out their loneliness and join the CGT worldwide spread. At the seminar they become convinced of the power of several CGT procedures and with joy the resulting conceptual level analysis. The mentoring collegial help is wonderful. This type of seminar is springing up all over the world by my advanced students. They are strongly convincing to firmly choose CGT. They encourage "just do it" "not knowing beforehand" "being open" emergent research. It

changes their world view from preconception to emergent discovery. Participants literally come from all over the world.

The PhD Committee

A major factor in deciding to choose CGT for the dissertation is the dissertation committee. They have the social structural power to quash a decision to use CGT and often do. Taking on a negative oriented committee to CGT is often too much for the novice. He/she is not ready for such an argument. The powerful strong pressure of a dissertation committee to not use CGT is increasing in the world with the spread of CGT. It is challenging the routine QDA requirements of worrisome accuracy, full description, preplanned interviews etc, that many committee members are well versed in. They defend their knowledge and skills. So again, many novices are calling for help as they formulate such a fateful life choice to bring to committee. They need help on taking on these seniors with such fateful power. They have to be convincing.

This reader gives many reasons to choose CGT that the novice can personally use in their argument to choose CGT. But also under one cover this reader gives many "why" arguments by well known GT researchers to ground and legitimate their arguments. Also the novice can give this reader to his committee to read for themselves the "why" choose CGT, since most are steeped in QDA and have read little or nothing on CGT methodology. This reader will help the novice receive the following good news as Angel wrote me, "The good news is that my proposal was approved by the committee at last. Instead of arguing some of their changes, I gave them a paper authored by you explaining why CGT is not constructivist."

Do not underestimate the problem of getting approval from a committee wedded to another method as their research identity is challenged. Respected mentors who are not in the department, if available, can save the day and get approval if they are senior enough. They exist but are not many. Many supervisors cannot even read or learn a bit about CGT as there is too much conflict with their current perspective. They can only confuse the choice for the novice. These seniors can easily force the naive novice to make the "wrong" decision into preconceptions and literature review before research etc. They can demand a long chapter on methodology that is totally QDA for the proposal, which is ignorant of CGT.

Thus choosing CGT as the method to use for a dissertation can open the novice up to many pressures, some hard and some easy to handle. The hard ones can potentially sabotage the decision to use CGT when they should not. For example "why take on such a difficult, constant conflict and argument with seniors who think they know best? The multi-version view of GT causes this conflict with various levels of pro and con procedures applicable and not applicable to doing CGT. The novice does not know all the answers yet and the senior cannot listen anyway. Taking on such confusion is not conducive to a good CGT dissertation and time is too valuable to enter the conflict. The negative pressure can be debilitating. Sometimes it is best to "obey" and get the PhD degree and then do a good CGT out of the collected data for future publication and jobs.

Choosing CGT often breeds a loyalty and stand for the method that can become excessive in the face of demands from the socially structured, vested fictions of committee members. The excessive loyalty can harm or distort. Stop, do not demand CGT procedures to this degree in pursuing the CGT method procedures in the face of such vested interests. Taking on the conflict with a contrary department committee is not worth the time and possible damage to one's research or even career. The CGT method lives on intact elsewhere. Under this condition reserve the pure method for post PhD research.

Writing up the CGT method for a proposal in this situation is probably a waste of time. Senior committee members are often learned non-learners. Teaching teachers is not an easy activity. Yet, if they wish, they can read my books and this reader. Thus forcing the novice to write up the CGT method before research is pre-conceptive. He cannot really write up convincingly what he has not done yet. Doing CGT is a learning experience waiting to happen, then write up. Writing before research is done yields often just beating on the same old QDA and multi-GT version issues. Yet further mentor rescuing from supervisor tyranny subsequently can lead to excitement and unwavering devotion to CGT.

In sum, a long chapter on why choose CGT will often enough not get very far in a contrary department. And taking on the ignorance of a committee or department questions ad infinitum will just confuse all involved. Lofty perspective arguments on many research issues, however right or wrong, can make doing CGT almost impossible to do correctly. I turn now to discussing the rhetorical wrestle between methods.

The Rhetorical Wrestle

There is no winning the rhetorical wrestle. The rhetorical wrestle is comparing to see what is best between the features and procedures of QDA methods and so call jargonized remodeled GT version with CGT. The arguments between the methods can go on forever. They are just different. The novice does not have to win a better, say a generalization or interview technique etc etc. He just chooses and uses the method he chooses. He likes one method over the other for essentially personal abilities, skills and reasons. A method has grab for him. If he does not choose he will be lost in the many conflicts of the wrestle. Lost in not knowing what to do or which way to go.

A student from Nepal sent me his paper in which he laboriously compared all the GT jargonized versions. He came to a one-sentence conclusion. He says, "After studying this literature on GT versions, I came to the conclusion that what is not grounded theory rather than what is." So much for the result of one wrestle. He could not choose CGT as too confusing a commitment.

Lets look a little closer to ground some of the wrestle and why there is no sure answer, just differences. Tony Bryant, an experienced GTer demonizes CGT as positivist with lofty jargon. He severely discredits the positivism that he accuses CGT as using. He wants people to discard positivism that allows interviewers to pick and choose the data he

believes. He trashes generating concept procedures. It is hard to know what he is talking about, but how could a novice choose CGT in the face of such accusation by a highly experienced GTer. Trying to base a decision to choose or CGT based on positivism is a waste of time. The literature continues the argument continually to no solution. This debate is not an argument for the novice to worry about. His worry is to do well whatever method he chooses for the dissertation. Theoretical debates come much later in the academic career.

Students write me asking how to give CGT a perspective and how to write it up compared to other methods. They think perspectives legitimate research results. I write back to not perspectivize CGT. Just generate concepts that name patterns. The perpetual debate over which different perspectives are best in various methods is a waste of time and not solvable. Strauss used to say GT has no perspective, just a style.

When choosing CGT is based on one's philosophy of research compared to the philosophy of the method, the novice must have both which many do not have yet. So the wrestle between the two, and even other method philosophies, becomes too much to understand so arguments are faulty and often a bit empty. So the novice is forced to take a philosophy stand with his choice of method irrespective of true merits. He must advocate arguments against all attacks irrespective of his level of understanding. The choice of CGT becomes a stand rather than an educated decision when forced to argue for a philosophy. He must stand strong against attacks and the typical confusion. There is no winning the combat. There is just being endorsed sufficiently by a department and its seniors to use a chosen method. And given the multi-version view of GT, there is only one version of CGT no matter the argument. Taking a multi-view from all GT versions ends in a jargonized confusion resulting in description, not conceptualization. The only rational decision is to choose either doing conceptualization or description. Novices can go for CGT with all its clear rigorous procedures in order to transcend description with conceptualization theory.

CGT generates a substantive theory to be used to explain and abstractly account for a pattern of behavior. It is to be modified based on comparative data, not proven. It does not deal with multiple realities as QDA does and the so-called jargonized versions of GT. It is based on an integrated set of concepts explaining the continued resolution of a main concern. There may be more than one main concern in a problem area and CGT can do a theory of each, but only one is necessary for a dissertation, however overlapping they may be. For example heart attack victims are concerned with both cutting back and super-normalizing and also the moral claim to infirmity. Generating a substantive theory of one of these concerns is enough. A substantive theory about one main concern has general implications for other areas of behavior. For example super-normalizing in football is a big issue. The wrestle of which GT version to use does not get to this abstract level. The wrestle conflict is usually over what is "accurate" data for a description with a perspective, not over the abstract power of explanation that emerges using CGT procedures, which many academics cannot grasp. The ontological and epistemological issues of varied theoretical perspectives, such as symbolic interaction, are not relevant for CGT, just grounded conceptualizations of patterns in whatever data is used is relevant for CGT. "All is data" in which the patterns are conceptualized for CGT. The contest between social versions of GT is empty. CGT is a version in its own right and of course all research methods are grounded

some way. And there is no stopping the CGT jargon from being used for talking about different QDA and GT methods.

For example, in CGT all is data, but the wrestle asks the question what is data? Depending on the version the answer can be objective, symbolic, positivist, interpreted, constructed, interviews, descriptions etc, etc. Answering the question is discouraging for the novice since none is correct. The answer is irrelevant for choosing CGT. There are patterns in all data, so the novice need only cite what kind of data he is using. Most often it is open non-structured interview data using no preconceptions.

Much remodeling of CGT with descriptive lofty talk based on worrisome accuracy and a full description and conceptual description demands are plentiful and unknowledgeable. For the novice this kills the excitement motivation of discovery for the novice .Why choose CGT and enter into this mess? The novice should avoid these arguments and "just" choose CGT on its merits of conceptualization and generation. Sounding learned in these contests is a waste of time to get no answer and lose sight of the joy of discovery. The only rational decision for choosing is to choose conceptualities using the rigorous procedures of CGT on whatever data obtains OR choose a descriptive version of GT or QDA. Researchers like CGT since it transcends the descriptive by conceptualizing abstract patterns and it has clear procedures for generating emergent conceptual theory.

Suddaby wrote an article on "What GT is Not." It is about the profound misunderstanding between CGT, other versions of GT and QDA. This article should help the novice in his choice of a methodology for his dissertation and particularly CGT. He writes about how the literature is filled with serious misconceptions that of course affect the novice's choice to stop the confusion. His article starts out detailing how CGT freed researchers from the assumptions of grand theory and its positivism when testing preconceived hypotheses. CGT freed us to see how social actors in real situations produce their meanings From this, theory could be generated about what is actually going on using CGT methodological procedures. Fine, but he addresses the question: which version of GT to choose? To arrive at an answer he lists six "nots" which CGT is not. He works on the distinction between interpretive reality and objective meaning. Again choice is up in the air on which data to prefer to choose.

Suddaby's "nots" are: CGT is not an excuse to ignore the literature. CGT is not descriptive or phenomenological. CGT does not test extant hypotheses whether qualitative or quantitative. GT is not a simple application of procedures all at once. Procedures go on sequentially, simultaneously, and subsequently in ongoing interest with the data and emerging conceptualization. CGT procedures are not perfect. They are readily modifiable not wrong when warranted. Lastly, doing CGT is not easy as a step-by-step methodology. All goes on at once often initially in confusion. Its apparent simplicity is a misperception. Doing CGT is rigorous and tightly procedural however modifiable. It is not an "anything goes" methodology.

Judith Holton, a well known grounded theorist and former editor of the Grounded Theory Review, wrote me a direct, simple, accurate reasoning for choosing CGT which avoids all the lofty talk, method messing and scholarly arguing in the rhetorical wrestle. She

says "CGT's particular value is its ability to provide a conceptual overview of phenomenon under study: what is actually going on. It focuses on the participant's perspective and gives them the opportunity to articulate their thoughts about issues with understanding, reflection and insights they consider important. GT provides the conceptual overview with grounded interpretation, explanation impacts, underlying causes and effect and so forth. GT provides a conceptual compliment to the descriptive finding of QDA and Quantitative research. GT is not superior, just complementary to in-depth description." This is a clear, correct, simple scholarly approach to choosing CGT. She does not offer any combat for or against CGT with other methodologies.

Judy makes the further point that the traditional concern over rigor and credibility to yield validity is built into the procedures of CGT methodology. Not to worry if following CGT procedures. Conceptualization makes auditing data unnecessary as auditing is descriptive and conceptualization is abstract as its critique is over validity of grounded pattern naming. A pattern holds however it is named. She says: "Ontological and epistemological issues of theoretical perspective which are part of the multi-version conflict are not relevant for CGT. Just grounded conceptualization is relevant on whatever data is used. CGT has no predetermined pre-conceptual philosophy given in lofty words. CGT is just 'all is data' whatever is used and whose patterns are conceptualized. Contests between so-called versions of GT are empty and jargonized with GT vocabulary."

As said above, CGT is not for testing extant hypotheses. The constant comparative method produces emergent patterns which continual constant emergence from the data is self-testing of their grounding in the data. The patterns relate to each other as conceptual theory and how they are presented depends on the emergent theoretical code used.

Doing CGT is not a simple mechanical application of its procedures. It is the creative application of them all at once with the data as the emergent theory generates conceptually. Confusion and ambiguity, even fear of failure, at the beginning soon change to clear conceptualization as the researcher constantly compares and theoretically samples toward saturation. CGT methodology is not a pure step-by-step method. CGT methodology is itself a theory. Thus CGT is not an easy seamless clear methodology done step by step. It goes on all at once as the substantive theory develops; so contesting with other QDA and GT versions is messy and goes nowhere. The apparent simplicity of the CGT method is a misperception. So the novice should just decide and join the learning curve if CGT is the choice. Doing CGT can go fast, taking only six months or so, but many extend the research a few years as they tackle the conceptualization, confusions, to the end product.

Read my books on CGT methodology and the reader will see that CGT methodology is a well-formed bona fide methodology, not an excuse for not having one. It is rigorous and tightly procedural from start to finish. Selection and identifying participant's ongoing issues that they are continually resolving emerge. They ARE NOT conjectured "should have" issues preconceived by the researcher to do a study of however lauded they may be in other fully preconceived studies.

The rhetorical wrestle will never stop. It has gone on for over 40 years since the publication of *Discovery of GT*. It is too academic to give up sounding lofty. And academics get career rewards for the effort. But the novice should leave the combat and legitimating to the experienced GT researchers like Olavur Christiansen, Isabelle Walsh, Judy Holton and Odis Simmons (see their papers in this book) and just do good CGT research and get the PhD degree for it. Let the experienced GT'er take on the Strauss/Corbin advocates, Charmaz/Bryant and Gibson/Hartman people to mention a few. The method literature is replete with their bewildering wrestle.

I think by now the reader gets the idea of the rhetorical wrestle leading nowhere. I could go on, but there is no "best method" answer to the wrestle between methodologies. The volume of books and papers showing CGT products and methodology value is immense and a great and sufficient indicator of the value of generating a CGT theory for the dissertation. I warn: do not get involved in the lofty analysis of all the issues facing the multi versions of QDA methods. They will confuse the choosing decision. There is only preference not solution. The conflict over multi versions never gets to the abstract level about conceptual theoretical emergence which CGT produces and which many cannot grasp. Choosing CGT can be seen as a stand facing bureaucracy rather than a fully educated decision. Dr. Andy Lowe, a well-known CGT researcher for over 20 years, advises the following in dealing with committees. He writes, "The essence of survival within the bureaucratic system for the researcher is to always allow the bureaucracy to believe its own rhetoric. Always avoid direct confrontation and instead always use their own rule etc, to achieve your goal of intellectual autonomy". This is a bit too sophisticated for the novice, but it works well.

I turn now to a discussion of actual choosing, many ideas of which have already been sighted.

Choosing CGT: Final Thoughts

I have said much up to this point on choosing CGT firmly as a "grabby" preference, not a better or best method. I turn now to what often goes on in the novice's learning curve when making the choice of CGT for doing a dissertation in the department context. Needless to say it is a vital valued choice, and whether firm on the spot or gradual it is subject to the CGT research learning curve.

Choosing CGT takes a sufficient self contained maturity, which few young novices yet have. Most novice minus mentorees, soon to be mentored are in their 30s or older. The autonomy, "not knowing" beginning requirement and initial confusion using the constant comparative method to conceptualize takes some age maturity to handle. It can become fearful to cope with. Novices have to be careful to not yield to mentoring advice that shifts them out of CGT methods, for example shifting them to preconception to reduce initial confusion. This can take some age maturity.

Novices choose CGT for the grab, the excitement of discovery and to claim autonomy when doing the dissertation. The grab is individual and atomized through out the world. There is also a desire to be in the "among" wherever the CGTer individuals may be. They look for CGT networks by computer. They search for compatible departments and mentors.

Those doing CGT may be forced to study a professional problem, rather than an emergent main concern. This can kill the choice of CGT for switching to a preconceiving version of GT. Preconceive structuring up a QDA research solves this ambivalent problem of having to please the committee. The pressure to comply with a shift away from CGT can be quite strong and scary to resist since their academic career is at stake. Trying to get started and references travel fast. Hopefully this reader will help relieve the superior/committee interference problem by showing it to them to at least scan. Tommy Hung, a PhD candidate from Portugal says, as is so typical of novices, "I struggle in doing open coding data analysis and even in asking questions during forced preformed interviews as my supervisor interferes, even dominates my direction in doing data analysis alone by requests like please discuss with me your data analysis. And please write a conference paper from your data etc. Such requests appear constantly. I should avoid talking to my supervisor." Hung is being constantly pestered, but still sticks to CGT so far. The outcome I am not sure of. Overbearing pesty supervisors are hard to take for long before giving in and going QDA.

Supervisor concerns of rigor and credibility are traditional for all methods but not necessary for CGT. Built into the conceptualizing procedures of CGT is automatic validity of grounded concepts. This makes auditing unnecessary as it is descriptive and CGT is abstract conceptualization carefully generated inductively by the constant comparative method. The concepts cannot be reified if grounding CGT procedures are followed.

Another path to using CGT is a consequence of the learning curve. Some novices start doing QDA or descriptive versions of GT, yet try a bit of CGT. Gradual understanding of CGT from trying conceptualization procedures reduces resistance to using CGT as mistakes and confusion diminish, then disappear, fear fades. They then get "grabbed" by the excitement of discovery generating and autonomy and conceptualization. Thus they decide to fully switch to CGT. What appeared as a long and lonely journey in the beginning if they used CGT, suddenly becomes peopled by other novices using CGT as they join the CGT networks on the internet. They make a firm decision to use CGT even if the learning curve takes a few years. The combination of rigor and creativity growing in doing CGT reduces the novice to a CGT advocate and true believer. The multiple QDA version mess is just left behind with no contrary arguments interfering with being in favor of a firm CGT decision. The "eureka" moments that come with discovery of totally new concepts help convince putting aside all the preconceptions of descriptive QDA methods. Interview guides are put aside in favor of just letting the participants vent their concerns, face sheet data become moot. Trust in the CGT methodology grows by the convincing yield of the generating procedures. This learning curve path to the CGT choice is well grounded and advised for the "seeing is believing" doubtful and fearful novices.

A very successful novice can inspire new novices to be faithful follower adherents to CGT with devotion and no doubts. The successful novice getting the PhD awarded seamlessly and often with the best PhD dissertation award for the year can become a

supermodel for beginning CGT novices. They are pointed to as proof positive of the joys and legitimate value of a CGT dissertation. Brianna Both wrote me that she “knew Bene Brown who produced the most powerful GT theory, so it was her work which pointed me to CGT and you Dr. Glaser. Brene wrote in her publication *Daring Greatly* “I want to acknowledge Dr. Glaser who was willing to come from California to the University of Houston to serve on my dissertation committee. He literally changed the way I see the world.” Brianna thus followed her model, Brene, to the nth degree and herself did a wonderful dissertation. Referring to my input further legitimated her using Brene as her supermodel. The model path convinced the choice of CGT for a dissertation and academic career. In these cases, the philosophy of the CGT methodology becomes strongly the novice’s philosophy of method and even life: not knowing beforehand becomes the root to eventual knowing from the emergent. The approach to knowing by not knowing is liberating.

Not knowing beforehand until the data is conceptualized easily becomes a personal way of life. This of course supports further firmness in choosing CGT for the dissertation. We all do mini GTs for personal problem solving. We run our patterns constantly. We look at the data and try to spot the patterns involved that explain a problem or our main concerns and then we follow the pattern. We are constantly resolving these concerns. Thus CGT procedures and trust in conceptualization spills over into personal life. There becomes a reciprocal support for the method between doing CGT and solving personal problems. This occurs naturally for many of us and thereby firms up a decision to choose CGT for the dissertation. Again it makes the rhetorical wrestle a moot waste of time. Applying CGT personally gives the person a level of power over his life and liberation in academic pursuit of the PhD. Choosing CGT is automatic, like what else would one choose to find out what is really going on. Personal life is changed from preconception to follow academic openness to the data however slower the pace to emergence. It makes being a PhD candidate very meaningful and grounded as opposed to the usual critique of academia that it is just lofty rhetoric. The personal use of CGT is private and thus very seldom mentioned in the literature. It helps dealing with life patterns such as in divorce, in marriage, in illnesses. In child rearing, in custody fights etc, etc. Its power, if used privately, convinces the novice of its power academically so it is chosen.

Choosing CGT may end with the completion of the PhD as no need or funds to do future CGT. But many wish to continue if they can find the resources. Jeanette Eriksson wrote me, “I just want to say that my journey over the doing GT has been great and I found out how much I want to use CGT in the future.” Thus future choosing carries the motivation to continue doing CGT, if the opportunity and resources are part of the subsequent academic career. If not, or research interests subside after the PhD the choice may end. The choice need not go on forever and the now PhD can turn to other methods if interested or joining a big preplanned research project. The choice can end with the awarding of the PhD and doing no more research.

Also the choice for CGT can come late. A lady wrote me: “After using other types of research methods for over 20 years, I am so glad to have come across CGT. Your work is really what we need in management research.” Quite often the choice to do more CGT after the dissertation is done is to renew the excitement of discovery and share it. Simple interview research can be quite inexpensive.

Also doing CGT can bring with it self discovery as well as personal problem discovery, which can motivate to continue CGT research after the PhD. Staying open to the research can keep a CGT researcher open to general self discovery. Brianna Booth's study of maintaining boundaries between people was a superb dissertation. Further it was directly related to her personal approach in friending and dating. Some finished PhD students even spiritualize the CGT staying open to data discovery. Once learned staying open with not preconceiving can come naturally. My trouble-shooting seminars of course help get the PhD dissertation. The seminars also stimulate the future orientation of students once it is learned to personal staying open with no preconceptions. Students constantly talk about being changed for life based on the full orientation of CGT. Thus their choosing CGT for a dissertation can have and did have for students future, lasting beneficial effects for both self and career.

Phyllis Stern told students that becoming known for doing an excellent CGT as an expert draws one into a career in meeting, boards and becoming a roving supervisor for foreign and US PhD candidates in many countries. It becomes a worldwide ticket, I know many of these CGT traveling experts.

CGT can be chosen for the wrong reason. It can be chosen as part of a big preplanned study thus required to preplan data collection interview and its problems. The choice can come with money and academic support, possibly a supervisor with a stake in the big study. The novice might not be clear on the no preconception rule of CGT. He might not know better and not realize he is just doing QDA description. The preplanning undermines the procedures of CGT. It remodels CGT to conceptual description.

Also choosing not to choose CGT can be wise if done in favor of avoiding being forced to do CGT wrong by a committee or a department which dwells on full description, worrisome accuracy, no abstraction and lofty talk calling it all GT to make it all sound learned. Taking on such senior pressure is not worth it. Not choosing and just going with the departmental method becomes the rescue from a scary choosing path of a novice. Finding an experienced mentor coupled with reading our books could be the only possible rescue.

Closely related to this poor choice is choosing CGT to test an extant hypothesis. This requires preconceptions also. Since whatever may emerge may have no relevance to the hypothesis, the CGT has to be "forced" to bear on the hypothesis from interviewing through conceptualizing. If the CGT happens to question an extant hypothesis, fine, but it cannot be forced and remain a CGT. The testing can easily be social structurally forced taking away the freedom for discovery that was the original goal. Scholastic freedom is compromised and lost. This loss of CGT emergence for discovery is lost in Isabelle Walsh's mixed method approach in which GT is used to correct quantitative findings by preplanning. Testing extant findings is not a higher purpose of CGT. Withstanding the academic pressure to test hypotheses when backed by the committee is not an easy pressure for the novice to cope with. Testing verified yet erroneous hypotheses will never be stamped out in the future by CGT biased preconceptions in using its procedures. It can only occur naturally by a freely emergent CGT, whenever it might occur. One should not do CGT to do combat with other methods. Corrections of other's findings are only genuine when consequential. Wrong choice reasons for using CGT require jargonizing.

Closely related to the correcting approach is doing a CGT on secondary data, usually interviews. If the data is picked up as preplanned, say a preconceived problem, then the CGT will be non-emergent. It will pick up the preplanned biases as real. In short, the secondary data has to be open and non-preconceived. Hard to find, since most QDA studies are preconceived academic "should be" problems, not emergent personal issues. The novice does not have to know anything about the participants or field they are being interviewed on. In fact the less he know the easier it is to let concepts emerge. He just has to know the interviews by others emerged as true expressions of the participants. There are mountains of unanalyzed interviews to choose from.

Professing the use of CGT also happens infrequently, but this is still too often. The student discovers a good concept with great general implications. Their richness plus his intellectual capacity combine to produce a conjectured CGT. I have seen three dissertations done this way. They were beautifully conceptual and all conjectural. They were hard to spot at first until the conjectural patterns emerged. Their theory ran thin. Conjecture (that is think up) can never be as creative as generated concepts. Professing the use of CGT and not really doing it is not hard to spot. It comes with excitement, but too fast without the real work of doing CGT.

Conclusion

The reader can see now that choosing CGT is not simple, whether direct or gradual. There are many paths, much advice and many variables to contend with. Whatever the combination that obtains for a novice, there are many future career and personal rewards for those who can make and stick with a decision to choose CGT for research for the dissertation. Just make a firm decision without the pro and con arguments and do it. The value of CGT research has been shown over and over. There are many CGTs, how to books, substantive theory articles and books, CGT articles on methods and substance, journals on CGT all to attest to the value of CGT. Use a few for exemplifying for self and others to show what a worthy CGT looks like. Good examples can assure the supervisor and committee of the CGT research outcome. The examples are legitimating and convincing of value.

However, be careful not to cite jargonized written views of QDA as CGT. As Gary Evens said in his "walk through" the multi versions of GT, "Choose the best fit between personal philosophy and method philosophy. Be sure to walk the talk with caution in referencing GT writings. In spite of the fear and confusion in the beginning, have faith in the CGT process. Hindsight will show it was the right choice. Staying open to the emergence of conceptual fit and relevance will further confirm the choice." These are Evans' sound words of advice. They have a long history of working well. I can only add to be careful, as said above, of taking on supervisors who cannot tolerate the CGT perspective compared to their own QDA perspective.

Astrid Gynnild, professor and editor of Grounded Theory Review, wrote me: "Choose CGT for future orientation toward explanatory understanding, exploration, abstract transcending of accurate goings on, increased awareness, inner drive to know more about people's behavior, general implications, skills at memoing and feeling one can contribute original

thought and achieve autonomy. Find an experienced mentor. Here is my brief list of positive reasons." As the reader can see, the list of values for choosing CGT is nonstop and varies considerably among novices and the experienced but the product pattern is the same. They express the joy and productivity of doing CGT. Just firmly decide to choose CGT and then use it.