



GROUNDING THEORY REVIEW

An international journal

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Barney G. Glaser, PhD, Hon. PhD

June 2015

Grounded Theory Review, Vol 14 (Issue #1), 3-10

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/>

The Cry for Help

Barney G. Glaser, PhD, Hon. PhD

Classic grounded theory is being chosen as a methodology throughout the world. One result is the cry for help of many individuals with aspects of their getting the research going for their dissertation. The cry is individual, because CGT attracts on the individual level. No department has chosen it for all its candidates as an option. The novice candidate has the task of convincing his supervisor and/or department of his choice.

One reason many choose using CGT is that it offers autonomy. By autonomy I mean total freedom to let the participants' main concern or problem emerge and the conceptual variables emerge that continually resolve the main concern. Most methodologies require that the research problem and its resolving require they be preconceived before research begins. In short, CGT allows a do not know approach to full discovery. Correcting existing research conjecture is not the goal of CGT.

This autonomy, which is so attractive to many novices, has many dimensions of problems. Claiming autonomy when researching within a structure of control by superiors is problematic. Success varies from failure to get autonomy to being autonomously alone with no help. Most PhD candidates have been trained in their student careers to seek genuine help and to seek an "ok" as their work proceeds. Though a big draw to using CGT going autonomous can be very frightening? "Am I using the procedures correctly that give autonomy?" is their big question. So they want help. Also many who have chosen CGT do not realize until they start research that they cannot tolerate autonomy. They need a constant "ok" and are almost paralyzed without it. They need a constant mentor to trust. Minus mentorees often have must difficulty. Thus the mixed bag of autonomy offered by CGT procedures' varies on its proper use and is not the manifest glory it sounds like to many at first glance.

CGT, when done correctly with autonomy at all stages, goes fast, less than a year to emerge a conceptual theory, yet I have talked with students who have been waiting up to five years for an "ok" of their work. Especially at the start of their research. "Am I doing it right?" and "will my supervisor approve?" are constant questions.

Tolerating the beginning confusion that goes with beginning research not knowing can become intolerable autonomously. The "a-ha" eureka moment will come, but not immediately. Patience with confusion is required so the research does not become forced with existing frameworks and preconceptions. The experiential growth and clarity that come over time in doing CGT requires autonomy from routine help. Only experienced researchers with CGT are suitable to giving moments of brief help to enforce the candidate autonomy with simple realizations.

The initial confusion that comes with the constant comparison of indicators before emergent conceptualization, taxes autonomy to the maximum. It is easy to use preconceptions and/or to seek authoritative help to ease the autonomous responsibility. Few can take it, many cry for help to be sure they are "doing it right." Once concepts emerge, autonomy goes into full force. The autonomous novice researcher with a few good core concept possibilities can be told nothing to threaten his autonomy. So novices should hold on to their autonomy, it will be solidified by emergent concept. Do not out of fear give up their autonomy. Confusion and preconscious processing and constant comparisons are part of the CGT beginning process. Only a well-trained CGT researcher will know how to help without taking away autonomy with preconceptions. It only takes a few comments of support. And for foreign students, a little help with the language of conceptualization.

The intense rhetorical wrestle between senior researchers on merits of CGT versus other GT versions and descriptive QDA may also erode the novice's autonomy. He/she may be forced by their academic department to adhere to a theoretical perspective that erodes or denies autonomy on an aspect or many aspects of CGT research. Typical is having to choose a problem to research before it has emerged. The novice is too new at CGT to argue a perspective of complete autonomy to a sophisticated senior researcher. It takes a strong PhD candidate novice to keep his autonomy in the face of such academic pressure. Autonomy is easily eroded.

"Am I on the right track?" is a question expressed by many autonomous researchers, no matter what stage of theory generation they are at. Their autonomy leaves them without supervisor or other senior comments giving them the "ok" of what and where they have done. Getting a quick "ok" is a normal need of the autonomous, but should not be allowed to erode autonomy. Especially at the beginning of research. Toward the end, when the research will be presented, the "ok" will be about a formalized autonomously generated theory that has to be "ok'd" in the field by others. Thus, the growing need for approval is based on autonomous produced theory, not subversive to it as such. The autonomous researcher is not left alone forever. He or she eventually gets awarded with approvals and a degree.

The autonomous researcher at later stages of research is rewarded as the complete owner and discoverer of his theory. Autonomy has paid off. Students needing constant help and "ok's" never experience this reward, though they may get their degree under supervision. CGT offers the autonomous reward. And CGT attracts many an independent student for its autonomy offering. They tend to be independent in everyday life also as a natural inclination. That is why CGT is independent based, not academic department based. The excitement that comes with discovering a core category that resolves a main concern, confirms for the student his autonomy and can be shared as discovered and grounded as real. Not shared to be evaluated and corrected.

Autonomy helps the researcher decide many procedural issues in doing CGT: How to vent participants, when to theoretically sample, when to sort memos, when to stop interviewing on interchangeable indicators, when to formulate a main concern and a core category, etc, etc. It keeps the research going at a good pace. Needing help and "ok's" from colleagues and supervisors before taking these procedural steps, slows the research

down too long and unnecessarily. Autonomous decision keeps research moving and the decisions self-correcting to achieve emergence. "Am I doing it right" gets answered all along the way by what is generated and emergent. Again, waiting for supervision to review and have office hours is costly. Being on the "right track" emerges with the resulting theory. Autonomy pays off quickly.

Discovering a juicy core category clinches the autonomy position. It becomes a juicy personal and other person reward for being the sole discoverer. Autonomy needs no collaborative and supervisor sharing.

Mentoring

The right kind of help helps. Help with supporting autonomy, I quote Linda Schurch who just received her PhD in January 2015. The PhD is nominated for the best dissertation award at her university, and Linda writes, "Thank you Barney for your congratulations. I am so happy to be done and honored to have made this contribution steeped in your guidance, books, isms and have the full measure of excitement to contribute something substantive and grounded in the data." She continues, "I would like to recognize the seminal theorist for classical GT, Dr Barney Glaser. I attended two CGT trouble shooting seminars (New York, California and vitally a third held in UK). There are no word to describe the sense of "awe" and deep honor to be trained in CGT from the master seminal theorist himself. It was a life changing experience. I used several of Barney's quotes supporting my autonomy like 'you are confused,' 'stay that way ' or 'just do it' or 'drop ideology'. I wish to thank Dr. Helen Scott and Dr. Judith Holton for their methodological mentoring and counseling." Thus, right mentors help preserve the autonomy of the research and thus ensure excellent results!

I have many colleagues who give the right kind of help, fully supporting the novice researchers autonomy leading to success, not falling out. Also the fellow novices and accomplished grounded theorists in the trouble shooting seminars are there to help each other. The atmosphere is open and friendly and no one is there to judge anyone. Thus autonomy allows this freedom to be "whatever". Autonomy is no threatened by heavy evaluation. It is supported by the joy of discovery shared by others. In short, in the trouble-shooting seminar, autonomy is supported and applauded. This is in stark contrast to the usual demanding use of preconceived formats in typical academic practice and meetings. The model for the trouble-shooting seminar is being used all over the world now by former students of mine. Many wonderful dissertations have come out of this trouble shooting of ten students who were incredulous at first and wanted to be told preconceptually what to do.

Coding

Constant comparative coding leads to much confusion in the beginning. The quest for am I doing it right help is strong, which threatens autonomy. Open coding can shock the novice

researcher when he discovers that the emergent main concern is strikingly different from the preconceived one. And further when he discovers that the main concern takes him into a different field. For example, one student discovered that the main concern of people in finance was survival in a financial crisis, not social structural career achievement. This was great as a discovery, but scary for coding, since he knew nothing about survival categories and a lot about career advancement. His supervisors suggested using preconceived career categories or just description. Thus, discovery had possibly the negation of autonomy of emergence in theoretical coding. The student supported his autonomy of coding emergence and its confusion, which resulted in a worthy dissertation on surviving financial crises, not on career advancement. He wrote us to help to solve coding confusion of other students when in unknown problem areas. The thrill of discovery always wants to be shared. Successful coding leading to amazing discovery of concepts fosters, supports and confirms the autonomy offered by CGT methodology.

If a novice doubts his coding skills and asks a supervisor if it is ok, he is liable to be derailed to another version of GT or QDA and codes with preconceived concepts. Thus, he loses his autonomy over discovery of new concepts. Or his confusion worsens trying to convince his supervisor over his confusion autonomy. Hanging in is hard, but once concepts emerge from constant comparisons, confusion is seen as worth the travail and soon forgotten for the excitement of discovery and a feeling of mastery over the CGT methodology. The cry for help becomes the cry of excitement as the sole generator of a theory. Supervisors can no longer erode autonomous confidence.

The preconscious processing that goes on during constant comparative coding and feels like confusion, requires autonomy from others. Otherwise preconscious processing will easily be snuffed out by preconceived forcing categories suggested by others. Especially by supervisors who cannot tolerate their students' confusion and require it be structured up to meet the demands of a PHD program. Procedures of analysis from other qualitative methods are often used to structure, hence force, a clarity on the confusion. They are rescue efforts that prevent GT procedures.

Constructive help encourages keeping coding and patience waiting for emergence of categories. The eureka moment will happen! Pattern emergence is natural and normal. It happened in everyday life all the time for all of us. In CGT it is simply seen and tapped as a procedure requiring patience, confusion and preconscious processing. It should not be seen as ineptness, especially by seniors with other methodological perspectives that force data to void the comparative induced confusion.

The interminable rhetorical wrestle and confusion between multiple versions of grounded theory and QDA methodologies can easily entrap the novice GT researcher into loss of perspective or a particular perspective. He joins a perspective to rescue his self-confidence from the wrestle confusion. In either case the novice will lose autonomy by commitment to a method, which requires some sort of forcing in lieu of autonomous emergence. Only CGT provides the clean autonomy that allows the emergence of whatever may emerge, irrespective of the perspective of a version of GT. Self-confidence is required to accept CGT autonomy for its purpose: no preconceived emergence.

And “just do it.” The rhetorical wrestle will not stop. It is academic life to argue for perspectives one over another and more so as an academic ages. Novices are forced to join a perspective to be part of the academic life. It takes a lot of self-confidence to ignore applauded perspectives and just stay open to autonomy given by CGT procedures. To choose autonomy in the face of fear of getting no result takes knowing oneself, liking research, following CGT procedures and trusting to them and having patience in striving for the eureka moment that comes with emergence of the main concern and core category. For help, trust only an experienced CGT researcher. As one student put it “The results are fantastic. If CGT is used as designed.” Then the researcher glories in his autonomy of contribution and the rhetorical wrestle is forgotten, as it does not achieve the goal of research: a good product. Preserving the researcher’s autonomy preserves the general strength of CGT procedures used autonomously. The rhetorical wrestle undermines this strength to no advantage toward achieving a worthy research product.

I often receive a copy of a PhD thesis for two major reasons: Great pride at achieving the degree and thanking me for any help along the way. Or great threat of being required for major revisions to make it look consistent with department imagery. And thus I receive a cry for help in dealing with the PhD committee. My success in helping with revisions at this final stage is iffy and questionable. The novice’s autonomy, which got him this far, can be quite strongly resented by colleagues. Thus, the cry for help can go on and on until the committee signs off on the thesis. Revisions can take months and need major help by experienced CGT researchers.

Jargonizing

Jargonizing satisfies to a minor degree the cry for help and keeping one’s autonomy. It gives a language to one’s CGT research. Thus, the novice can explain what he is doing and his stage of GT research like he knows what he is doing as an autonomous researcher. This jargonizing can go on irrespective of what he is actually doing and what stage he is at. He can sound in autonomous control. Jargonizing makes his research autonomy unassailable on the word level. It is only by having his actual procedures exposed that his autonomy will or can be exposed. For example, saying he is theoretically sampling sounds great, but is he actually doing it? Solid autonomy comes in actions, not words. As Hans Thulesius wrote me, “CGT jargon is slowly spreading all over the world, in different languages. The spread of the method is way behind it, and novice oriented questing for action help and assurance beyond the jargon.”

Help

Needing a senior to convince the committee that CGT is legitimate and rigorous, and that the current dissertation is a significant original contribution. That is a very serious moment in a candidate’s career to PhD. He is putting his whole life into research for a couple of years or more to be awarded a PhD. A grave, great need for expert help, and polite pleasing when necessary for an expert to come from afar across the world to help.

Post PhD

Post PhD can be a very needy time for help. The intense attention to the novice and his research pre PhD is over. The new PhD returns to a depth of mixed methodological and theory perspectives, which can make him feel quite alone. It can be very demanding on one's autonomy to be in the middle of the rhetorical wrestle perpetually with no solution, just the stress from unresolvable conflict. One solution is to travel globally to conferences on CGT so as to network and share. Skype and email are lesser solutions, but can connect the lone PhD. Dr. Sima Sadeghi, of Iran, is an extreme case of needing to regroup in a grounded theory trouble shooting seminar in the US. At her own cost she spent two months getting a Visa to come to the US for the seminar. She was desperate. She also is financing her own trip. Many new PhDs travel globally to conferences to regroup among fellow GTers. It is rejuvenating for the loneliness of Post PhD neediness. This regrouping is a need that is very important to keep CGT going and subsequent research not slipping back to a QDA. L It also handles post PhD depression.

Flattery

The introduction to a "cry for help" with the dissertation research is typically some form of flattery to me or a senior. The flattery tells how important and strong the CGT perspective is in their research. How CGT has changed their lives, has changed the way they see the world. And they need help with this change in research perspective. Then the problem is stated which is typically a major perspective conflict with supervisor and/or committee. Of course there are many solution to this conflict, but simple support for the CGT perspective helps confidence and autonomy, by confirming that the novice has it right. And he has the right to use CGT like so many others use it. The following quote is a typical flattering approach to getting help from someone I do not know. "Hope this email finds you in good health and spirits. Please allow me to introduce my self first. My name is P. and I am a PhD candidate at the University of B., UK. I admire your work and contribution for the development and introduction of GT to the scientific community. Your work had tremendous impact on my study and helped me significantly in my research endeavor."

Then comes the problem for help. "However, I am struggling with identifying how to "prove the external and internal validity of concepts. I am aware of the quality and rigour criteria explained in your book Theoretical Sensitivity but my supervisor disagrees with it and states that I have to use criteria suitable for the above mentioned factors. The disagreement between mine and my committee's view creates unnecessary tension and confusion in my research journey." While simple enough, the issue to explain to the candidate this conflict with the committee is very fateful for a candidate and requires help. A super polite request for help is warranted by desperate novices in conflict with committees. A little help goes a long way and often saves the academic life and the PhD degree of the novice. The novice continues with his plea for help, "I realize that you are very busy person but it will help me significantly if you could shed more light on this issue and help me to justify my decision not only in front of my supervisors but my examiners

too. Thank you very much for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you." In short, he does not doubt that help will come, the need is so great, fateful and crucial. I and my senior colleagues have seen this last step cry for help many times.

Specific Help

Besides the cry for help being general such as the rhetorical wrestle over methodological perspectives, special procedural requests for help also appear. The request is justified by referral to one of my books or other seniors' work. If a procedure is advised such as no taping interviews, why and what alternative procedure is better? How to argue for the procedure against non-believers, steep in QDA procedures? The novice needs help with examples in taking on argument over procedures. CGT is composed of many procedures that must be adhered to and are in contra to QDA procedures. Legitimizing them is a problem novices face and must argue for. They need help to argue constructively for the CGT procedures that emerged with the methodology. Keep in mind that different methodologies have different procedures. What is required by one may not be suitable for another. Further CGT has many procedures for generating conceptual theory that are not suitable to QDA description. There is much chance for conflict with other methodologies' procedures. Trying to resolve the conflicts is a waste of time. It would claim a procedure that is not suitable for a methodology for which it is not used. For example, taping interviews is suitable for QDA dull description, but not suitable for CGT conceptualizing for theory as it overdoes interchangeable indicators.

Routine Help

Much request for help is not crisis oriented or desperate. It is routine and thoughtful emergence as the data is constantly compared. One thoughtful request is how to name a pattern or if a name is ok enough. What name options have the most grab? What name gives the imagery of the core problem or core variable instantly? What name options have immediate general implications? Is it a good name for the generated theory? A good name with grab quickly catches the interest of readers. Named patterns is fateful for interest by others in the theory. A candidate wrote me about naming a core category "embodying the self" and I suggested as an alternative of "externalizing the self" or "mobile self cleaning." Which is best, I do not know. The researcher's autonomy comes into play. He chooses as its his theory. The candidate can create names with grab also like "me fitting" or "resisting residual selves." Naming is a chance to become very creative. Good names often come out of constant comparison. As the pattern emerges so does a name for it, such as "survivalizing." The pattern imagery can produce a name for it with grab that produces the imagery for readers. The flexibility provided by autonomy and memoing comes into play strongly when naming. It is what the generated theory will be called by colleagues and what the researcher will be known for.

Senior Satisfaction

Some senior colleagues get great satisfaction in continually mentoring a candidate who has a good grasp of CGT methodology and are generating a good theory contribution. Helper satisfaction is to the maximum. These seniors will argue and stand firm with pride against committee and examiners who challenge CGT with their own perspectives and have the social structural power to demand severe revisions to the thesis. By attacking their student they are feeling attached and need resolution.

The novice's need for help does not stop with the awarding of the PhD. He needs recommendation for jobs and support for publications and workshop or seminar appearances. His satisfied mentor is obviously the best and most proximate helper by support and recommendation.. He may be asked to join a department where CGT is in conflict. He is likely to be tolerated as the resident GT teacher and needs senior support and legitimation from past mentor, who is at another school.