



Notes on the Forward to the Electronic Version of *Doing Grounded Theory: Issues and Discussions*

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In 2022 after the passing of Dr. Barney Glaser, the Glaser family gathered an international group of classic grounded theorists, who were mentored by Glaser, to offer advice on how to best honor the co-founder of grounded theory and also to perpetuate and promote the methodology. Until this point, Glaser's books were available only in paperback form, having been self-published and distributed by Glaser through his publishing company, Sociology Press. So, in order to make his books more accessible in the electronic age, the group accepted the challenge of developing digital versions of Glaser's books. After a laborious process, several of the books were converted to a format and platform that has allowed painstaking copyediting. Editing of the electronic editions included correction of typos and other errors noticed in the self-published editions. At the writing of this note, two books are imminently ready for electronic publication: *Theoretical Sensitivity: Advances in the Methodology of Grounded Theory* (1978) and *Doing Grounded Theory: Issues and Discussions* (1998). *The Grounded Theory Perspective III: Theoretical Coding* (2005) is also nearing completion. The books should be available in Kindle versions in early to mid-2025.

Reprinted with permission, the Forward to the electronic edition of *Doing Grounded Theory* (below) offers a special look at the evolution and development of *Theoretical Sensitivity* as

well as *Doing Grounded Theory* as described by the Glaser, himself, through his words in the books and also through the words of some of his closest mentees. Special thanks for the electronic versions of these books go to David Johnston, who tirelessly worked to transfer the physical books onto a digital platform and format the copyedited text; to Tina Johnston for her advice and assistance; and to Barney Glaser's children, Bonne, Lila, Jillian, and Barney Jr. for their advice, contributions, and consent.

Forward

We present here the electronic edition of *Doing Grounded Theory: Issues and Discussions*, published in paperback by Dr. Barney Glaser in 1998. Although Dr. Glaser had published more than a dozen papers, monographs, and books as a single author and seven with Anselm Strauss, *Doing Grounded Theory* is considered one of the foundational books that illuminates the method. Glaser's grounded theory oeuvre approaches 50 scholarly works and spans nearly a half century from 1963 until 2019. At the original writing of most of his works, Dr. Glaser had not imagined all the possibilities of written electronic media. The original books were self-published and distributed by Glaser's publishing company, Sociology Press. The purpose of this electronic edition of *Doing Grounded Theory*, along with others of his books, is to ensure that primary sources of classic grounded theory become widely available to contemporary students and scholars. This edition also corrects typos and other copyediting problems that are noticeable in the original book. The words and ideas have not been altered.

In 1965 Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss published *Awareness of Dying*, the first of several theories derived from their study of dying in the hospital setting. In 1967, they changed the research landscape with their seminal work, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory:*

Strategies for Qualitative Research, a book that first described the grounded theory methodology that was developed during the dying study. *Discovery* depicted it as “a theory about a method.” It was only ever meant to be a starting point for grounded theory, and in many ways can be regarded as a polemic because it challenged the dominant research discourse of the time. Glaser and Strauss’s research on the dying process eventually culminated in their partnership on three books: *Awareness of Dying* (Glaser & Strauss, 1965a), *Time for Dying* (Glaser & Strauss, 1968), and *Anguish: The Case History of a Dying Trajectory* (Strauss & Glaser, 1970) as well as a number of academic papers including *The Social Loss of Dying Patients* (Glaser & Strauss, 1964), *Temporal Aspects of Dying as a Non-Scheduled Status Passage* (Glaser & Strauss, 1965b), and *The Purpose and Credibility of Qualitative Research* (Glaser & Strauss, 1966). Together, they also published *Status Passage*, (Glaser & Strauss, 1971) and *Chronic Illness and Quality of Life* (Strauss & Glaser, 1975).

Although Glaser and Strauss continued to develop the methodology and published theories for a decade after *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, material that described development of the method over the intervening years was only available to their students. Through those years, Glaser remained laser focused on the grounded theory methodology. Odis Simmons, a student, close friend, and eventual colleague noted that Dr. Glaser was always open to learning from the words and experiences of his students and grounded theory colleagues (Simmons, 2022). Indeed, he was continually writing memos derived from his student seminars and academic discussions with colleagues at the University of California at San Francisco. Simmons wrote, “As he taught his students, whenever and wherever he got an idea for a memo he jotted it down and filled it out later.” As Dr. Glaser worked with students, he discovered more and more about how grounded theory works. Students’ research

provided empirical data and allowed him to create a richness of the “methodological theory,” ironically verifying the theory of the method.

So, in response to a need to further refine, articulate, and elaborate the method, Dr. Glaser sorted those memos and in 1978 he wrote, *Theoretical Sensitivity: Advances in the Methodology of Grounded Theory*. When Dr. Glaser finished the book, Simmons recognized the many ideas they had discussed over the years, moving beyond *Discovery* and filling the new book with ideas he developed independently of Strauss. Indeed, the contribution of Simmons is acknowledged throughout the book under the name “Bigus.” Strauss, who was second author of most of their collaborations, would not write about the methodology until 1987, 22 years after the publication of *Awareness of Dying*. Simmons, who was a student of both Glaser and Strauss and has fond memories of both, believes that Strauss didn’t clearly understand Glaser’s work and regressed with his understandings about grounded theory. Learning Glaser’s and Strauss’s understanding of grounded theory separately enabled Simmons to discern their divergences (Simmons, 2022). Because Strauss’s version departed from the original, the methodology as described in *Discovery* and *Theoretical Sensitivity* became known as classic grounded theory.

In 1994, it came as a surprise to Dr. Glaser that the use of grounded theory had swept the globe with researchers interested in high impact dependent variables such as learning, pain, cures, and profit. Grounded theory was being used in the fields of sociology, health sciences, education, business management, and marketing—disciplines that were dealing with vital and relevant problems. Researchers were looking for a methodology that gave them practical answers that fit, worked, were relevant, and easily modifiable to constantly changing conditions. As with his students in years past, Dr. Glaser met with researchers who had

used the method, learning from them and trying to shed light on methodological issues they had encountered.

Consequently, it became Dr. Glaser’s “self-appointed task” to listen to these researchers, recognizing that grounded theory’s future was in the hands of those new to social research. His goal was to learn from their experiences and to further illuminate the theory as it was originally envisioned. By the 1990s, he had also seen that the popularity and swift global spread of grounded theory had engendered misuse, which itself “breeds further misuse” (Gutherie & Lowe, 2011). Thus, Dr. Glaser wrote *Doing Grounded Theory*. He built this book upon the earlier works, especially *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), *Basics of Grounded Theory Analysis* (Glaser, 1992), and *Theoretical Sensitivity* (Glaser, 1978) and added newer insights and explanatory illustrations. Dr. Glaser called out falsely legitimizing labels and revisionist versions, while acknowledging the limitations of grounded theory. Rather than promoting grounded theory methodology as more than what it was ever intended to be, he reiterated that a grounded theory is simply a set of integrated conceptual hypotheses systematically generated from substantive data, which presents the world with explanations, rather than verification.

In *Doing Grounded Theory*, Dr. Glaser brought forth the enjoyment that researchers can derive from discovering a grounded theory, one in which researchers doing grounded theory commit themselves to a future of handling complex substantive problems. He extolled researchers, particularly PhD students, to avoid self-conscious babble, premature perspectives, fighting windmills, and justifying the method. Instead, he counseled them to find joy in discovery of “high-impact variables that succinctly yet eloquently explain experienced reality” (Holton, 2019).

Classic grounded theory has continued to sweep the globe, reportedly becoming the most frequently used method in qualitative research (Gynnild & Martin, 2011). Therefore, it is with our humble gratitude to Dr. Barney Glaser, an untiring mentor and teacher to so many, and to his family, who continues to support his work, that we offer this carefully edited edition of *Doing Grounded Theory*.

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Declaration of Conflicting Interests: The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding: The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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