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The Impact of Symbolic Interaction on Grounded Theory

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# The Impact of Symbolic Interaction on Grounded Theory

*By Barney G. Glaser, Ph.D., Hon. Ph.D.*

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*(Chapter 10, The Grounded Theory Perspective III: Theoretical Coding, Sociology Press, 2005)*

As I stated in the introduction to chapter 9, GT is a general inductive method possessed by no discipline or theoretical perspective or data type. Yet the takeover of GT by Symbolic Interaction (SI) and all the departments and institutes that SI informs and resides in is massive and thereby replete with the remodeling of GT. The literature on qualitative methodology is massive and replete with the assertion that SI is the foundation theoretical perspective of GT. GT is reported as a SI method. That GT is a general inductive method is lost.

Sure, GT can use SI type data and its perspective, but as a general method it can use any other type data, even other types of qualitative data, as well as quantitative, visual, document, journalistic and in any combination, and any other theoretical perspective, such as e.g. systems theory, social structural theory, structural functional theory, social organization theory, cultural theory etc. Thus, the takeover of GT as an SI perspective methodology is just discipline-perspective dominance, as discussed above, and nothing more. It, of course, dominates with a set of TCs (process, strategies, conditions, context etc) I have considered at length in chapters above.

Researchers, especially in nursing, just want a theoretical perspective. SI institutionalizes GT as its own! Researchers like it because it gives them an ontology (what is data) and an epistemology (a philosophy of research). The takeover becomes structurally induced by researchers, especially nursing, in their research, since they want a theoretical perspective in advance. It gives them a feeling of power, while they do not realize that the SI takeover reduces the general method power of GT. The writers on GT as a SI method use as their legitimating source because of Strauss's (my co-author of discovery of GT) training in SI. They ignore the roots of GT in my training in concept-indicator index construction in quantitative survey research.

its inception in the early 1960's (McCarthy 1960); however, as the discipline entered the new millennium, Sherry (2000) suggested that all is not sanguine with it. Sherry's (1998, 2000) point of contention with the place concept is that marketers deem consumption settings, or servicescapes (Bitner 1992; Sherry 1998), as being comprised of physical elements (Turley and Milliman 2000). Thus, he believes that marketers fail to consider that places may also be comprised of intangible, symbolic realms, which may be integral to consumers' personal worlds and experiences.

Rather than consider that consumers view places as points-of-exchange where they satisfy essential consumption needs, Sherry posits that places have different dimensions of meaning for consumers, based upon their personal experiences in them. In addition, he speculates that the impact of these meanings, on consumer behavior, ranges on a continuum from the subtle to the profound. However, like Trickster, Sherry (1998, 2000) stops conjecturing mid-stream; leaving future researchers with the challenge of generating a theory of consumer's being-in-place.

The goal of this article is to heed Sherry's (2000) challenge by conceiving a theory that (1) illustrates why and how consumers experience places in their lives, (2) uncovers major antecedents that impact consumers' place experience, (3) links place experience to patronizing behavior, and (4) is parsimonious, relevant, and modifiable.

The theory serves as a milestone for marketing as it addresses a chasm in the marketing mix. Namely, that marketing mix, along with its consideration of place as distribution, is not entirely complete, is somewhat inconsiderate of consumers' needs, and focuses on investigating unidimensional relationships between stimuli and responses, rather than on the much richer concept of exchange relationships (van Waterschoot 2000; van Waterchoot and Van den Bulte 1992). To date, the majority of place studies in marketing have attempted to discern stimulus-response regularities between specific environmental conditions (e.g., music, crowding, scent) and consumer behavior (Bone and Ellen 1999; Chebat and Dube 2000; Chebat and Michon 2003; Harrell, Huff, and Anderson 1980; Hightower, Brady and Baker 2002; Milliman 1982; 1986). Although this research is insightful, a limitation of this methodological philosophy is that marketers construe that consumers simply react to environmental stimuli. Thus, marketers have essentially failed to consider that consumers may seek out and patronize places as

In the following pages, I will discuss these issues at length. Much has already been said in this book about SI and its set of TCs. This chapter just focuses and adds some ideas. The goal of this chapter, as in all the above chapters, is to free GT from this dominance so GT analysts will have the fullest range of TCs – from any and all perspectives-- possible at his fingertips for emergence. No one discipline with/and its theoretical perspective defines and possesses GT, as I discussed at length in chapter 9. Obviously many GTs use a SI perspective (as well as others), whether bounded or not by it. Earned, emergent relevance is the TC of best choice.

## **Sources of SI Dominance**

Obviously, the impact, dominance and possession of SI on GT came from Anselm Strauss's training in SI at University of Chicago. Many authors assert this one source of SI. Carolyn Weiner (op. cit. page 6) says: "GT derived from the tradition of SI, this sociological stance is based on the perspective of George Herbert Mead as developed by the Chicago school of sociology and asserts that people select and interpret meanings from their environment, formed in many definitions of the situation. The individual acquires a commonality of perspective with others as they learn and develop together the symbols by which aspects of the world are identified. In other words there is a social construction of reality."

Marjorie MacDonald and Rita Schreiber (op cit page 42) "to begin, we must explicate what we mean when we speak of grounded theory. Central to our understanding is SI, a theoretical perspective rooted in the philosophy pragmatism (Blumer 1960/86, Dewey, 1922, mead,1934/67). Human action and interaction and the construction and reconstruction of meaning within levels of context are central phenomena of interest and foci for theory development. This is a synergistic and dynamic process in which action/interaction changes the context, which leads, in turn, to the construction of new meaning and new action. In light of this, GT is concerned fundamentally with the relationship between person and society."

Marjorie MacDonald says (op cit, page 126) "For Strauss, pragmatism was central to his thinking. Although people acknowledge the theoretical origins of GT as being rooted in SI, it seems that insufficient attention has been given to its pragmatist underpinnings, as originally outlined by Dewey (1922) and later articulated by Blumer."

Janice Morse affirms in her article "Situating GT, ("Using GT in Nursing, "op.cit. page 2. ) "The second point is that I treat GT as a method-- that is, as a particular theoretical perspective to analyze data that originally evolved through a particular theoretical perspective i.e. symbolic interaction"

P.Jane Milliken and Rita Schreiber recently wrote a chapter entitled "Can You Do GT without SI? (GT in Nursing Research op cit, page 177 to189) They begin by quoting Ian Dey referring to the sources of GT – quantitative (Glaser) and qualitative (Strauss) methods: In the marriage of these two traditions , it was intended to harness the logic and rigor of quantitative methods to the rich, interpretive insights of the symbolic interactionist tradition." (Dey, op cit 1999, page 25) The ladies conclude "Thus, GT emerged from and is intrinsically tied to symbolic interaction." There follows this initial statement of the ascendancy and claim on GT of SI ( at the start of their chapter), After this assertion, 12 pages of close argument leads to their conclusion, which is: ."To achieve this end the researcher necessarily engages in symbolic interaction within her self or himself and with the data, with participants and with the emerging theory. Thus it is our view that symbolic interactionism is inherent in GT research, whether the researcher is aware of it or not. If research is truly grounded theory, it cannot occur in the absence of symbolic interactionism, which is intrinsic to the process. This does not imply that other theoretical perspectives – such as feminism, critical theory or hermeneutics-- may not be incorporated as well, but that these other perspective are superimposed onto symbolic interactionism." (op cit page 188-9).

In short in their view, GT is possessed by SI as ascendant, no matter what other theoretical perspective may also be included in the study. It is their "philosophical justification" for doing GT.; it is their "epistemology that guides its unfolding." (op cit page 189). Their discipline dominance of GT by SI is wrong. No data type defines GT. We must keep in mind that their misguided view, is because (1) qualitative data, particularly long interviews are very suitable for nursing research , (2) they are only trained in interview research which is SI oriented, and (3) because of their training they are not really aware of other theoretical perspectives or their TCs – such as systems , social organization, social structural, phenomenological, economic, etc, etc and other types of data.—survey, documents, visual, experimental, library, observational etc, etc. Thus their focus on GT as needing SI, or GT as an SI method, is a socially structured

vested fiction. It is vested in discipline dominance, departments and careers with a specific SI research orientation in nursing. These fictions do not overturn or disappear easily; there is too much vesting at stake. All I am saying here is that there would be no threat to their limited view by staying open to TCs from all theoretical perspectives.

The Strauss origination of GT using SI has a pretty heavy impact and dominance, which given the above discussion, is hard to resist., but GT is just not an SI in possession. But I, Barney G. Glaser, was co originator, if not the originator of GT. I was clear in Discovery of GT, Theoretical Sensitivity (pages 62-64) and Doing GT that GT was “based in a concept-indicator model” leading to conceptualization (page 62) taken from psychological research and used extensively in quantitative research. I then added the constant comparative method – comparing the indicators – to conceptualize the categories and their properties. And I then added Lazarsfeld’s notion of the interchangeability of indicators., which led to theoretical saturation, so no more indicators need be attended. Thus GT came straight from survey research analysis. And it came from Robert K. Merton’s training his students in substantive and theoretical coding – conceptualization.

GT is just a relatively simple inductive model that can be used on any data type and with any theoretical perspective. It is just a general inductive model, or paradigm, if you will, that is sufficiently general to be used at will by any researchers in any field, any department and any data type. . No one theoretical perspective can possess it.

Thus SI perspective people can use it as a sensitizing perspective ,of course, but they are in error to say that it is an SI method and SI must be used in all GT as its foundation. SI is not necessary to legitimize the GT method. And in the bargain, this takeover stultifies the emergence of a full range of possible TCs.

The GT model is used in survey research all the time. I read many papers and monographs while at Columbia University., the most impressive being Lazarsfeld’s “the Academic Mind” a study of apprehension during the McCarthy era.. My dissertation, “Organizational Scientists: their Professional Careers” (1964), a study of scientific recognition, which was published immediately, was a quantitative GT. The GT model is used on qualitative data that is not SI oriented.. See also Diane Vaughn: “The Challenger Launch

Decision.”, which book is done from documents. Strauss also gave a long discussion in *Discovery* (chapter VII) on the use of library materials. But keep in mind I am not arguing here for the use of GT on whatever data, as I have said in my previous monographs: “all is data” for GT. What I am discussing here is the use of a full range of TCs for the emergent integration of GT, which means TCs should not be restricted by one theoretical perspective like SI does.

In *Theoretical sensitivity* I list 18 TC families which come from general sociology, not linked with any perspective, e.g. cutting points are cutting points, ranges are ranges, binaries are binaries. Etc. Their use has been squelched in large measure by the impact of SI. In *Doing GT* I listed more TCs. The full range is awesome and fun to learn, but SI curbs this knowledge. In *Theoretical Sensitivity* I coined the terms Basic Social Process and Basic Structural Process as TCs in trying to bring structure into SI oriented research.

MacDonald says that (op cit page 128) “Strauss’s important contribution in this era was that of SI with a concern for organization and structural perspectives. In fact, Denzin, in his response to charges of an a structural bias in SI, cites Strauss’s early work as evidence that social structures were given their due in terms of their role in human action.” Their brief allusion to increasing the range of TCs was small and brought back into the control of SI research. It was a brief acknowledgment at most. They ignored my 18 TC families, and now we see they ignore the fullest range of TCs by being shackled by SI. The biasing power of SI as ascendant is very strong!

Using qualitative data does not make GT a qualitative method, it is a method that can be used on all data and accuracy is not the issue, conceptualization is for GT. Thus it follows that when SI researchers use GT, it does not make it an SI method. The reverse is correct, SI simply used a method that can be used by any theoretical perspective from which many TCs can emerge. Yet the QDA remodeling of GT is clearly aided by the impact of SI on GT. (See GT perspective II)

## **A Paradigm**

The quest for an ontology and epistemology for justifying GT is not necessary. It will take these on from the type of data it uses for a particular research FOR THAT RESEARCH ONLY. GT is simply

an inductive model for research. It is a paradigm for discovery of what is going on in any particular arena. It provides a global view by “providing a method of solving the puzzle of viewing human experience and of structuring reality.” Wendy Guthrie, “Keeping Client In Line” (1998).. Whether GT takes on the mantle for the moment of prepositivist, positivist, postpositivist, postmodernism, naturalism, realism etc, will be dependent on its application to the type of data in a specific research. But in any case any TC that emerges to integrate the theory should still come from the fullest range possible. GT is not only appropriate for nursing research, but also for education, medicine, public health, management, organization, accounting, social work, business, finance, sociology, social psychology etc etc. as many studies I have read can attest to.

GT as an inductive method, would seem to fit Klee’s notion of paradigm offered in his book: “Introduction to the Philosophy of Science:” (Oxford University Press (1996) page 135)

*“A paradigm is an achievement that defines practice for a community of researchers. It defines practice because the achievement constitutes a model to be imitated and further extended. Future research tries to fit itself to the same pattern as the original achievement. This definition of practice brings in its wake, the seeding of the fundamental principles of the domain, the subsequent possibility of extremely precise research, a pedagogical tradition that trains succeeding generation in the use of the paradigm, a collection of institutions designed to promote the paradigm (professional journals, professional associations), a worldview with metaphysical consequences.”*

Yes GT is a paradigm as Klee portrays. But the reader should keep in mind that in generating its subsequent dimensions of used and institutionalization, that it does not become discipline, theoretical perspective, and department dominated -- as SI has done -- and then the openness of GT is lost to the power of the dominators. And then subsequently, of course, the fullest range of TCs is lost in the takeover.

Klee recognizes this drift to dominance of a paradigm when he says (op cit page 134) “A general approach to research come to dominate a field – becomes a paradigm – when the practitioners working under its direction score an amazing research achievement, an achievement everyone recognizes as such, even those practitioners



committed to competing approaches.” To be sure this happened to GT, based on its achievements, BUT in the bargain it became mixed with those practitioners who are wedded to the SI perspective. Then of course with SI dominance GT was remodeled. (See GT Perspective II).

## **SI Possession Everywhere**

As I said above, the methodological literature is replete with the notion that GT is a SI methodology. Much GT to date, in nursing and management, seems to use qualitative data, which tends to be SI oriented. But bear in mind that neither the type of data or the theoretical perspective of the SI TCs, which are many, define the GT method. The GT method just uses them as it would any other type of data or any theoretical perspective with its own TCs.

An immediate cause of SI possession of GT, is that nursing research is usually highly interactional (though it need not be), so nurse GT researchers and QDA researchers are highly and easily drawn to SI thinking and use it for preconceived frameworks to model the research. SI provides a source of many TCs which have grab for intense, long interview data, which detracts from the using the fullest range of TCs that could be emergent. Those supervisors of dissertations coming from departments that embrace GT as an SI method, can easily require those SI TCs to be used as if that is all there is to it in doing GT. It is not, there are many TCs that are lost by this SI possession.

I can only give the reader a taste of this SI possession of GT— so replete, so dominating, so remodeling and so ascendant and so limiting to the full generality of GT. Here are a number of samples of assertions to this effect. Keep in mind that they are simply followers in style of the original, but not accurate, assumption that GT is an SI method. They simply take for granted the SI foundation of GT. Also keep in mind that researchers could say the same about systems theory, social structural theory, cultural theory, social organization, or any other theoretical perspective.

Karen Daley in her very good dissertation on Asthma and Decision Making, asserts on page 32 “GT is based on the philosophic perspective of symbolic interactionism. SI assumes that human action depends upon meaning that people ascribe to their situations. This assumption drives grounded theory research by allowing the

researcher to look closely at an individual's interpretation of self and their actions."

Alvita Nathaniel in her dissertation on Moral Reckoning of Nurses says: (page 34) "Moral Reckoning" which emerged from the present study, is supported by extant research and theory. It is congruent with SI, a common theoretical foundation of GT. Inquiry from the SI perspective is particularly appropriate for a study of nurse's moral distress. GT is a natural product of the postpositive movement and SI."

Locke in her book of GT (page 30, op cit) asserts "A theoretical perspective informs how we understand complex social realities and what we direct our attention to when collecting and conceptualizing data. (Becker 1986). In his guide for conducting fieldwork, William Foote White (1984) underscores the importance of having an explicit theoretical perspective..... a good theoretical perspective, such as SI, helps qualitative researchers orient themselves to the worlds they study, but it does not specify what they will find." To be sure grounding her SI assertion using the history of QDA helps legitimate the SI possession of GT and remodels it.

Janice Morse in her article on "Emerging From the Data" The Cognitive Processes of Analysis in Qualitative Inquiry." (in Critical Issues in QDA, Janice Morse Editor, Sage 1994, page 34) simply states in her chart that the conceptual basis of GT is SI, as if no question is involved. She further keeps the same point in 2001, seven years later, without budging, in her article "Situating GT": She says: "The second point is that I will treat the GT as a method – that is as a particular theoretical perspective (i.e. symbolic Interactionism)." Possession by SI of GT is sure and complete---, no question, no further analysis among these authors.!

Alvesson and Skoldberg in their book "Reflexive Methodology: New Vistas for Qualitative Research," (Sage 2000, page 11) states: "Roots. Glaser and Strauss's 'GT' has dual roots in SI in the person of Strauss, and the other in the statistically oriented positivism that was part of Glaser's intellectual luggage. General surveys of SI such as Plummer (1991) usually mention GT as particular orientation with this movement. Although we do not altogether agree with this description, we do regard SI as the most important source of inspiration for GT." At least I +(Glaser) was mentioned with roots before SI took over in their minds. SI does take over with

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ease, because the roots of GT in inductive survey analysis are not understood by many researchers.

Lamborg and Kirkevoid in their article on “Truth and Validity of GT”, *Nursing Philosophy* 4, pp. 189-200 write: “From a SI perspective, Glaser and Strauss provided the interaction perspective of GT. GT relies heavily on Mead’s and Blumer’s SI (Milliken and Schreiber, 2001). Inspired from SI, GT is concerned with the dynamic relationship between person (individual or collective) and society.” The mutual quoting among author of GT being an SI method is replete.

Here are two more affirmations; Karen Locke in her book on GT in *Management Research* (op.cit., page 20) says: “American pragmatism and, in particular, sociology’s SI school of thought constitute the disciplinary traditions that help to inform GT. SI can best be understood as working through of the pragmatist world view.” Locke also says on page 25: “GT’s association with SI school of thought is repeatedly articulated by its originator and their students. It is particularly important for those organization researchers who work outside sociology’s disciplinary boundaries to appreciate this link between GT and SI.” “And often as a research product, GT reflects SI’s theoretical and methodological presuppositions about the nature of the social world and the way it can be studied.” These statements certainly shut down the openness of GT to a full range of TCs, by outright assuming of SI’s ascendance over GT.

Phyllis Stern, a noted GT teacher and researcher ordains GT as possessed by SI in her famous article “Eroding GT” in *Issue in Qualitative Research Methods* (sage 1994 page 215). She says: “the framework for the GT theorist is rooted in SI (Blumer, Mead, op cit). wherein the investigator attempts to determine what symbolic meaning artifacts, clothing, gestures, and words have for groups of people as they interact with one another.”

The ordaining of GT as SI, the worldview is purports to project, and theoretical capitalism involved is unending. GT will be possessed and taken off the general level for specific people and field purposes, irrespective of its general power. And in the bargain the full range of TCs is lost – there is no staying open in the face of the takeover. But this is not necessary once the reader gets the idea:-- openness is not a threats, it helps.

Two senior researcher, Schrieber and Marjorie MacDonald state flatly with confidence : “this pragmatic view flows directly from the philosophical foundations of GT in SI and pragmatism.” (Using GT in Nursing, op cit., page 43) In the same chapter they say: “Central to our understanding of GT is SI, a theoretical perspective rooted in the philosophy of pragmatism (Blumer, 1969, Dewey, 1922, Mead 1934,67).”(op cit page 42 ) Their confidence has roots in the past, always a legitimating approach. But these roots provide present blind unthoughts also like, they say,: “SI is a theoretical perspective that illuminates the relationship between individuals and society, as mediated by symbolic communication, which...looks beyond the behavioral component to the underlying meaning that motivates it.”(page 178).” Good jargon, but so... what has this to do with GT discovering the latent patterns in any kind of data from interchangeable indices. This confident sureness strangles GT!, especially the constant comparative approach to generating emergent substantive and theoretical codes !

Rita Schreiber and Jane Milliken were shocked by my statement: “GT can be done outside the theoretical framework of SI (Glaser, 1999) (Schrieber and Milliken “Using GT in Nursing” page 177). They then devote a whole chapter trying to handle this rather simple statement, not realizing GT is a general inductive method.. It is called “Can you ‘Do’ GT Without SI” They engage in a heavy, erudite analysis of SI always concluding with sentences as this: “Clearly, in our view, the epistemology of GT is steeped in SI;” (page 180) or “Clearly, in our view GT is a methodology in the sense that Harding (1987) uses the term, in that it bridges the philosophical underpinnings of SI and the conduct of GT research endeavor.” (page 181).

They continue “What follows is a discussion of key elements of technique used in GT as they relate to SI.” These elements fall into their line since they deal with only one qualitative data type: high interactional, interpretive data, as if all qualitative data is this type. In fact there are many types of qualitative data., which they leave out and which would undermine their contention. :”SI penetrates even the technical level of GT so that, in our view, an adequate GT cannot be divorced from SI” (page 187) . They concluded firmly: “Thus it is our view that SI is inherent in GT research, whether the researcher is aware of it or not. If research is truly GT, it cannot occur in the absence of SI, which is intrinsic to the process” .

They say lastly “other perspectives (used in GT research) are

superimposed onto SI.” (page 188) This is a “bit” of a nod to other perspectives by a perpetually ascendant, impenetrable, possessive SI perspective. This remodels GT to a QDA method, with all its negative consequences, but here I simply point out that they endorse only a small set of TCs. They are not staying open to the sensitivity of the fullest range of TCs that can emerge. Their possession closes them down to TC possibilities and stultifies GT.

Their colleagues Crotteau, Bunting and Draucker, in their article “GT in Hermeneutics” (Using GT in Nursing, op cit ,page 193) echo Schreiber, Mac Donald, and Milliken, They say: “GT is rooted in SI, which focuses on the meaning of events to people in natural settings.” This is the same sureness about the SI takeover of GT. The echo is everywhere. The roots of GT in general induction and concept-indicators analysis are lost to these SI owners of GT and with it is lost emergent TCs.

In a solo chapter Marjorie MacDonald does register a small doubt about the SI takeover and possession of GT (Using GT in Nursing op cit page 121) She says: “There are good reasons why critics have charged both SI and GT with an astructural bias... It is difficult not to make the judgement that GT does indeed ignore issues of power, culture, social organization, economics, gender and other structural influences on human action.” Anti critiques she says have “concluded that many interactionists have not neglected social structure, especially since the mid-1970’s. They argue that the notion of astructural bias as a defining feature of SI should be reconsidered.(Page 119). MacDonald explains this argument or controversy (page 117): “Many social theorists saw SI as being in distinct opposition to the classical European sociological perspective which was concern with macro-social analyses of societal structures (e.g. economy, polity, culture) as the primary determinants of human action. Thus SI emerged as a reaction to the dominance of structural functionalist perspective in sociology.”

The astructural criticism and complaint of SI is MOOT for GT, unless, as these researchers would have it, that GT is possessed by SI. But GT is not possessed by SI, so let the this SI controversy be argued any which way, it is irrelevant for GT. It is GT’s general method power that puts it outside this argument. But these researchers do not realize the distinction and difference between SI and GT, thus they do not realize the full implications for remodeling GT by SI notions and the loss of TCs.

Perhaps to counteract this critique of SI and GT, caught in the bargain, Strauss offered the conditional matrix to bring in a bit of social structure to GT research. But this gesture is mere tokenism to maintain the takeover of GT by SI. It barely touches the fullest range of TCs, which bring all kinds of structure, culture, systems, social organization. etc...into GT, once is it allowed to stay open and be free of the SI possession. Once GT is seen as a general , inductive method that can use any kind of data, since as I have said in many places: for GT “all is data”, this controversy is truly irrelevant. The researcher will be sensitive to only those categories, both substantive and theoretical that emerge as relevant.

This distinction is seen clearly by one of my former students: Dr Barry Gibson. In excerpts from an unpublished paper posted to the online forum of the GT Institute website.(Sep 2000): He says referring to the SI takeover of GT: “This coupling process risks the possibility that the data become pre-conceived in relation to the distinctions that are received within existing theory.. The argument is that such distinctions must not be preconceived as relevant before the process of theory generation commences “(Glaser, 1992, page 116.) . I see this preconception as SI TC based in interaction studies. But bear in mind that GT is conceptual, not interactional. Further Barry says, quite rightly, “The epistemological implications of using the incident as the basis of data analysis are clear that there can be no subjects (participants) in data analysis and theory generation should be guided by the concept of constant comparison and theoretical saturation.. In terms of the method of GT, there are subjects and these are constituted as both the research and the informant. These both disappear, however, during the process of data analysis whereby the incident (as conceptualized) becomes the unit of analysis and all ‘individuals’ in the research process fade away.”

The SI takeover is clearly a remodel with many negative consequences. GT is simply a general inductive method that conceptualizes into a generated theory, which explains the latent patterns in any type of data of a general area, whether substantive or formal.

Naomi Elliot, a Ph.D. candidate in the School of Nursing. St James Hospital Dublin, Ireland, and a student on my seminar saw this takeover instantly when as she says (email Feb. 2003): “I was challenged by a colleague who considers that an exploration of how

SI underpins GT is critical to any discussion on GT methodology. Having read your Chapter 2, "The Roots of GT", I am left thinking that to restrict such a discussion to SI alone is to ignore the influences such as survey design analysis, explication de text, or qualitative math etc on GT. So my questions are, to what extent does SI underpin GT?" My answer to Naomi is above: to no extent. It depends on the type data used, of which only ONE kind is SI data, even within the scope of qualitative data.

I could go on but the pattern is clear. In the literature everywhere SI possesses and GT! And this possession is reinforced by senior researchers, junior researchers, departments, different fields that like qualitative research and writers on qualitative methods. A robust full range of possible emergent TCs is lost to the domination of SI. GT's generality is lost to the drive for ontology and epistemology which discussions have turned to SI for foundation. Now let us look at some consequences of this possession.

### **Consequences of SI's impact on GT**

My colleague, Judith Holton, (email 10/2004) expresses quite clearly the general consequence of SI's take over of GT. She says, in her words, "GT has been co-opted by the critical mass of those working within SI and constructivist theoretical frameworks (esp. nursing and related health services). The result is a remodeling and eroding of classic GT as a general methodology; its being lost by sheer dint of their numbers and by their mutual echoing in peer-reviewed journals.. In this echoing of one another, they lost the ability to see beyond their own preconceived worldview. Instead, they continually reinforce mutually held perceptions thereby blocking out their ability to remain open to GT as a general methodology that works with any theoretical framework, as appropriately emergent and with any data as available."

There follows here several more specific consequences. The SI takeover of GT transfers to GT all its problems in the bargain "as if" they are problems with GT. For one problem, as we have just seen above,. SI is seen as astructural which deflects focus from relevant structural categories and structural sensitivity. And, of course, it is SI which has the astructural problem, not GT. Many feel this problem with no idea how to solve the lack of fitting TCs from other perspectives.

SI as the foundation of GT leads to a theoretical capitalism that admits of no other theoretical perspective, hence search for other TCs outside the SI perspective. Staying open is hard if not impossible., when facing a theoretical capitalist as supervisor or just teacher. Their identity is based on an SI orientation! Training in their department will be based on SI, not other theoretical perspectives. Resulting TCs are prioritized to an SI orientation. For the few who may wish to break out to staying open and finding relevant, emergent TCs, the wrestle is often just too hard. to take on, especially for students.

Why? Because SI which is mixed in with QDA and then remodels GT, as part of the takeover, to suit its data type (interaction), blinds GT researchers to being sensitive to other theoretical perspective's TCs. Staying open to extricate GT and oneself from this replete massive, possessive, takeover is too much to expect of the average researcher. Especially if he/she wishes a career and publications in the social structures that enforce this thought. Taking GT outside the SI orbit is too contrary, even subversive. If fact there is certainly nothing wrong with the SI perspective and its use in QDA. They are ascendant to be sure in the literature. They are just NOT characteristics of GT as a general, inductive method, as SI devotees would co-opt it. The loss of this takeover is, of course, a loss of tremendous theoretical power brought to GT by discovering emergent TCs (from any field) that fit and integrate the generated theory. Instead we often get from the takeover a retreat to a descriptive, tiny topic research, devoid of but a few concepts and lacking conceptual generality. It is then called GT which is nothing more than a legitimating label. (See several journal issues of Qualitative Health Research).

This condition makes the researcher feel like a part of the SI, QDA takeover while it lets him off the hook of studying the GT method to the extent its precise procedures of induction can be followed. Impressionism creeps in place of careful constant comparison of indices until their interchangeability reaches saturation. It changes the use of literature to the degree of preconception of its relevance and use, and it messes up the nature of memoing. It preconceives theoretical sampling by its directing to, not letting emerge, substantive and theoretical categories.

This takeover is so assumed, so automatic, so natural and so wrong for GT. It is unscholarly and bias educated. It harps on accuracy,



verification, constructivism, interpretation and naturalism as binding a GT product instead of conceptualization which is abstract of all these SI/QDA concerns as I have written about at length I(See GT Perspective I and II,2001,2003) . They are lost in meaning making patterns based on evidence based impressions , not as GT requires latent behavioral patterns arrived at by careful constant comparisons. In doing so they force TC frameworks on data and conceptualizations before hand,-- usually a pet TC. The full range of TCs from whatever perspective has no chance of emerging.

Again the prominent (heavy) QDA methodologists by citing the prominent SI theorists (especially Blumer and Mead) hang tight to GT as subordinate to SI's possession. It is their worldview in the center of a professional network., which kills curious transcendence. GT looks for the latent patterns which explain what is going on as people resolve their main concern, not the meaning, interpretive patterns that are exchanged, which itself is a small part of the variety of data that GT uses. SI's possession of GT would have it as all the data of GT, which is so wrong. And to be sure the consequence is to close down the TC range available to integrate a generated theory.

Just because Awareness of Dying. Glaser and Strauss, which gave rise to the "Discovery of GT", dealt with qualitative data did not make is an SI book. We discovered many latent patterns from the interviews and observations that were simple fact that upon comparison generated conceptual latent patterns (categories) abstract of any joint interpretation and meaning analysis of interviewer and respondent as SI would have it. Also the main concern of the nursing staff -- managing awareness of dying -- was an abstraction the nurses did not voice directly and clearly but it was acted out all the time around dying people. SI data was but a bear 25% of the study, if that. It is not 100% of all GT, which is an overstatement the SI methodologists want to make as they wed it to concerns of constructionism, accuracy, long guided interviews and non-latent meaning patterns. Actually, SI accounts for only a small part of the data that GT is used with.

SI is a natural type of data that occurs in interaction, but one can question whether or not it is a discipline or perspective at all. But this argument is for the espousers of it as a theoretical perspective.. Here I am just asserting that for GT "all is data", no matter the implicit theoretical perspective involved. And this openness allows for the emergence of a full range of TCs. Latent patterns are

everywhere, in all types of data. GT is the method for their discovery and conceptualization.

Taking the same type position as the SI methodologists, I could just as easily say that GT is a social structural functional founded methodology, or a systems founded method, or a cultural founded method dealing with norms and values, or a social organization founded method, a positivist founded method, etc, etc on and on, And each would have its own ontology and epistemology. Every grand scheme or perspective is implicit and sometimes explicit in social action. And then off they run with an epistemology to justify it. Fine, but GT is abstract of all this as it just depends on what data and data mix is used to see the epistemology(s) involved. The open GT researcher on choosing an area of interest will use whatever data there is to generate his/her theory. He will let the main concern emerge (the research problem) and generate a theory as “whatever” level seems appropriate, whether middle range, grand, substantive or formal. The credibility of his work is based on the careful comparing of incidents to generate concepts that fit (with validity). And his theory will be integrated by whatever TC emerges from the fullest sensitivity he may have unstultified by SI.

For all the supposed positive functions to SI methodologists of possessing and taking over GT, it just does not work. GT is simply a general inductive method. The SI methodologists have in GT terms not earned relevance for their assertion. They only have the vested social fiction of socially structured power of their organizations: institutes, departments, journals, careers etc. And it is no news to sociologists that vested social fictions have great power.

The SI takeover of GT limits the data, the substantive categories and subsequent TCs that the researcher will use or hopefully let emerge. What constitutes appropriate data and what the SI researcher is open to seeing in the data – how they construct meaning, means that the researcher will miss much that upon constant comparison will yield the latent patterns necessary to explain is going on. The overwhelming SI perspective blinds the researcher to all the data types, based on other perspectives, that are going on that are part of it, in favor of just some meaning making. There are always social structural features, social organization features, system features, cultural features, economic features, etc, going on that will be missed or slighted.

SI focuses on intense long interaction or conversational interviews, often based on preconceived interview guides, as meaning is developed. The GT researcher listens to verbal quips, sees much structural and cultural constraints etc and listens to participants spilling their concerns, briefly or at length. He reads associated documents, journals and newspaper articles, always comparing to generate categories. SI drastically curtails theoretical sampling as a framework and/or the problem is perceptively preconceived.. SI is identity and legitimacy forming and in the bargain reduces sensitivity to other data for research. The bargain of the SI takeover is not good for GT as it stultifies it as a general method.

SI's takeover of GT and its consequent data limiting then generates complaints that SI is a structural or too empirical. MacDonald says: "Grounded theory has an enduring respect for the empirical world and the perspectives of the people being studied. But because theory is linked so closely to empirical reality, Layder argues that GT is limited to what can be observed or recorded about human behavior and the action/interaction among people: (op.cit. page 120)". This is, of course, descriptive capture (that I discussed at length in "The GT Perspective I"), which itself stultifies conceptualization required for GT. And SI itself is very compatible and useful in descriptive qualitative research. Thus SI's takeover of GT tends to remodel it from conceptual theory to descriptive capture and its accuracy concerns., so the resulting product looks very empirically descriptive, NOT conceptually abstract of time, place and people. The result is that Layder will say, "The entire thrust of GT is tied to the empirical world as it appears to our senses.(Layder 1989a)" This statement is based on reading studies of QDA barren of conceptualization., and steeped in SI data., as if it was GT, and it is not.

The SI perspective is very capturing as it is easy in comparison to other more difficult perspectives such as structural-functional, systems theory etc... It just requires making meaning out of action/interaction which we all do readily in everyday life. Everything is seen as interpretive, which is only one minimal type of qualitative data. And SI's tendency to result in preframed, descriptive capture leading to routine QDA, Not GT, means that TCs lose relevance, since they only integrate theory, not description. They are not necessary for description or conceptual description, except maybe to keep saying "process" as a catch all term.

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The self-fulfilling effect of SI on nursing research is replete: virtually all routine researchers see their research work as SI. This capture is very desensitizing to the researchers, so they see no TCs that emerge that come from other related qualitative and quantitative data. that comes from other perspectives. For example, variation in work shifts, hospital nursing turnover, authority structures, nursing career effects cultural ethics, etc. As Carolyn Weiner says (op.cit., page 8) “All this can only happen if one has a view of humans as shaping their worlds to some extent – but in the face of inevitable structural constraints.” I would take her comment further saying humans are immmercifully shaped by structural processes, cultural norms, systems, etc, etc. All this is out of view to the SI devotee, hence the emergent TCs that come with it. Again SI limits the data for research, the TCs used if any, and when calling it GT, it denudes GT from a general method to a SI possess method.

The socially structured vested fictions about SI in nursing research will not change by my words, or the words of others. Choosing the SI perspective allows peer reviewers to critique routinely research with discipline dominance of department and journals. And the critique will often include the conjectural, elaborated, logical think up theory of the grand SI theorists. And GT is co-opted into this critique. It is time for GT to be used for what it was generated: a general method.

I only wish the GT researcher to stay general and open by studying other perspectives and their TCs so as to be open to their kind of data and emergence of the best fit TC form the fullest range. Central to our understanding of GT IS NOT SI , I affirm strongly and correctly. This is in contrast to the MacDonald, Schreiber statement: “central to our understanding of GT is SI, a theoretical perspective rooted in the philosophy of pragmatism.” (op. cit. page 42).

There is a growing dissatisfaction, however, with the limits that SI puts on type data, data processing and by consequence the TCs used if the research climbs out of description and becomes conceptual. For example MacDonald (op cit page 122) makes the avant-garde statement: “Nursing, however, and other health disciplines, are moving away from an individualist perspective, particularly with the increasing emphasis on the importance of health promotion practice. More and More, health promotion practitioners are becoming concerned with societal level concerns and the way social structures and institutions influence health and

health behavior". She also quotes Pendergast and Knotternerus (op.cit., page 135) as "having suggested that SI must deal with the astructural bias if it is not to be increasingly marginalized in sociology. Health promotion insists that social and structural influences on health must be taken into account." These statements apply to all SI oriented research, no matter the area or the problem.

There will be no threat to SI, if it advocates allow other types of data (structural, cultural, system, organizational, etc ) to be used and its consequent TCs to emerge. It will likely enrich the SI aspects of a research even as it loses the possessive takeover. And in the bargain it will release its possession of GT as a SI method, so GT can be seen for what it is : a general , inductive method suitable to all types of data , whether qualitative (baseline, proper line, vague, interpreted or conceptual (see Doing GT, page 42) or quantitative. And then the true inductive roots of GT in survey analysis can be seen and used carefully in the GT procedures.

In short SI severally limits type data collection among all qualitative data possible, with consequent lack of openness, lack of sensitivity, and the lack of TCs. Releasing researcher from these limits will not undermine SI. It will enrich its use combined with other data dealing with other perspectives (e.g., nursing and management go on usually in highly bureaucratic organizations which yield many structural, cultural and system variables) Then GT is raised to its true general level and the researcher can be open to all possible TCs. GT IS NOT as MacDonald asserts (op cit page 116) "an interpretive research methodology such as grounded theory."

Students being trained in GT research for generating and emergent theory need to be trained in the TCs of many fields so they are open and sensitive to all data which may be involved in a theoretical completeness of a GT. This will stop the incessant rhetorical wrestle that tries to link GT with only one theoretical perspective (SI or Systems) since a good GT will likely have data from many theoretical perspectives, which data when compared result in the conceptualization of latent patterns leading to an explanation of continued resolving of the main concern in an area. There are many, many TCs that possibly have emergent fit. The reader (teachers and students alike) should study the 18 TC families I listed in "Theoretical Sensitivity" and the subsequent ones I listed in "Doing GT", as a start to learning the theoretical perspectives from which they derive, their roots in many other fields and then study TCs of other theoretical perspectives and fields. The resulting sensitivity to a

fuller range of TCs will enhance seeing their possible emergence to integrate a generated theory.

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In closing this chapter and this book, I wish to talk briefly of the results of GT research which I used as I have tried to explicate above and in previous books. First of all I hope I have answered Naomi Elliott's question, a Ph.D. candidate at a School Nursing in Dublin, Ireland, to me in Feb 2004 email – a question many others have asked: “The reason I am writing you is to ask for clarification on the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of GT methodology. Just recently I was challenged by a supervisor who considers that an exploration of how SI underpins GT is critical to any discussion on GT methodology. So my question is to what extent does SI underpin GT. Does it do it alone or is GT also based on other influences?” I trust this chapter and book answers this frequent question.

Vivian Martin emailed me in Oct, 2003, her trouble in trying to force SI limits on her Ph.D. dissertation research. She wrote: “The big TC that has knitted together my conceptualizing is that to think of these interpenetrating processes as being part of an autopoietic system. I do not have a deep grasp of systems theory, but I do know that Purposive Attending is autopoietic, sort of a mix between SI and structuration. A big problem with SI is that it does not deal with structure effectively and it does not really tell how things come to take on meaning.” TCs such as awareness contexts, boundary work, normative culture and structural identity, helped her also handle Purposive Attending. She settled on awareness structuration. SI analysis could not be forced, as we see above that some would prefer.

I have been involved in many dissertations that go way beyond SI by combining it with other types of qualitative data and other TCs. Wendy Guthrie's (University of Strathclyde, Scotland) superb dissertation on Keeping Clients in Line, deals with four types of ascendant relationship control of professional clients. Barry Gibson's (Ireland) dissertation on Cautionary Control gives a typology on compliance with cautionary rules in dentistry regarding HIV patients. Brene Brown's (University of Texas, Houston) dissertation on professional accompanying relationships in social work focuses on staying relevant, binary deconstruction and binary retreat. Amy Calvin, (University of Texas, Houston) received the best dissertation

award for her dissertation on personal preservation while dying from a deteriorating disability. Berit Brinchman (Bodo, Norway) dissertation of proximity ethics and patient vitality. Hans Thulesius, (MD, Ph.D., Faculty of Medicine, Lund, Sweden) on balancing cure vs. comfort care in Palliative care. Judith Holton, (University College Northampton, England) dissertation handles the problem of rehumanizing in the knowledge workplace by joining fluctuating support networks. Maria De Hoyos Guarjardo (University Warwick) has accomplished an excellent dissertation on solutioning in problem solving in higher mathematics. Hans Lehman (university of Christchurch, New Zealand) did his dissertation of the conflict between undue control and utility and is structuring in the arena of international information networks. Walter Fernandez (Queensland University, New Zealand), did his thesis on Metateams in Major Information Technology Projects. Alvita Nathaniel, (University of West Virginia, Nursing) a professor of nursing, did her dissertation on Moral Reckoning of personal values, professional ethics, norms and organizational constraints for nurses in situational binds on wards. Tom Anderson, (University of Manchester, England) amazed us with his GT dissertation on the visualizing of patient deterioration based on soft data on intensive care wards.

And there are many more GT dissertations and post doctorate work, that have come my way. The point is that, as I said in “Doing GT” chapter 3, the rhetorical wrestle is a waste of time regarding ontology and epistemology. There are too many different types of data involved, GT being possessed by no one theoretical perspective for any data type. These authors have dealt with whatever is going on in their areas of concern with the “all is data” principal in mind, while doing laudable work as far as they can go. and being available to as many TCs as their current studies have allowed. Teasing out one particular perspective in these complex GT’s would be a waste of time with futile results. Product proof is the goal for GT as a general inductive, rigorous method.

So the answer to Schreiber and MacDonald is two-fold. Yes, I am far more experienced than they are and their connection of SI to GT is flawed. These two answers are to their paragraph (op. cit., 179) “For us, the connection between SI and GT was obvious. Nonetheless, we recognized our own inexperience relative to Glaser and found forced to rethink our assumptions, as we face the possibility that our beliefs about the relationship between SI and GT could be flawed.” Instead of their immaculate 12 page super-rethink

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on why GT is an SI method, they need only do a GT of the dozens of extant GT dissertations, to realize my points made ad nauseam in this chapter.

## **Works by Barney G. Glaser**

The Discovery of Grounded Theory (1967) *with Anselm L. Strauss*

Theoretical Sensitivity (1978)

Basics of Grounded Theory: Emergence vs. Forcing (1992)

Doing Grounded Theory: Issues and Discussions (1998)

The Grounded Theory Perspective: Conceptualization Contrasted with Description (2001)

The Grounded Theory Perspective II: Description's Remodeling of Grounded theory Methodology (2003)

The Grounded Theory Perspective III: Theoretical Coding (2005)

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