



GROUNDING THEORY REVIEW

An international journal

After Discovery: Growing success

Contributions by Evert Gummesson, Hans Thulesius, Alvita Nathaniel, Tom Andrews, Antoinette McCallin, Mark Rosenbaum, Astrid Gynnild, Walter Fernandez, Pernilla Pergert

November 2007

Grounded Theory Review, Vol 6 (Special Issue), 45-76

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/>

Grounded Theory 40 Years – A Jubilee Extraordinaire

Evert Gummesson, Ph.D.

Had I known when I was 40 what I know now, I would have devoted my research to 1.) grounded theory (GT) and 2.) the family called complexity theory (CT), developed within natural sciences but with equal relevance for social sciences, and of which network theory is part. GT and CT alike are theories of life and methods of investigating and learning about life. They are even lifestyles. They are not in competition but supplementary. In fact, GT would mix well in the CT family.

So maybe my life after 40 has been wasted, but no, that sounds too “rational.” I needed the time to mature. And if I can’t profit from all of my current insights in this life, I am well prepared for my next incarnation.

GT researchers are the postmodern alchemists who transform the concrete mud of substantive data into the golden wisdom of formal and abstract concepts of divine validity. They are postmodern in the sense that they are not stuck in the mud of received wisdom; they are intellectual and disrespectful rebels.

Las Vegas had its Siegfried & Roy, taming white tigers and dazzling the audience with illusions. Just as full of magic but devoid of illusions, sociology has its Barney & Anselm. Be it that GT was created by two gentlemen, but it is not a macho theory. It is androgynous, an amalgam of female and male qualities. Or yin and yang, if you wish. Although GT is structured and rigorous (male) it is equally flexible, intuitive and common-sensical (female). And through GT reality gently emerges (female); it is not the outcome of crude forcing (male).

Although GT is described as theory generating it is equally theory testing. Not in the sense that it is there to tell how stupid received theories were, but to offer improved theory. In doing so it is a parallel to what total quality management from industry calls “continual improvement.” Constant comparison

The Grounded Theory Review (2007), Special Issue

leads to constant improvement. So if the new theory works better it should automatically replace old theory. No confrontation necessary, no defense necessary.

But the conventional scientific community and the frail persona of the bulk of professors are reluctant to accept innovation, especially if it means quantum leaps. So it takes time. Despite this, I am happy to say that GT is getting more and more into the business schools. It is still a rare but colorful bird among the black and white ones that populate their methodological zoo. In economics I see little progress. It is so prejudiced by obsolete theory and methodological ritualism in which reality and its complexity has little place – despite the fact that the economy of the world, of nations and industries is characterized by extreme complexity and in need of a theoretical overhaul. I am convinced that if more GT studies were made in management and economics our social map would change. Both disciplines, much more so economics (“We are a mature science!”) than business and management (according to economists an immature “science”), are addicted to forcing and deductive testing of received theory. They urgently need to get their act together and go into rehab. I am convinced that if GT became mandatory as research approach in business schools and economics departments, the two disciplines would be reinvented.

So what is the conclusion? Very obvious, GT is not a middle-aged theory and methodology. It is a timeless, rebellious youngster.

--- September 21, 2007

Author

Evert Gummesson, Ph.D.

Professor of Marketing and Management

Stockholm University School of Business

Email: eg@fek.su.se

Homage à Barney Glaser's Discovery

Hans Thulesius, Ph.D.

*In the 60's a time of progress and resurgence
A bright guy from Frisco uncovered emergence
Away with conjecture and fanciful fictions
Coding for concepts gives grounded predictions
Let's cheer for the man who discovered emergence¹*

It is 40 years since "Discovery of Grounded Theory" and seven years since I discovered classic GT. And it all happened because Barney Glaser came to my small Swedish hometown for a three hour seminar. These years have been truly exciting. I have experienced so much creativity in my research thanks to the method. And GT has also released originality in my research, which gave me a Dissertation-of-the-year award in Swedish family medicine in 2003. Post-doc it has secured me a research position with a lot of freedom allowing me to go on using GT in various fields. So it is true as Barney says that GT gives autonomy to the researcher.

GT the way Barney teaches it is especially exciting since he, as a person, embodies the method. He walks the way he talks and uses GT analysis for everything in his life. Sociology Press, his investment company, all the houses he builds, the GT seminars, and of course all the books he has written. Everything based on GT analysis. That is amazing and sets an example. As he says "If the method is that good, why don't you use it on your own life? Take notes!" GT really has potential that at least I myself have yet to discover.

When I ordered my first book from Sociology Press in April

¹ This light-hearted limerick was composed and recited by Hans Thulesius at a special tribute dinner for Barney Glaser, at Clos Maggiore, Covent Garden, London, April 24, 2007

The Grounded Theory Review (2007), Special Issue

2000 (**Doing Grounded Theory**, which I have since translated into Swedish), it arrived with a handwritten line from Barney. Ever since, he has personally been there with support. And even though it was sometimes just a two-word e-mail reply to a multi-paragraph text, it has really meant a lot every time I have gotten something from Barney. Why? Well I guess it has to do with Barney's genius in combination with his honesty and generosity. He wants to help as many as possible and thus has to discipline time use. At the same time, ever since his dissertation on scientists' recognition, he knows how important recognition is in all types of human activity.

The importance of **The Discovery of Grounded Theory** since 1967 in the world of behavioral science is significant. In November 2007, the book got 8545 citation hits on Google Scholar. No other method book dealing with qualitative data analysis gets even half that many citations. The Strauss and Corbin book, **Basics of Qualitative Research** (1998), got 2957 and the Denzin and Lincoln (1994) **Handbook of Qualitative Research** got 3332. One of Barney's own comments on that comparison is - and this is a real e-mail quote - "Hans, as I have said, if nothing else, I gave the world a jargon that legitimizes. Barney".

-- November 18, 2007

Author:

Hans Thulesius, GP, Ph.D.
Kronoberg County Research Centre
Department of Community Medicine
Vaxjo, SE
Email: hans.thulesius@ltkronoberg.se

A Tribute to the Fortieth Anniversary of Classic Grounded Theory

Alvita Nathaniel, Ph.D.

This year celebrates the 40th anniversary of the groundbreaking text, **The Discovery of Grounded Theory** (1967), which was co-authored by sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss. Funded by a Public Health Service Research Grant from the Division of Nursing, **Discovery** was at the forefront of the postpositivist era during which social scientists were beginning to develop new ways to conceptualize and predict human behavior. Glaser and Strauss broke new ground as they described an inductive method which “discovers” theoretically complete explanations about particular phenomena. Today, classic grounded theory is gaining popularity due, in large measure, to the continued leadership of Barney Glaser.

Grounded theory flows naturally from the co-developer’s backgrounds. Glaser studied quantitative and qualitative math at Columbia University with Lazarsfeld, *explication de text* at the University of Paris, and theory construction with Robert Merton. Strauss studied symbolic interactionism with Blumer at the University of Chicago (Glaser, 1998; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Traces of each of these influences are easily identified in the method. Glaser, the first author of **Discovery**, has continued to clarify the grounded theory method as first described in 1967 (1978, 1996, 1998, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2007).

Since before the time of Aristotle, scientists and philosophers have debated the scientific method, placing greater confidence in either induction or deduction as methods trended in popularity. Grounded theory countered the dominant view in the 1960’s that the only scientifically sound form of systematic social inquiry consisted of positivist methods. Classic grounded theory gave a new structure to inductive research and garnered respect because it took advantage of reputable mathematic quantitative and qualitative ideas. Although a number of people have attempted

The Grounded Theory Review (2007), Special Issue

to derive variations based upon the method as first described in **Discovery**, Charmaz (2002) agrees with Glaser (1998) that his is the pure version of grounded theory.

Glaser (1999) calls grounded theory a “total methodological package,” providing systematic methods for collecting data and establishing theoretically complete, publishable theory, rich in “imageric concepts” and perceptual power. Glaser (1999) depicts grounded substantive theory as a “third perceptual-level theory,” moving from empirical data to concepts that are then transcended to the core variables of substantive theory.

Glaser continually reminds us that theory represents truth only insofar as it systematically presents concepts and processes that are grounded in data from real-life situations. The goal of grounded theory “is to generate a theory that accounts for a pattern of behavior which is relevant and problematic for those involved” (Glaser, 1978, p. 93). Grounded theory is based upon assumptions that both knowledge and people are dynamic and that context facilitates, hinders, or otherwise influences human goals and social psychological processes (Benoliel, 1996). Frequently, the theoretical codes and categories in grounded theories are derived from one or both of the two types of basic social process. Widely attributed to Glaser, *basic social processes* “are theoretical reflections and summarizations of the patterned, systematic uniformity flows of social life which people go through, and which can be conceptually ‘captured’ and further understood through the construction of basic social process theories” (Glaser 1978, p. 100).

When done properly, classic grounded theory differs from other research methods in that it renders neither story nor description. It provides a conceptual representation of the world as it is. Grounded theory gives us a way of looking at the facts: of organizing, synthesizing, transcending, and representing them. Concurrent with its conceptualizations of empiric data, the logic of theory also serves as a device for interpreting, criticizing, and unifying established theories and modifying them to fit unanticipated data and to guide the discovery of new and more powerful generalizations. Thus as

The Grounded Theory Review (2007), Special Issue

Glaser suggests, “all is data.”

This unifying view is unique in that it leads to theories that are easily modified as new data is encountered. As Kaplan stated, “Truth may be eternal, but science requires no more of a theory than it be sufficient unto the day (Kaplan, 1964, p. 315). Unlike the “results” of other methods, grounded theory culminates in an integrated set of tentative conceptual hypotheses that can be modified with further study. Grounded theories are symbolic representation of people’s experiences. As the data are gathered, compared, conceptualized, and analyzed, patterns emerge. This is one of the unique and practical features of classic grounded theory: it is neither elitist nor rarefied; rather, it is a representation of truth as perceived by study participants.

Glaser reminds us that two elements of grounded theory safeguard against inherited dogma: empirical grounding and constant comparison. Glaser (1965) proposed constant comparison as a key intellectual strategy of grounded theory analysis. Theory emerges as the investigator goes back and forth in an iterative process constantly comparing sentence to sentence, incident to incident, incident to concept, concept to concept, concept to extant literature and so forth (Glaser, 1965, 1998). This method of constant comparison leads to the modifiable character of grounded theory. It also increases formal abstraction and corrects for poor data as it brings the theory into closer grounding (Glaser, 1965, 1999).

Since the publication of **Discovery**, Glaser has maintained intellectual curiosity and a belief in the value of the grounded theory method. He has written scores of books and scholarly papers about the method. Four decades after developing the classic grounded theory method with Strauss, Glaser published a long-anticipated follow-up monograph that details the method for generating formal grounded theory (2007). Although **Discovery** and Glaser’s other books offer hints about formal grounded theory, this is the first definitive guide for researcher-theorists. This monograph should provide the inspiration and direction needed by researcher-theorists to generate formal grounded theory—new territory for grounded

The Grounded Theory Review (2007), Special Issue

theorists. Not one to rest on his laurels, today Glaser is in the midst of a new book outlining how GT can be used as a quantitative method.

Glaser is a prolific writer and also a vibrant teacher. Well into his 70's, he continues to conduct small group seminars to help PhD candidates from around the globe as they begin grounded theory research. During the seminars, Glaser's informal style encourages scholarly interchange as new researchers learn the intricacies of the method. Few universities have faculty with classic grounded theory expertise, so Glaser and a small experienced group of classic grounded theorists support and mentor PhD candidates. The seminars help participants to understand classic grounded theory, which is paradoxically simple yet complex. With the simple goal of understanding "what is going on" in people's lives, one must know the foundations of the *methodology* in order to understand each element of the *method*.

Glaser is patient and generous as he helps to move novice PhD candidates through the process of learning grounded theory. The method so captures participants, that many return to seminars to further develop expertise and later to share knowledge with upcoming novices. It is fascinating to watch participants as a seminar progresses. Seminars include diverse groups of people—nurses, mathematicians, business executives, physicians, journalists, educators, social workers, and others—who might ordinarily have little interest in research outside their own sphere. Yet during a seminar, participants truly engage with each other because grounded theory, by its very definition, describes conditions that are important and have "grab." Animated scholarly discussions continue through meals and late into the night and informal mentorship bonds are formed that often carry through the dissertation process. Seminar participants are making a difference in the scholarly arena as they take the classic method back to their countries, universities, and disciplines.

On a personal note, I will always be grateful to Glaser who mentored me as I learned grounded theory. I began theory development after attending one of Glaser's seminars. Later, he

The Grounded Theory Review (2007), Special Issue

mentored me through the dissertation process. His patient guidance helped me to have the courage to speak with my own voice and to develop an original theory. Had I not had the privilege of his mentorship, I might have succumbed to popular notion that students should join the ongoing research of faculty mentors and likely would have produced tentative, preconceived, “tiny topic” research of marginal importance.

In conclusion, we celebrate together the 40th anniversary of Glaser and Strauss’s groundbreaking text, **The Discovery of Grounded Theory** and the untiring and generous efforts of Barney Glaser, the true “father” of the method. Theorists from around the globe prove that classic grounded theory provides a structured and rigorous means to discover theoretically complete explanations about phenomena that are problematic and important to those involved. This diverse community of classic grounded theorists acknowledges the responsibility to assist Glaser and to mentor upcoming generations of novice grounded theorists.

-- November 16, 2007

Author:

Alvita Nathaniel, Ph.D., DSN, APRN, BC
Director, Nurse Practitioner Track
School of Nursing
West Virginia University
Charleston, WV
Email: anathaniel@hsc.wvu.edu

The Grounded Theory Review (2007), Special Issue

References

- Benoliel, J. Q. (1996). Grounded theory and nursing knowledge [Electronic version]. *Qualitative Health Research*, 6(3), 406-429.
- Charmaz, K. (2000). Grounded Theory: Objectivist and constructivist methods. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2nd Ed.) (pp. 509-535). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Glaser, B. G. (1965). The constant comparative method of qualitative analysis. *Social Problems*, 12, 436-446.
- Glaser, B. G. (1978). *Theoretical Sensitivity: Advances in the methodology of grounded theory*. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B. G. (Ed.). (1996). *Grounded Theory: The basic social process dissertation*. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B. G. (1998). *Doing Grounded Theory: Issues and discussion*. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B. G. (1999). The future of grounded theory [Electronic version]. *Qualitative Health Research*, 9(6), 856-10.
- Glaser, B. G. (2001). *The Grounded Theory Perspective: Conceptualization contrasted with description*. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B. G. (2003). *The Grounded Theory Perspective II: Description's remodeling of grounded theory methodology*. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B.G. (2007). *Doing Formal Grounded Theory: A proposal*. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. New York: Aldine De Gruyter.
- Kaplan, A. (1964). *The Conduct of Inquiry*. San Francisco: Chandler.

Reflections on ‘The Discovery of Grounded Theory’

Tom Andrews RN; B.Sc. (Hons); M.Sc., Ph.D.

The seminal book by Glaser and Strauss (1967) was a write up of how their study on awareness of dying was done, thus was grounded theory (GT) discovered and not invented (Glaser, 1978). To be able to appreciate the impact that the publication of **Discovery** has on research and qualitative research in particular, it is necessary to understand the context within which it was written. Since grounded theory has had the greatest impact on qualitative research, this paper will briefly discuss the state of this research method during this period.

Historically qualitative research was defined within the positivist paradigm where qualitative researchers attempted to do good positivist research with less rigorous methods and procedures. At this time researchers had limited methodologies to choose from and included experimental design and survey research. Field research methods had wanted and were viewed as a preliminary step in refining instruments for use in quantitative research (Charmaz, 1995). Methodology books focused on theory verification and as a result, there were very few sociological theories (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). By the 1960s qualitative research had lost credibility among an increasing number of sociologists, since they believed that it was not capable of verification (Strauss and Corbin, 1994). The resultant ascendancy of quantitative methodology led to a growing division between theory and empirical research (Charmaz 2000). The dominant sociological paradigm at the time was structuralism and its statistical hypothetical-deductive methods of data analysis (Stern and Covan, 2001) which Glaser and Strauss regarded as inordinately speculative and deductive in nature (Strauss and Corbin, 1994). It was a common practice to deduce theory which was seldom related to data (Glaser, 1998) resulting in an embarrassing gap between theory and empirical research

The Grounded Theory Review (2007), Special Issue

(Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Qualitative researchers wrote research reports that reflected the positivist paradigm and they were concerned with offering objective interpretations of their findings (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). With the publication of their methodology book “Discovery” this view was challenged. It also challenged the assumptions of qualitative research as preliminary; the quest for rigour made qualitative research illegitimate the separation of data collection and analysis; qualitative research could produce only descriptive case studies rather than theory development (Charmaz, 1995). Although there were attempts to formalise qualitative methods, they used the rhetoric and language of positivism (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994) and were not rigorous (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Glaser and Strauss were among the first to provide written guidelines for systematic qualitative data analysis with explicit analytical procedures and research strategies (Charmaz, 2000).

What is not fully appreciated in the research literature is that **Discovery** was meant to be a beginning, implying that it should form the basis for further development of the methodology (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). This has of course subsequently happened with the publication of several methodology books further explicating the method, beginning with **Theoretical Sensitivity** (Glaser, 1978) and continuing with **Doing Formal Grounded Theory** (Glaser, 2007). It continues to provide a strong rationale underpinning qualitative research (Strauss and Corbin, 1994). This may partially explain one of the most pressing challenges to grounded theory: the eroding and continuing re-writing of the method. This may in part be explained by the fact that it has given qualitative researchers a ready made language that they can use to legitimise their studies but has in the process served to subvert grounded theory, resulting in complexifying a simple methodology (Glaser, 2003). In recent writings there have been attempts to reclaim and emphasise the conceptual nature of grounded theory in order to counter the re-writing of the methodology (Glaser, 2003) by reclaiming and emphasising this erosion of the method. A positive challenge for classical grounded theorists is the generation of formal theory.

The Grounded Theory Review (2007), Special Issue

Currently there are very few examples of such development. This will have the effect of further developing this underrated potential of the method as well as emphasising its conceptual nature, helping to differentiate it from qualitative methodologies.

In my own profession of nursing, grounded theory has been very influential being the second most popular qualitative research method used (Morse, 2001). When I first started my PhD, I was influenced by a sociologist who directed me to read social constructionism. It was only later that my supervisor suggested that my area of study might be better served by using GT. While reading **Discovery**, I realised that this method was unlike the grounded theory that I had been taught during methods classes. This highlights the importance of reading primary sources. Initially I found **Discovery** a sometimes difficult read. This may be because (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) were intent on stating their position rather than providing clear-cut procedures. Also Glaser (1998) admits that some of his writings can be dense and difficult to understand! I read other papers on the methodology, but while they helped me to understand GT, they seemed to me to deviate from how it was originated. I read studies that were based on the work of Strauss and Corbin but they were largely descriptive and some were critical as this particular interpretation of GT generated too many categories. Having read **Theoretical Sensitivity** I dipped in and to of **Discovery** during my period of study. It helped me greatly to understand GT and is a book that I continue to read. It keeps me focused on GT's conceptual nature and its power for generating theory. There is no doubt that **Discovery** requires persistence and study in order to fully appreciate it as the seminal text of GT. In using classical GT, I found that it liberated me from the difficult and sometimes circular debate about realism versus relativism that is central to understanding social constructionism. I was attracted by its pragmatic approach, its emphasis on discovery rather than on issues of ontology and epistemology. The idea of understanding and conceptualising the main concern of participants appealed to me. The method was very well suited to the real world of nursing and the issue I was researching.

The Grounded Theory Review (2007), Special Issue

There is no doubt that **Discovery** has made a unique contribution to advancing research methodologies. In making explicit how the “Awareness” study was done, it ensured the discovery of a new methodology. There was nothing like it previously and as a result it was at the forefront of the qualitative revolution (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). It was simply a new and very different way of thinking and researching. As a result, qualitative methodology was advanced at a time when it was dominated by the positivist paradigm and provided credibility to a largely discredited methodology. Its influence has extended far beyond sociology into such diverse areas as business, management, medicine and nursing. Moreover, it continues to be the basis for the refinement and extension of classical grounded theory. Personally, it delivered on its promise of guiding me from when I entered the field until I left, with a study that was original, ensuring that I was able to generate a theory of relevance and significance. With the challenge to generate formal theories from substantive ones and further explication of its use with quantitative data, the full potential of GT is at last being realised. It has made such an impact that it is impossible to visualise a world without **Discovery**.

-- November 10, 2007

Author:

Tom Andrews, Ph.D.
School of Nursing and Midwifery
University College Cork, IRL
Email: t.andrews@ucc.ie

The Grounded Theory Review (2007), Special Issue

References

- Charmaz, K. (1995). Grounded Theory. In: Smith, J., Harre, R., and Van Langehove, L. (Eds.), *Rethinking Methods in Psychology*. Sage, London.
- Charmaz, K. (2000). Grounded theory objectivist and constructivist method. In: Denzin, N. and Lincon, Y. (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Sage Publications, Thousand Oakes, pp. 509-535.
- Denzin, N. and Lincon, Y. (1994). Introduction. In: Denzin, N. and Lincon, Y. (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, pp. 1-17.
- Glaser, B. (1978). *Theoretical Sensitivity: Advances in the methodology of grounded theory*. Sociology Press, Mill Valley, CA.
- Glaser, B. (1998). *Doing Grounded Theory: Issues and discussions*. Sociology Press, Mill Valley, CA.
- Glaser, B. (2003). *The Grounded Theory Perspective II: Description's remodelling of grounded theory methodology*. Sociology Press, Mill Valley, CA.
- Glaser, B. (2007). *Doing Formal Grounded Theory: A proposal*. Sociology Press, Mill Valley, CA.
- Glaser, B. and Strauss, A. (1967). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Aldine De Gruyter, New York.
- Morse, J. (2001). Introduction. In: Schreiber, R. and Stern, P. (Eds.), *Using Grounded Theory in Nursing*. Springer Publishing Company Inc., New York, pp. xvi-xvii.
- Stern, P. and Covan, E. (2001). Early Grounded Theory: Its Processes and Procedures. In: Schreiber, R. and Stern, P. (Eds.), *Using Grounded Theory in Nursing*. Springer Publishing Company, New York.
- Strauss, A. and Corbin, J. (1994). Grounded Theory Methodology. In: Denzin, N. and Lincon, Y. (Eds.),

The Grounded Theory Review (2007), Special Issue

Handbook of Qualitative Research. Sage Publications,
Thousand Oakes, pp. 273-285.

In Honour of Barney Glaser: A man of many contrasts – innovator, mentor, and snappy dresser!

Antoinette M. McCallin, Ph.D.

I first met Barney Glaser in 1996 at one of the earliest troubleshooting meetings at the University of Canterbury in Christchurch, New Zealand. About forty people from all over New Zealand, plus a couple of Australians attended that meeting. People had travelled very long distances for the privilege of hearing one of the originators of grounded theory speak about the methodology, and how it should be used.

A couple of memories stand out for me. The first was the revelation that Dr Barney Glaser, the author of the seminal works on grounded theory, was such a snappy dresser! He was beautifully turned out, arriving one day in a warm rose cashmere pullover, and beautifully cut traditional dark blue blazer and slacks. The outfit on the second day was the country tweed theme and was just as exquisite. The man looked magnificent! And, while it might be argued that Carolyn's unfailing eye for design and beauty was evident there, what surprised me most was how well he had read the context of the day. As an old Cantabrian, brought up Christchurch, I had been well schooled in the "correct" behaviour and dress, as per the norms and values handed on down from the first four ships that arrived in New Zealand with English settlers for a new colony and a city that was to become more English than the English itself. Barney read that social context unerringly. That picture contrasts with another view of Barney seen on a recent trip to San Francisco earlier this year. Encountering Barney on his home territory was rather different. One day I was sitting in the hotel lobby when a little red mini, the latest model I believe, zipped into the car park, and out leapt a man in what can only be described as "comfortable" grey sweats. Yes, Barney Glaser no less, sporting the "relaxed look", as was appropriate in California and Mill Valley, where he informed me, most people work from home.

The Grounded Theory Review (2007), Special Issue

You may well ask what this has to do with the more serious topic of classic grounded theory. It possibly reflects Barney Glaser's innate ability to change with the times, adapt sensitively to the context, and to read what is needed in any situation. When that is combined with an insightful personality, a tireless energy, and the willingness to share his expertise nationally and internationally, the calibre and sheer magnitude of this man begins to emerge. Barney's ongoing questioning and lively critique of the world we live in is perhaps typical of the inquiring mind that asked so many questions about traditional research methods in the 1960s. This was trail-blazing work at a time when long-standing research approaches did not explain the practical realities of a rapidly changing socio-cultural context.

Producing **The Discovery of Grounded Theory** forty years ago, and articulating strategies for qualitative researchers to develop theoretical explanations of the world, was ground breaking in a scientific world where positivism dominated. Since then grounded theory has become the most used qualitative methodology internationally. Barney's commitment to travelling the world and his willingness to work with novice grounded theorists everywhere, to coach researchers to develop a clear, unadulterated understanding of grounded theory, is impressive. The message is simple: Move beyond description! Conceptualise! Conceptualise! Conceptualise! Trust in emergence!

As a workshop attendee, several things stand out about Barney Glaser. Firstly, his unpretentiousness about who he is, always makes an impression. Newcomers to a workshop often enter nervously, shy about being "in the presence of the great man". Barney unfailingly puts people at their ease, working alongside individuals respectfully, recognising just how far to challenge, always gentle, forever patient. Secondly, Barney's ongoing enthusiasm for classic grounded theory never flags, and is integrated with a thoughtful sensitivity to the struggles of students often working in isolation in remote areas of the globe. Encouragement is offered, tempered with a deep wisdom about human nature, and a quick sense of humour to lighten the situation, if needs be. The result is that those of us who

The Grounded Theory Review (2007), Special Issue

have been fortunate enough to attend workshops come away feeling empowered to follow the methodology, to learn more about the methodological challenges, and overall, to develop ourselves as rigorous researchers, generating knowledge as it was intended all those years ago in 1967.

Returning from whence we began - when I met Barney Glaser in 1996, he signed my copy of **Theoretical Sensitivity** with the caption “To Antoinette, who *feels* the method!” Apparently, my face is somewhat expressive, and shows interest, excitement, not to mention “time for a break” and “where’s the coffee?” Unknowingly, I had been the responsiveness gage for the group, helping Barney pace his workshop. As he continues to “pace” classic grounded theory development people like myself, welcome the chance to join with other like-minded researchers, to gather together in hotels, lobby’s, pubs, in all manner of eating places, on the Internet of course, not to mention airport lounges, and even airport shuttles, happy to settle down for a discussion of what has come to be known as “GT”. In many diverse settings, with people from different countries we share our insights, experiences, trials and tribulations, so we can all move forward as worthy representatives of our mentor, Dr Barney Glaser. I for one have come a long way in the last decade. Two grounded theories later, pluralistic dialoguing and humanistic guidance I have finally learned how to conceptualise! The next challenge is formal theory development. *Feeling* the method has been fun, exciting, and challenging, it has opened up the creative part of scholarliness that I did not expect to find in research. I do not think any of that would have been possible without the inspiration from Barney himself. On behalf of all New Zealand grounded theorists, I salute you and thank you for your original contribution to science.

-- November 11, 2007

Author:

Antoinette M. McCallin, Ph.D., RN
Head of Research, Division of Health Care Practice
Faculty of Health and Environmental Sciences
AUT University, Auckland, New Zealand
Email: amccalli@aut.ac.nz

Tribute to Barney Glaser

Mark Rosenbaum, Ph.D.

If one understands the tenets of Glaserian grounded theory, then one understands the process of knowledge creation. Indeed, the greatest “seed” that Barney Glaser implanted in my mind is that knowledge is not created via empirical verification, but rather, it is simply validated as being extant. When researchers combine theory A and theory B, to generate a new relationship, which I’ll refer to latent variable C, they are not creating knowledge—they are merely verifying what is already known. Even if one wants to argue that latent variable C is novel, then consider this reality. Consider the situation when a researcher states that Author A developed theory A and that Author B developed theory B. This author, Author C, argues that knowledge was created because s/he thought it novel to simultaneously draw upon Authors A & B to create theory C. Had Author A and B met for lunch, then Author C would have no reason to exist. Researchers who combine extant theories may create a “better recipe,” however; these researchers are falling prey to “theoretical capitalism.” As Glaser would say, theoretical capitalism provides researchers with a false sense of security and with research that lacks theoretical grab. Author C is simply verifying what is already known—*interesting but boring*.

Grounded theory is a methodology that should be utilized by researchers who want to be original and who have the intellectual stamina to offer respective disciplines original theoretical ideas that may be controversial. A grounded theorist does not relish the comfort of drawing upon extant works in the hopes of yielding a minor contribution or of finding new correlations between established theories. A grounded theorist is a risk taker who believes that s/he can generate original knowledge by offering the discipline novel theories that not only organize a set of disparate articles but also transcend them. A grounded theorist offers the world theoretical frameworks that grab attention from researchers in a variety of

The Grounded Theory Review (2007), Special Issue

fields as well as research propositions that can be empirical verified in future or current studies.

Indeed, I can personally attest to the fact that researchers from America, Philippines, and Singapore have personally asked me whether they can develop scales for my “Theory of Third Places” and whether they can verify my theory in future studies. On the one hand, I’m honored that my grounded theory has garnered international attention. On the other, I cannot help to think that these researchers are merely validating the theory in other contexts. Rather than validate my theory, I try to encourage researchers to transcend it or to expand my substantive theory to a general theory. In fact, one of my students applied my theory to her hospital and developed an off-site “third place” for Hispanic women that combines coffee and medical knowledge. Clearly, taking a grounded theory to a new context, to a new population, and to offer new dependent relationships to the core category, is more original and transcendental than creating scale items for a proposed theory (interest vs. boredom).

I salute Barney Glaser for teaching me how to create knowledge and how to transcend original thought. I salute him for teaching me to be aware of falling prey to theoretical capitalism and to assume the challenges inherent in creating new knowledge. I salute him for teaching me how to use theoretical grab to create interesting theories. I salute him for giving me the courage to generate novel frameworks that organize disparate works, but, more importantly, which transcend extant knowledge. I salute him for teaching me how to understand the movement from theoretical induction to theoretical verification. Lastly, I salute Barney Glaser for helping me become a successful academic.

Author:

Mark S. Rosenbaum, Ph.D.
Northern Illinois University
College of Business, Department of Marketing
DeKalb, IL
Email: mrosenbaum@niu.edu

Atmosphering for Learning

Astrid Gynnild, Ph.D.

When reflecting on the impact of Barney Glaser and classic GT, the first concept that comes to mind is Barney's own "atmosphering". And I think I'd like to add "for learning". After studying Barney Glaser's GT books, going to many GT-seminars and getting to know Barney personally, it strikes me that atmosphering for learning is a continuous challenge when exploring the potentials of the methodology. The more I learn, the more humble I get towards this, in many ways, "taken-for-granted" aspect of doing research.

Atmosphering for learning concerns both the researcher and the researchees involved in a study, and also students and the audience. Atmosphering for learning is about toning, creating a mood in oneself and others that opens up for new ways of seeing, hearing and experiencing. The great challenge is for the researcher to create a climate that makes everybody feel well to the extent that they too let go of presuppositions, scepticism, anxiety and other thoughts that block free thinking. Consequently, atmosphering for learning also concerns research credibility, relevance and fit. It's a way of building up trust in relations and a way of establishing full contact with others in a minimum of time. In one way, the four levels of data operant in grounded theory simply reflect the researcher's closeness to his human sources. Thereby, feedback is also provided about the researcher's own atmosphering skills.

Atmosphering for learning includes writing and teaching as well as informal face-to-face-settings. Since Barney long ago has identified many facets of atmosphering, I will restrict myself to four aspects of his embodied seminar approach that have been particularly important to me. These are aspects that are transferable to all arenas of life where the goal is to connect trustingly with others.

The first is informal socializing as a warm-up to hard and concentrated work. Informal socializing can for instance be done by inviting people out for dinner the day before the

The Grounded Theory Review (2007), Special Issue

formalized part of the event starts. The second is the use of warm-hearted irony, in Barney's own terms reversal humor. Approaching people with reversal humor is quite a risky business, actually. But when you succeed, it's an incredible mind opener because it creates a feeling of being on the same wavelength, of being understood and having something special in common. Reversal humor is both intensifying and relaxing. It certainly keeps you awake and in particular, it provokes reflection.

The third aspect that fascinates me is the dressing down approach. I remember the first time I actually met Barney Glaser face to face. He was wearing an old college sweater, a pair of Levi's jeans and grey jogging shoes. I'm not sure what I had expected beforehand but there is little doubt that the dressing down code contributes to demystifying a person's expertise, talent and fame. Symbolically, the relaxed dress code signals that in spite of exceptional research contributions, Barney's still one of "us" so students don't have to keep themselves back; and since he is trustable, they can open up. Dressing down also demonstrates that doing research of importance doesn't depend neither on a specific dress code nor need it be done only within traditional organizational frames; it can be done anywhere, on a smaller or larger scale by all kinds of people, as long as they are abstract thinkers who know how to conceptualize.

I'd also like to mention the practicing of inclusiveness – "there is no such thing as a silly question", and the practicing of caring curiosity and supportive clarity. As Barney says himself, he easily gets along with people. He is concerned about helping as many students as possible getting their GT PhDs and does so by being open and direct and clear. Nobody should be in doubt about his opinion!

On a walking-survey-level of analysis, I believe that Barney's main concern is contributing to spreading classic grounded theory methodology all over the globe, in all ways possible, in order to help people grow and raise their levels of skill and understanding, and thereby developing society as a whole. The good will that radiates through all his professional

The Grounded Theory Review (2007), Special Issue

work is supported by a lifelong devotion to idealistic research values, manifested through non-profit books, seminars, individual supervising and the running of the website.

His liveliness and playfulness displays itself side by side with empathetic curiosity, serious research efficiency, and an inner motivation so thoroughly grounded that the methodology is taken a step further for every new book, which in practice means almost every year. The quick switching between modes and roles makes Barney an intuitive expert in theoretical discovery as well as exploration and development.

In my view, most of his talents are synthesized in an atmospherer for learning approach to tasks and people. After 40 years of GT and hundreds of new theories I think we may say that the recipe has proven to be quite successful!

-- November 20, 2007

Author:

Astrid Gynnild, Ph.D.

Associate Professor and Head of Department

Centre for Relational Development

Bergen, NO

Email: agynnild@gmail.com

The Flocking Process

Walter D. Fernández, Ph.D.

We all know of Barney Glaser's brilliance and academic contribution; however, in this brief note, I would like to reflect on some of the properties that enabled a brilliant person like him to become the great person he is.

My first real encounter with Barney Glaser was over a short number of emails. I was then finishing my PhD dissertation for which I adopted the classic grounded theory methodology and I had a question for him. Of that particular interaction I would like to highlight the manner in which Barney Glaser responded to my query. Not only was Glaser kind, understanding and reassuring, he also displayed his immense generosity by volunteering to review my methodology chapter. I felt honoured and also a bit anxious; I was one of those PhD candidates who "learned" the method from books and convincing my advisers of the virtues of grounded theory was *interesting*, to say the least. My first exchange with the master was a crucial and very positive experience from which I received far more than a technical answer to a question. Glaser gave me the confidence to complete and defend my dissertation and a practical lesson in collegiality. However, it would take some time before I was able to see a pattern in his actions, a discovery that occurred during my second significant encounter with Glaser.

Our second meeting was in Mill Valley, California, in 2005. I was invited to observe one of Glaser's great "troubleshooting workshops" and jumped at the opportunity. After the workshop, I wrote that the seminar was a truly remarkable experience "where people who are passionate and learned about the grounded theory method enacted an instance of a *flocking process*." We were researchers from many different fields, a truly cross-disciplinary group of scientists from different continents. Yet, these differences were irrelevant, we were united by a way of thinking and doing research, we had the common language and rituals of the

The Grounded Theory Review (2007), Special Issue

grounded theory method. Sharing our beliefs, experiences and values made us a flock. The flocking process is a *becoming process* where people form a single congregation in relation to their teacher-pastor.

Glaser was the “pastor” of the flock, playing a pivotal role in the flocking process. As the properties of the pastor emerged, we could see Barney Glaser as a gentle, good humoured, wise person who combines a brilliant intellect with the best of human nature and kindness. Barney Glaser is the ultimate teacher, to whom we are indebted not only because of his discovery, with Strauss, all those years ago, but because he is the core variable that makes the process possible.

Grounded evidence of the flocking process exists in my data. For example, reflecting on the seminar, Antoinette McCallin stated that she felt specially privileged as “part of the international grounded theory community of scholars” and that the experience “was like coming home to my research family.” Antoinette’s sentiment was echoed in correspondence from every participant. Being part of the *family*, sharing values, concepts and approaches unifies the flock. Furthermore, the concept of family is linked to two other important elements, identified as key enabler in this brief theory of scholarly flocking: *generosity* and *humility*.

After comparing evidence from this core event with evidence from previous and subsequent grounded theory events, I can assert without trepidation that the theme of *generosity* runs strongly not only in Barney Glaser but also in his family and in the grounded theory community. Glaser teaches us that generosity coupled with humility allows us to learn and teach, to remain open to evidence and to try to understand *what is going on*. In other words, the ability to put aside preconception demands both generosity and humility.

We know that words are important teaching tools and they are necessary, but also that they are not sufficient to teach generosity or humility. What makes Barney Glaser such a great teacher of uncommon concepts is the power of enhancing his well-timed words with the absolute congruence of his actions. Barney Glaser is grounded theory enacted; after forty

The Grounded Theory Review (2007), Special Issue

years he remains open and committed to a way of investigating reality, to teach and to learn. His commitment, his generosity and his humility make the flocking process possible, benefiting our research community and helping us to try to understand what is going on in our lives.

Reflecting on the workshop allowed me to think about the properties I admire in Barney Glaser, the great teacher of our diverse flock. After that week in Mill Valley I returned to Australia reinvigorated and enlightened by this friendly and smiling sage, who can simultaneously be a recognized figure of the 20th century's sociology and the most humble and charming of human beings.

-- November 12, 2007

Author:

Walter Fernández, Ph.D.

Co-Director, National Centre for Information Systems Research

School of Accounting and Business Information Systems

ANU College of Business and Economics

The Australian National University, Canberra, ACT 0200

Email: walter.fernandez@anu.edu.au

Thank You for the Method

I'm nothing special, in fact I'm a bit of a bore,
If I tell a joke, you've probably heard it before.
But I generate grounded theory,
It fits and it works and it's relevant too.
I'm so grateful and proud,
All I want is to sing it out loud, so I say...

Refrain:

Thank you for the method, for Grounded Theory,
Thanks for all the joy it's bringing.
Who can live without it, I ask in all honesty,
What would life be, without a method to use what are we.
So I say thank you for discovering and giving it to me.

I know a method I trust in and it's not a bore,
When you start to use it, you need to go strait to the core.
And if you have wondered, how did it all start?
Who found out that nothing can capture a heart
Like a grounded theory?
Well, it's Barney and I am a fan, so I say...

Refrain:

Thank you for the method, for Grounded Theory,
Thanks for all the joy it's bringing.
Who can live without it, I ask in all honesty,
What would life be, without a method to use what are we.
So I say thank you for discovering and giving it to me.

Melody: *Thank You for the Music* by ABBA. Lyrics adapted and sung by Pernilla Pergert (Ph.D. Candidate, Karolinska Institute, Stockholm, Sweden) at a special tribute dinner for Barney Glaser, at Clos Maggiore, Covent Garden, London, April 24, 2007. Special thanks to Bjorn Ulvaeus for granting us permission to print this piece (in conversation, Covent Garden Hotel, April 26, 2007).

