



**From the Editor's Desk:  
Description and Classic Grounded Theory**

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I'm most probably dating myself now, but many years ago, there was a popular group, Tears for Fears, who sang a rather famous song. With respect to the group, I would like to modify one of the lyrics of the song to be appropriate for grounded theory: Description "wants to rule the world" (Tears for Fears, 1985, Chorus). As Barney Glaser often stated, description, as such, isn't a bad thing (Glaser, 2002); but we need to remember that "descriptions run the world" (Glaser, 2002, p. 24). Because it has such a stronghold on all people, as classic grounded theory scholars and students of the design, we need to be mindful of this idea. I would like to talk about why descriptions do not fit in with classic grounded theory. Broadly speaking, there are two tightly linked reasons a researcher is very strongly discouraged from description in classic grounded theory. Description is not generalizable, and the information is not conceptualized.

To address the first reason, I would like to talk about classic grounded theories in general. Following the tenets of classic grounded theory, we researchers know that information needs to be conceptual in nature, even though we are looking at a specific group of people during a specific period of time. More specifically, according to Glaser (1998), "conceptual generality [rather than] unit generality" (Glaser, 1998, p. 125) is needed so the information is not tied to a given time, place, or person (Glaser, 2007). When we describe things, we are tying the description to a given group of people, time, and/or location. The theory must last forever and not be exclusively tied to a place, person, or time (Glaser, 2012). While that information may be

valuable and highly informational, it would not be considered a theory developed using classic grounded theory. There is great value in presenting what Glaser (2001) had stated: "Perhaps the most important aspect of conceptualization is that concepts last forever, descriptions are stale dated" (p. 15).

Second, descriptions are not conceptualized information. Consider this sentence, used here as data: "I experienced a high degree of anxiety when I was required to talk with a large audience during my graduate course involving public speaking last year." I will first create a descriptive code and then a more conceptual code. The first code would be "high degree of anxiety due to public speaking." While the idea may be good, it is focused on a specific environment and not beyond people, time, or place (Glaser, 2012). As such, it would not be an acceptable code (though, I suppose, initially it might be OK), but it is "stale dated" (Glaser, 2001, p. 15) and based solely on a specific public speaking experience. A more conceptual code might be "feeling anxious" or perhaps "having anxiety." In this way, with a more conceptualized code, it rises, so to speak, above a specific person, period of time, or location.

Given how prevalent descriptions are in the world, becoming proficient in conceptualization takes time, practice, and (often) a different mindset. Such a shift in mindset requires effort on the part of the researcher or student, as conceptualization does not always come as easily and naturally as one might wish. Start slowly and simply; ask yourself how a given idea might be transformed from descriptive to conceptual.

We can apply the idea of viewing something with a different mindset to so many other aspects of our lives. I will let you, the readers, determine the applicability in your own lives. But I do want to assure you that developing a conceptual mindset is a valuable skill to have not only in classic grounded theory but also in our own everyday lives.

We, at the *Grounded Theory Review*, are pleased to offer a number of fine articles in this edition. The first article was written by Elisabet Tiselius, Johanna Granhagen Jungner, and Pernilla Pergert, entitled “Translating Behind the Scenes: An Observational Study on Language Barriers in Childhood Cancer Care.” During cancer care, the authors wrote, linguistic barriers may risk “the quality of care and patient safety” (Abstract). In this classic grounded theory study, the aim “was to explore social patterns of communication across language barriers” (Abstract). The second article is by Kara L. Vander Linden concerning a methodology-specific rubric for Glaserian classic grounded theory. In this paper, Vander Linden presented a clear and important direction for researchers using classic grounded theory based on the following “7 categories: (1) methodological clarity, (2) role of the researcher, (3) literature review, (4) problem, purpose, and research question, (5) data collection & theoretical sampling, (6) data analysis, and (7) theory write-up” (Abstract).

Our third article is by Charles Domician, entitled “The Proposed Formal Grounded Theory of Fishmining: Lack of Trust and Inadequate Multistakeholder Governance Drive Resources’ Unsustainability.” In this fascinating study, Domician discussed “ways Tanzanian and European fisheries actors solve and resolve their main concern given the persistently ongoing unsustainability occurrences in the management and exploitation of fisheries resources” (Abstract).

Our next article is by Odis Simmons entitled “Using Grounded Theory in Managing Diversity Context.” In his article, Simmons discussed how the application of classic grounded theory and some of its core tenets may be used to develop effective and substantial theories that are “applicable in real-world diversity contexts” (Abstract).

The fifth article we present is by Helen Scott, entitled “Sampling in Grounded Theory.” While qualitative research has a number of sampling techniques, grounded theory has theoretical sampling. According to Scott, “we analyse data, questions arise, gaps in the theory are noticed and we theoretically sample for particular data to address those questions and gaps” (Abstract). Thus, in grounded theory, there is a focus on making theoretical not logical decisions, as Scott explained.

The sixth article is by Barry Chametzky, entitled “Doing Classic Grounded Theory with Quantitative Data. Chametzky explained that there is very limited extent literature in which authors have used quantitative data and classic grounded theory. Thus, a high need exists for this article. With some fictitious data, Chametzky explained how to code such data. Once codes are created, the commonly accepted steps of classic grounded theory one would use with qualitative data become applicable.

For the seventh article, Dawn Reid White, Tim A. White, and Kara L. Vander Linden wrote about *Emerging from Grief: The Theory of Care Realignment.*” In this article, the authors addressed an important element: how spousal caregivers deal with the redefinition of life and themselves after their partner has passed away. In the multistep process about which the authors discussed, caregivers learn to rebuild themselves in various ways while they grieve.

Finally, for our eighth article, we offer a reprint of Barney Glaser’s article entitled “Reading and Using the Literature.” According to Glaser, an important grounded theory dictum is that “there is a need not to review any of the literature in substantive areas under study” (p. 147). In this article, Glaser spoke about three types of literature: “(1) non-professional, popular, and pure ethnographic descriptions, (2) professional literature related to the substantive area under research and (3) professional literature that is unrelated to the substantive area” (para. 1).

Regardless of the work a researcher may be doing in classic grounded theory, this resource will prove invaluable.

I have saved the best and most exciting news for last. The *Grounded Theory Review* has been growing—and so has our research community. To keep pace with all the new research and maintain our high editorial standards, as of January 2026, The *Grounded Theory Review* is changing its publication frequency from two times a year in December and June to a rolling publication schedule. We are very excited to bring you new research and scholarship more frequently.

Finally, I would like to express my great appreciation to the reviewers and staff at the *Grounded Theory Review* for all their hard work throughout the year. And on behalf of everyone at the *Grounded Theory Review*, we would like to wish you a very safe and joyous winter holiday season. See everyone in 2026.

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