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Procedural and Methodological Rigor in Classic Grounded Theory

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Abstract

Though well-respected within its community, classic grounded theory is not as widely known as some other qualitative and quantitative research designs. Just as the other research designs have inherently rigorous principles, so too does classic grounded theory. The purpose of this talk is to explain several of these rigors by way of the tenets of the design. Only through a discussion of how rigorous this research design is, can novice and more experienced researchers truly appreciate its beauty, acquire valuable information about the design, and discover how beneficial the design might be to them. More specifically, there will be a detailed discussion on the following elements of rigor: (a) remaining true to and not manipulating the data; (b) using a grand tour question with no other questions; (c) using the Constant Comparison Method; (d) developing conceptualized rather than descriptive concepts; and, (e) ensuring the five pillars of classic grounded theory are present.

Keywords*:* classic grounded theory, rigor, procedures, methodology, qualitative research, multivariate theory development, multidimensional theory development

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Esteemed colleagues, learners, friends, and listeners. Welcome. My name is Dr. Barry Chametzky. I am a senior core faculty member at American College of Education in the United States. I am also the new editor of the Grounded Theory Review, an international, peer-reviewed journal specializing in classic grounded theory. Additionally, I am also a fellow at the international Grounded Theory Institute. I am honored and humbled to be here today and would like to thank the Sport Sciences Research Institute for the opportunity to offer this talk. The topic of my talk today is Procedural and Methodological Rigor in Classic Grounded Theory.

Up until the 1950s, sociological researchers conducted quantitative research as a way to verify or support (Glaser, 1965) theories developed by what may be termed “great” theorists like Weber, Durkheim, or Max (Glaser, 1967). Starting in the early-to-mid 1960s though, Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss believed that qualitative research can be used in an equally valuable manner. According to Glaser in 1965, “qualitative research is [more than] a preliminary, exploratory effort” (p. 1). Today, I hope to show—and subsequent to his 1965 article, Glaser would have agreed—that qualitative research, and more specifically, classic grounded theory, indeed has earned a solid place in the world of academia for novice and experienced scholars alike because of its procedural and methodological rigor.

The first step, though, is to provide a simple definition of what classic grounded theory is. In 1967, Glaser and Strauss defined the term *grounded theory* as "the discovery of theory from data" (p. 1). The definition may seem rather simple but as I will explain, there are critical nuances to be understood. With classic grounded theory, the days of verifying theories from those great scholars is gone. Now, any researcher is able to develop a rich, multidimensional theory that has a solid foundation in data. The generation of theory is not de-

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pendent on the type of data collected, according to Glaser and Strauss in 1967. All data—qualitative and quantitative—can help develop a rich, multidimensional and multivariate theory to explain how people behave in given situations.

In this talk, I would like to provide an extremely short history of classic grounded theory. It will be abundantly evident that the educational training of the researchers plays an important role in classic grounded theory. Then, quickly thereafter, I will offer a rather detailed discussion about various procedural and methodological rigors in this research design.

History

Barney Glaser came from a mathematics background at Columbia University and had some training in French literary analysis. With mathematics, Glaser had, in a sense, a positivistic perspective because math proves things. Somewhat diametrically opposed to that perspective, Glaser also had some training in French literary analysis while he studied at the Sorbonne in Paris, France. Based on a suggestion made by Lazarsfeld (Glaser, 2008), who was Glaser's mentor at Columbia, this well-established type of literary analysis, known as an *explication de texte* or textual explication, became a vital and core component, though in a modified form, in classic grounded theory. Briefly explained, an *explication de texte* is a type of analysis dating back to the 19th century, according to Perret in 2020, and is still used in French high schools and colleges where learners attempt to understand an extract of text—poetry or prose—in a highly nuanced manner through a line-by-line, detailed, yet distant examination of word choice, sound, rhythm, prosody, and cultural connections.

From a classic grounded theory perspective, the roots of the *explication de texte* can be seen as early as the mid-1960s in the constant comparison method where data are analyzed in a line-by-line or idea-by-idea manner and where codes and their associated memos are an-

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alyzed in a more nuanced and myopic way. Specifically, the associated codes are compared in connection one with each other. I will discuss the constant comparison method in greater detail later in this talk.

Anselm Strauss had a background in symbolic interactionism at the University of Chicago. Strauss learned that each of us is able to have a different perspective of the same event. I will give you an example. Consider three possibly different perspectives of this talk. Some of you might view this talk as the most interesting topic in the world. While others of you might be wondering when I will finish talking so you could get back to a previous task. I, on the other hand, am nervous and trying to remain composed and professional in my talk. These are three separate perspectives of the same event and demonstrate, however simplistically, the fundamental issue of symbolic interaction. Each person views the world and given events in a slightly different but equally acceptable manner. Such perspectives are vital in classic grounded theory as they can help the researcher develop a multifaceted and multidimensional theory. Without such comparison and analysis, such a rich theory cannot be formed.

Several Examples of Procedural and Methodological Rigor in Classic Grounded Theory

I would now like to demonstrate through detailed explanations how procedural and methodological rigor in classic grounded theory is demonstrated. Each of these examples is highly integrated—procedurally or methodologically—one with another to create a rich foundation for the research design. As a way to start this important discussion, I will mention how the schism between Glaser and Strauss occurred. The cause of this rift between these two colleagues points to an important element of procedural rigor in data analysis.

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Glaser and Strauss researched and worked together for a number of years on different projects such as *Awareness of Dying* in 1967 in which they explored the concept of death in hospitals from the perspectives of doctors, nurses, patients, and family members. Also in 1967, they wrote the seminal work *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. These two co-authors and colleagues wrote other works well until approximately 1990 when a schism developed because of Strauss' beliefs in his *Basics of Qualitative Research* book. In the book, Strauss believed that in grounded theory a researcher needs to interact actively with data, and, as such, modify it. No doubt, this was a subtle nod toward his training in symbolic interaction. But that belief bothered Glaser greatly.

In 1967 in *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, Glaser and Strauss wrote that forcing "'round data' into 'square categories'" (p. 37) does not allow a researcher to remain true to the data. This statement was certainly in Glaser's mine when, in starting in 1991 (Glaser, 1992), he responded to Strauss' 1988 book entitled the *Basics of Qualitative Research* where grounded theory was discussed by stating that

> . . . the work is not based on emergent relevance with categories that fit and work, and the product is not grounded theory. Again, it is preconceived, forced, conceptual description, which can be very significant in its own right, but again it is not emergent grounded theory. (p. 4)

Glaser felt that such interaction destroys and misconceives the data, as he wrote in 1992. Strauss refused to honor Glaser's wish that the book be corrected to reflect what grounded theory was. And so, with those two sentences, the professional relationship between Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss ended.

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I would venture to say that any researcher would agree that data must not be manipulated and altered during the process of analysis. To do so would result in unreliable findings and unethical research. Yet, we have evidence, based on what we know from subsequent versions of grounded theory that data are indeed manipulated and forced however subtle it may be. Glaser (2002a) referred to these versions as "remodeled" (p. 5); in his eyes, these modifications cause the new research design to stray away from the true nature of classic grounded theory as he and Strauss defined it in 1967 and must not be called grounded theory.

I will offer two brief examples. If we look, for example, at constructivist version of grounded theory developed by Kathy Charmaz, then we see an interactive relationship—a give-and-take if you will—between the researcher and the participant in terms of data analysis. To have such a relationship, according to Glaser, would damage the data.

Similarly, if we look at the design developed by Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin, we see the use of axial coding where data are to be manipulated and contorted into predetermined patterns. Such manipulations would, most assuredly, result in modified data and potentially inaccurate findings. Through these modifications, the pure, orthodox form of grounded theory gets "totally contaminated," as Glaser wrote in 2022 (p. 3). And decontamination is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to overcome.

With classic grounded theory, data are not manipulated or contaminated at all. There are no contortions through which data are put. There are no researcher-based modifications of the data. If a participant stated something, that idea was accepted without change because, according to Glaser in 1996, we researchers must follow Max Weber's idea of "*verstehen*, whereby the investigator understands a group's behavior by viewing their action through their eyes" (p. 47). Thus, we can understand a bit more clearly how the schism between Glaser and

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Strauss allowed Glaser to remain unwaveringly true to classic grounded theory and, at least implicitly, show how rigorous and ethical the research design is.

I want to make it clear, though, that Glaser did not have issues with the other designs as such; they were and are fine research designs. His lifelong concern was that they were incorrectly called *grounded theory*.

Implied in the aforementioned discussion is the concept of a *tabula rasa*—a clean slate—in which a researcher must not enter the data collection process as he or she might with other research designs—with some preconceived idea about what will be discovered. To begin to discover the behaviors of participants as they address whatever their main concern might be, a researcher must not add any external perspectives. In classic grounded theory, the researcher must not paraphrase or re-explain in their own words what participants meant to say. To do so would result in manipulated and forced data. The role of the researcher is strictly a hands-off observer, so to speak, who is only collects and analyzes data without re-interpretation. Through a *tabula rasa* perspective rigor in the research design is maintained. However, the *tabula rasa* expression needs further explanation.

As scholars, we know that it is impossible to enter any situation with a *tabula rasa*. We are trained to think critically and make researched connections between things. We are trained to wonder and explore potential connections. It would be completely impossible for us to maintain a sterile perspective when gathering data. What we can do, however, and what is meant by a *tabula rasa* perspective, is not let our thoughts, connections, and beliefs about what we think we think we hear in the data to interfere with the pristine data we are collecting. We are mandated by the tenets of classic grounded theory to set aside all of our ideas as we listen to what our participants are telling us to understand their *verstehen*.

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A second way to maintain rigor in classic grounded theory is not to have an instrument protocol where the researcher has a list of predetermined questions to ask. As I state this sentence, I can almost expect to see a cautious glare and perhaps a surreptitious comment from my colleagues because it sounds patently contrary to many qualitative research practices regarding reliability and transferability. After all, a colleague might ask, "How could a research design not have predetermined questions and an established protocol? Wouldn't those two elements demonstrate reliability?" To those questions, I would respectfully request that my colleague allow me to address their concerns with the following rather detailed points.

As I mentioned before, the researcher aims to understand the behavior of participants "by viewing their action through their eyes" (p. 47) according to Glaser in 1996. To that end, in classic grounded theory, a broad question—known as a grand tour question originally taken from ethnography (Fetterman, 2010)—is asked. The purpose of this question is to allow the participant to talk at length about whatever is of concern to him or her. In classic grounded theory terms, according to Glaser in 2009, the objective is to "instill a spill" (p. 22) and get participants speaking in detail about whatever might be important to them vis-à-vis the given topic.

Holton and Walsh in 2017 came up with an excellent grand tour question. They stated:

> For example, if you were interested in exploring the impending status passage (Glaser & Strauss, 1971) of university students in their final year of study, you might open the discussion by saying, 'I am supposed to be studying how students in their final year of study prepare for what's next, but I don't know what to ask you. What do you think we should talk about?' (p. 60)

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"Tell me about. . ." or "What is it like to . . ." are also excellent grand tour questions. And, these question openers could also be used to probe for additional information.

The researcher, do not know what the participant will say; each participant may have different, varying, and hopefully extended ideas about the topic at hand because each person may address his or her main concerns in different ways. So, the grand tour question is open-ended and intentionally vague. We cannot have predetermined questions because we cannot know beforehand what to ask and what the participants will say. Without this information, any detailed and predefined questions become valueless and greatly muddy up the waters; they are preconceived and violate the tenets of classic grounded theory. As such, a grand tour question has the important role of allowing the researcher to hear what is important to the participant. Additionally, the question allows the participant to speak freely about whatever is of concern to him or her. Because the same grand tour question is used for all participants, methodological rigor in the form of reliability exists as consistency is maintained throughout data collection. process.

There is value, now, in looping back to an idea I mentioned earlier: the constant comparison method first mentioned and explained by Glaser in 1965. I will explain how the constant comparison method is done and will show how transferability, another element of rigor, is demonstrated. In his seminal 1965 article, Glaser offered to the world a skeletal version of classic grounded theory in which four stages were discussed: (a) comparing the elements, (b) integrating those elements into broader categories along with their associated properties, (c) delimiting the theory, and finally (d) writing the theory (Chametzky, 2023). The first two steps are the most valuable in this discussion of constant comparison.

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In classic grounded theory, when a researcher has some interview data before him or her, a code or short phrase—generally a gerund because that works well for behaviors of people—is used to identify the idea presented in that data. So far, this process is similar to what a researcher might do in any another qualitative research design. The classic grounded theorist now needs to do two important things with that code or short phrase. First, he or she needs to write memos to explain the code or phrase—no more and no less. They can be any length from a sentence to several paragraphs. Based on a comment Glaser made in 1998, "memos are the conscious manifestation of the preconscious thought" (Section 5). As such, the format of writing a memo is freeform and completely up to the researcher.

The second thing that needs to happen—and here is where the constant comparison method is truly evident—is that the researcher will compare one code and its associated memo with another to uncover any potential heretofore unknown connections. With two codes and memos, things are rather simple but data are rarely only two codes and memos. Each code and its associated memo are compared with previous ones. Through this constant comparison method, the researcher aims to see how memos fit together one with another, how individual codes and memos can be grouped together to form larger units called categories, and how the categories can be fully explained to develop the core variable—the heart of the theory. The process of constantly comparing one memo with another can take time because with each comparison, one or more memos are written to explain the possible connection. I assure you that though this process seems never-ending, it does end and works quite successfully. But it is a difficult and time-consuming process that requires diligence on the part of the researcher as well as the ability to tolerate repeated uncertainty and confusion as the theory slowly—sometimes very slowly—takes shape.

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And it might happen that one or more memos would get set aside because they do not fit in a given category or property; they might fit in elsewhere. But if they do not fit in at all, that is acceptable too. There is value in restating that the theory will only be a slice of data, to explain the main concerns of the participants as they address the issue, according to Glaser in 2012. If there is some code or memo that does not fit in with the data, as with other qualitative research designs, it is perfectly acceptable to set that data aside.

I would like to continue my discussion about memos but from a slightly different perspective. As is often common with early memos, they are highly descriptive in nature. Having descriptive memos, because a researcher is initially learning about the data, is perfectly normal, acceptable, and accepted. However, as the researcher compares the memos one with another—through the constant comparison method—the researcher will hopefully notice a few things happening. First, some memos *will* get collapsed and combined with other memos because of repeated ideas or the discovery of broader components or categories into which several codes and memos might fit.

Second, the quality of the memos becomes less descriptive and increasingly conceptual. Moving from description to conceptualization is difficult for some scholars. The quality of the memos begins with the chosen codes as they need to be as conceptual as possible. Here is a simple but clear example of description and conceptualization that I used in one of my published papers regarding codes. The same rules would apply with memo writing.

While I was in graduate school learning about classic grounded theory, we were to work in groups on mock data and codes. The grand tour question was "Tell me about an 'aha' moment—a moment when you discovered and realized something important and valuable. One small bit of data was this idea from one of my articles in 2022: "I'd have to say that an

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'aha' moment for me was the time I spoke with a mentor at my school and asked for advice on a particular topic" (Section 5). The associated codes were "being unsure and reaching out" and "testing one's viewpoint." From an initial perspective either gerund phrase would work as both were conceptual. If I were writing memos now, I would ask myself what does "being unsure and reaching out" mean? How might that idea be demonstrated and why? What is involved in that idea? The same for testing one's viewpoint. Then, I would compare the two memos to see if there were any overlapping concepts. Again, description in initial memos is tolerated. But, as the researcher gains greater familiarity with memo writing and the data, conceptualization will start to occur.

One way to help a researcher think conceptually rather than descriptively is to ask these three questions that Glaser presented in 1978: "What is the main concern of the participant? What is this data a study of [and] What is actually happening in the data" (p. 57)? With these questions, the researcher is almost assuredly guaranteed to stay on topic, not to interpret, and to develop the needed conceptualization.

Such a shift from description to conceptualization is desirable and needed for only through the conceptual nature of codes and memos can an emergent theory be transferable and generalizable to other populations. The researcher needs to keep in mind that the goal of a classic grounded theory researcher is to develop a theory that, according to Glaser in 2009, is abstract of "time, place, and people" (p. 24). In 1978, Glaser stated that "[T]he successive raising of the description through conceptual abstraction to categories and then theory is explicitly developed in memos" (p. 84).

The pull of description that we all feel is strong. In several articles, Glaser stated that description runs the world (2002a) and there is no way to stop it because we all do it all the

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time. And as researchers, we believe that description is vitally important to help our readers, our listeners, and our doctoral students and candidates understand the data better. We cannot stop description. A great example of description would be obtaining demographic details of participants. From a practical perspective, unless there is an explicit need to gather such data, and that information is vitally germane to understanding and explaining the theory, then knowing and obtaining such descriptive details is not valuable. We as classic grounded theorists must understand quite clearly how bad description can be because it inextricably constrains us to a specific period of time, to a specific location, and to a specific group of people (Glaser, 2009). At times, we must fight with ourselves to avoid what Glaser in 2009 described as "worrisome accuracy" (p. 45)—the need to present overly detailed information for that is not the nature of classic grounded theory.

I will explain the need for abstraction in a slightly different way—by way of a theory that I developed in 2013. This theory was about how foreign language learners deal with their stressful online foreign language class environments. In my research, it was easy to explain how foreign language learners deal with their online language classes through a number of behaviors. Some stressed learners might scream, cry, and quit the course. Other learners might vent to family and friends or push ahead breaking the course into very small, micro-sized units so the feeling of overwhelm is greatly reduced. Others might even take numerous breaks to clear their minds. Regardless of how these learners might attempt to survive their online foreign language class, there is one broad thing that they all do. They attempt to balance or, to use a more specific term, offset their affective filter—the psychological wall preventing them from acquiring the needed the material and information (Chametzky,

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2013a). Such a statement may seem rather specific to a foreign language environment but it is not; we can say the same thing in other situations.

Here is a clear example. Currently, I am not a foreign language learner and this environment is not an online foreign language class. As I prepared for this talk—no doubt vastly different from an online foreign language class—I told myself that I can accomplish this task; I cried a bit (because of the excitement and honor you have bestowed upon me by allowing me to give this talk today); I talked to myself and reflected when I hit a mental roadblock. I took breaks to clear my head when necessary. In short, I did what some foreign language learners do; I offset my affective filter through various behaviors with the objective of writing and giving this talk. Clearly, then, the behaviors that foreign language learners exhibited in the study from 2013 are easily transferable to other stressful situations. Such transferability—an important element of methodological rigor—would not have been possible if the theory was not conceptual in nature. As appealing and easy as description might be, it limits the researcher to one time, person, and event rather than to a much broader perspective (Glaser, 2009).

If you were to read research conducted using classic grounded theory, you would discover that transferability is evident, though such qualitative terminology is not used. Similarly, dependability, credibility, and other qualitative methodological terms are equally applicable to classic grounded theory. I will explain this point further. But at this point in the talk, I would like and need to apologize for I have muddied up the waters substantially by using terms such as instrument, dependability, credibility, reliability, and transferability. Such qualitative terms, while vital in other research designs are not and must not be used in connection

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with classic grounded theory. The use of these terms detracts from the research design and the emergent theory.

In 2009, Glaser explained the use of qualitative methodological terms in classic grounded theory as Qualitative Data Analysis—"QDA" (p. 1) and is something to be avoided. In fact, to use such terminology, modifies the very nature of classic grounded theory. In terms of assisting novice and experienced qualitative and quantitative researchers to understand the classic grounded theory research design, though, I believe that using the various aforementioned terms is valuable for they can form a proverbial bridge between what is already known and what has yet to be understood.

To that end, then, I see value and a need, to turn our attention in this discussion of procedural and methodological rigor to what I have termed in 2013(b) as the five pillars of classic grounded theory: fit, grab, work, relevance, and modifiability. These classic grounded theory terms are common and Glaser used them in many of his writings such as *Theoretical sensitivity* in 1978, *Basics of grounded theory analysis* in 1992, and *Doing grounded theory: Issues and discussions* in 1998. Though those terms may be unknown to many of you, they connect easily to some accepted and commonly used methodological terms with which we all are undoubtedly familiar. Additionally, each term demonstrates further procedural and methodological rigor in classic grounded theory so they bear discussing in turn. To that end, let us start with the first term, *fit.*

We all know that in language, words matter. To use an incorrect or imprecise word in a given context could potentially change the meaning of the intent and result in great misunderstanding. If we were to look up the word *rigor* on the synonyms.com website, we would see possible synonyms such as hardness, harshness, and vengeance. If we are talking about

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research, while we can state the research was done with rigor, we could and would most certainly not state that the research was done with vengeance if we want the same connotation to be evident. In the first case, rigor means extremely thorough; in the second, it implies some sort of punishment. While both elements might be true, the nuance is vitally and significantly important if we are to convey the correct meaning of the word. Such nuance is critical in classic grounded theory as well. This criticality is perhaps more evident and mandatory in classic grounded theory because, according to Glaser in 1998, a given word or code needs to express in an adequate and exact matter "the pattern in the data which it purports to conceptualize" (p. 18).

If a clear and exact relationship exists between the chosen word or words and concept presented in the data, then there is *fit*. In some respect, fit could be connected with the well-accepted and understood methodological term *validity* because the word or concept truly and accurately represents what is in the data. And, because there is no modification of the data in classic grounded theory, the procedural and methodological element of fit and validity is present.

The second pillar is grab. In classic grounded theory terminology, grab is when an idea gets the attention of a person rather quickly (Glaser, 1978). When a researcher or reader understands the idea in question and what is happening in the data (Glaser, 2002b), grab exists. When grab is present, people feel as if they understand the concept, according to Glaser in 2002b. A good example is the theory about which I spoke about earlier—offsetting the affective filter. As a theory, it may be solid but as a gerund phrase, there is minimal grab for it is not easily understandable and relatable. On the other hand, the idea of how people get

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through stressful situations is highly relatable with strong grab as we have all experienced such situations.

From a qualitative perspective, grab and generalizability are connected because one cannot exist without the other. A generalized concept allows more people to relate to it—with higher grab—than one that is highly or overly descriptive. Such a connection leads to greater believability and increased credibility.

Work is the third pillar in classic grounded theory. One objective a researcher has, when developing a theory with this research design, is to ensure that it is multivariate and multidimensional. Having a theory with three to five categories each with several properties is ideal. A rich, well-developed theory that explains, as Glaser wrote in 1992, "the major variations in behavior in the area with respect to the processing of the main concerns of the subjects" (p. 15) is the ultimate objective all theorists wish to attain. In this case, if a theory is indeed multidimensional and can explain the different variations that might take place in a given substantive area, then the theory is said to work. And, when a theory works, generalizability becomes easier (Chametzky, 2013b) because it is highly conceptualized. On the other hand, having a one-dimensional theory—perhaps with only one category and one or two properties is not valuable; it is and would feel incomplete to a reader. Such a theory may very well also not work; it would be rather weak.

Relevance is the fourth pillar. Admittedly, this pillar may be viewed as potentially highly personal as relevance and importance are synonyms. A person might argue that a given idea might be important or concerning to one researcher might not be equally important or concerning to another. I would agree with that comment to a point. However, given the natural curiosity of people, according to Gazzaniga in 2009, it would be very reasonable to be-

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lieve that some other people would find the topic of equal interest. Additionally, when the substantive theory appears with its conceptualized categories and rich properties, it stands to reason that because of grab, relevance increases.

The final pillar in classic grounded theory is modifiability. I mentioned earlier in this talk that the emergent theory is a slice of data to explain how the participants address their main concern. Presuming that this theory is well-developed and multidimensional, then if another researcher finds a different heretofore undiscovered property that might slide into the theory in question, then that theory must be sufficiently flexible to be modifiable (Chametzky, 2013b).

One way, and certainly not the only way, that modifiability can occur is in the development of a formal theory. In such an example, a researcher would, as Glaser explained in 2007a, "[extend] the general implications of a core variable by sampling wider in the original substantive area and in other substantive areas and then constantly comparing with the purpose to conceptualize the general implications" (p. 5).

And conversely, if a theory is highly relatable and has great grab, some of its elements may be applicable in other situations and may connect to other theories thereby demonstrating modifiability. A great example of this idea is how the term supernormalizing used by Glaser in 1998 and 2014 gained entry into a theory I developed in 2015. Supernormalizing explains how people try to be normal after serious medical ailments. In my 2015 theory on surviving situational suffering, I used the term superadjuncting, as a nod to supernormalizing, to explain the behavior of non-full-time adjunct educators as they try to do "more than what [they're] doing now" (Section 4) so they might be deemed indispensable. In this brief example, we can see how modifiability, along with all five pillars come into play.

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As a researcher develops his or her theory using classic grounded theory, the five aforementioned pillars must all come into play to achieve the level of rigor needed. As with other qualitative and quantitative research designs, if an element of methodological rigor were missing, the end product might be rather good but would not be as strong as it could have been. Imagine, for example, conducting a qualitative case study without data triangulation. The end result might be extremely good but would not be as rich as it could have been if triangulation were employed during the data analysis process. The same is true with classic grounded theory. If any of the five pillars are not present, the resultant theory might not be adequately or sufficiently strong. Perhaps, too, it might not worthy of being called a substantive theory developed using classic grounded theory.

In this talk, I addressed a fair number of procedural and methodological ideas which demonstrate rigor in classic grounded theory. As a brief synopsis, I specifically explained how data modification and manipulation must not exist so a researcher can remain true to the data and maintain reliable data in an ethical manner. Additionally, in classic grounded theory, though a grand tour question is used, there are no other questions asked in a study using classic grounded theory; there is no instrument protocol. With one repeated grand tour question, reliability is established. Another way to achieve reliability is through the constant comparison method. To achieve maximum generalizability, conceptualization and abstraction is required instead of description. Finally, I spoke about the five pillars of classic grounded theory: fit, grab, work, relevance, and modifiability.

Conclusion

The French people have an expression, *à quoi bon*, which literally means *to what good*. In the context of this talk, I ask: *à quoi bon*?. What will all the information I presented

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here do for you as researchers, scholars, and educators? As I mentioned earlier, one of my objectives was to show how procedurally and methodologically rigorous classic grounded theory is. I believe I have accomplished that task through my various explanations and examples. Classic grounded theory can stand up to any other qualitative or quantitative research design and hold its own. Classic grounded theory is perhaps more rigorous than one might have previously imagined.

But another equally important, tangential objective is to help you understand the research design, at least on a broad level, so that if you are mentoring learners for whom classic grounded theory could be a valuable research design, you have the opportunity to speak briefly and intelligently on the subject. For a scholar who may be well experienced in qualitative analysis but less so in classic grounded theory, you might believe the research design is off-limits because you are not as qualified as you would like to be. Or, perhaps that it is too difficult to do. Hopefully now, through my talk, at least some of that unknown and that fear have been allayed. And if you are a student or doctoral candidate, you can now have a greater and deeper appreciation for the research design. Perhaps you might even decide that doing a dissertation or thesis using classic grounded theory is appropriate. You now have some procedural and methodological backbone to make your case to your advisor.

At this point, I would like to leave you with this final thought. In 2022a, I wrote that "the beauty of classic grounded theory is that it is all around us. We just need to be open to seeing and experiencing it" (p. 44) and that idea is still very true. I would challenge each of you to view the world with wondering eyes; ask yourselves "what is going on in a given situation?" Such a question will allow you to see the world in a new light. Such a question, too, is

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the beginning of a potentially rich and multivariate, multidimensional theory using classic grounded theory. Good luck and I will be excited to hear what you discover. Thank you.

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