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From the Editor

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The Grounded Theory Review

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From the Editor

This issue of the Review combines a strong focus on classic grounded theory methodology with our continued practice of featuring the work of novice grounded theorists. We begin the issue with a classic paper from Discovery, the seminal work of Glaser and Strauss (1967). **Theoretical Elaboration of Quantitative Data**, authored by Dr. Glaser, has been largely ignored by those who prefer to assign grounded theory to the qualitative paradigm. This paper, however, truly sets GT apart as a general methodology and not solely the purview of qualitative researchers. A careful reading may help to diffuse the persistent rhetorical wrestle that has developed through the fervent efforts of qualitative researchers to shape GT to the malleable boundaries and endlessly flexible designs that seem to define the qualitative research paradigm. As such, the QDA remodellers may have to rethink their conception of GT as simply a menu of method bits to be selected and combined as desired to produce, at best, conceptual description.

It is particularly interesting to note that Glaser speaks here of relaxing the rules of the quantitative paradigm to enable the generation of GT whereas the exact opposite has happened with the qualitative paradigm where the procedural package of classic GT has been so relaxed as to have effectively undermined the rigour of the methodology. This, of course, simply serves to emphasize the position of GT as occupying its own paradigm situated between the two traditional research paradigms.

Practically speaking, using quantitative data to do classic GT opens a vast realm of data to social scientists seeking to generate empirically grounded conceptual theory. It facilitates the process of analysis and conceptualization by offering a vast bank of conceptual indicators that have already been collected, organized and initially analyzed. As data collection is expensive

as well as highly time-consuming, learning how to work with extant caches of data can accelerate and densify conceptual elaboration in many studies. It may also encourage further scholarship among experienced GT researchers eager to further develop their analytic skill by learning to work with quantitative indices as their source of data.

Reading this leaves one wondering how anyone can continue to maintain that GT is a qualitative method - perhaps only out of ignorance of this important early work by Barney Glaser. It most certainly illustrates that GT cannot be confined to the qualitative paradigm but offers the same generative potential for conceptual theorization to quantitative research. Furthermore, it underscores the need for Glaser to write the book on doing quantitative GT!

The frequent misinterpretations and remodelled variations of grounded theory are the focus of Olavur Christiansen's paper (**A Simpler Understanding of Classic GT: How it is a fundamentally different methodology**). In seeking to offer a simpler explanation, Christiansen focuses attention on what he terms the "essential elements" of classic GT – the suspension of preconceived professional concerns in service to the emergence of what is really going on in the substantive field of study and the processing of this main concern through an emergent theoretical code as the core variable of the theory. He proceeds to detail how systematic adherence to these fundamental methodological principles through the application of the procedural package of classic GT produces a fundamentally different methodology than that commonly espoused as grounded theory within the qualitative research community where such requirements as extensive engagement with the literature, establishment of a preconceived theoretical framework from extant theory, interview protocols, etc. restrict and prevent the potential for theoretical emergence that is truly grounded in the data.

PhD candidate Naomi Elliott's paper (**Mutual Intacting: A grounded theory of clinical judgment in advanced practice in nursing**) offers a theory of the process by which clinical practitioners in community care settings work to assess

and adapt treatment so as not to jeopardize the patient-practitioner relationship, thereby keeping the relationship intact and in line with the patient's circumstances and needs. While Naomi's study is focused on clinical practice in community care, it holds general implications for the standard problem of goal oriented application. It proposes to explain how one determines the best application to goal when working within the constraints of what has to be applied and what the recipient of the application will allow, needs, and can tolerate.

To conclude this issue, we return to our focus on exploring the methodological development of classic GT. Two members of our Peer Review Editorial team – Alvita Nathaniel and Tom Andrews - offer their reviews of Dr. Glaser's latest book, **Doing Formal Grounded Theory** (2007). While many of us still struggle to master our skills in generating good substantive GT, Glaser challenges us to broaden our horizons by considering the many good substantive GTs "ready to be broadened and generalized into a FGT" (Glaser, 2007, p.1). After forty years of diligent scholarship on his part, his call begs our considered attention and scholarship!

- Judith A. Holton, Ph.D.