GROUNDED THEORY REVIEW
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From the Editor's Desk:

Self-Reflection and Classic Grounded Theory

Barry Chametzky, PhD

By way of an editorial for this edition, I would like to share some personal growth I am doing and experiencing. I am beginning to understand my own needs and wishes; I am beginning to understand why I behave and say things I do. In short, I am beginning a personal awakening. Leaning into the difficult elements causes intense emotions that need to be understood and unraveled. Often, but not exclusively, when I experience an emotion, it stems from something of which I am not yet aware. Leaning into those feelings, reflecting, and engaging in self-questioning—much like a grand tour question from Spradley (1979)—are needed to discover the root cause, whatever it might be.

In many respects, this personal development is not unlike what we researchers do in classic grounded theory. Initially, researchers need, to the extent possible (Simmons, 2011), to enter the research arena with a *tabula rasa*. But every researcher knows that truly experiencing a *tabula rasa* is not possible. Yet, setting aside ideas is mandatory in classic grounded theory. Additionally, as we researchers develop our memos and constantly compare our data (Glaser, 1965), we, too, develop depth in our classic grounded theory research. Only through (often) intense analysis and leaning into our preconscious thoughts can we, too, explore a new world and find important connections. As such, I invite each of you, when you are ready, to experience the wonderous process of classic grounded theory on a more personal and introspective level.

We at the *Grounded Theory Review* are fortunate for this edition because there are a number of fascinating and excellent pieces of research to present; I am truly excited to present these 8 articles to you.

Through studying a number of patients who were hospitalized to understand "their interactions and relationships with interprofessional healthcare teams" (Abstract), Didier, Nathaniel, Scott, and Zumstein-Shaha have uncovered and discovered a theory which explains how these patients "ensure protection of their own personhood in order to receive optimal care" (Abstract).

Chametzky presented a paper on confusion in classic GT earlier this year and referred to a comment that Glaser (1999) had made: an important characteristic of a grounded theorist is to "tolerate some confusion, and [. . .] tolerate confusion's attendant regression" (p. 838). In Chametzky's paper, he discussed different elements of confusion during the grounded theory process.

Our next paper is a research protocol by White, White, and Vander Linden. In their paper, White et al. wrote about formulating a theory concerning how caregivers of spouses have dealt with the loss of their partners to Parkinson's disease. Such a theory will be extremely valuable and is also reminiscent of the 1965 seminal work by Glaser and Strauss, *Awareness of Dying*.

While researchers using Glaserian grounded theory aim to develop a substantive theory to explain the main concern of participants, the theory does not necessarily have to end with the publication of that theory. In her article, Vander Linden presented valuable insights regarding how one may move past a substantive theory to the development of mid-range and

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formal grounded theories. She also presented some potential obstacles in moving "beyond the substantive grounded theory" (Abstract).

For our next article, we at the *Grounded Theory Review* are pleased, as a way to preview exciting things in the future, to present the forward notes of the electronic version of *Doing Grounded Theory* that Nathaniel and Andrews have written. As Nathaniel and Andrews commented, the reason for the electronic version of Glaser's 1998 work is to "ensure that primary sources of classic grounded theory become widely available to contemporary students and scholars" (Forward para. 1).

An insightful topic, our next article concerns various common misunderstandings and confusions that researchers may experience in classic grounded theory. Andrews explained several points of confusion researchers have in classic grounded theory. Andrews also devoted a section of his paper to the justification for the version of grounded theory developed by Charmaz. Such analysis opens the door for further intellectual discussions.

Readers of Glaser's work know that grounded theory is all around us. In our next article, Martin presented a connection between grounded theory and journalism. Specifically, she elucidated the similarities between the "tension between description (storytelling) versus theorizing [and] description and analysis in journalism" (Abstract). Such an article proves insightful and indeed valuable as one sees that grounded theory is all around us.

Glaser spent his entire life talking about classic grounded theory and how the variants proposed by Charmaz and Corbin and Strauss are remodeled versions. Yet, in some areas of the world, those variants are the accepted and common norms. In his article on *Pressing the reset button: Celebrating the unlearning of grounded theory in the People's Republic of China*, Fei explained how, in the People's Republic of China, the accepted version of

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grounded theory is by Strauss and Corbin. This accepted practice, because of incredible and persistent work by many people, is beginning to shift to Glaserian grounded theory. Such a shift, as Fei explained, is substantial. The information that Fei presented in this article sheds great light on some of the changes taking place.

As another year is drawing to a close, I know that 2024 has been, well, rather interesting, to be sure. But I do want to end this editorial on a grateful note; thank you so much to all the editorial staff, reviewers, and certainly readers of the *Grounded Theory Review*. Without everyone, we would not be where we are. On behalf of everyone here at the *Grounded Theory Review*, I would like to wish you and your families a very happy, safe, and joyous holiday season. Here's to the coming year filled with health, prosperity, joy, and everything you want.

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Patient Behaviors: A Grounded Theory Typology

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Abstract

This classic grounded theory study uncovered both a basic social process theory and an emerging typology of patients based upon their behavior as they react and adapt to the healthcare environment. The theory emerged in the context of care of 32 hospitalized patients and their interactions and relationships with interprofessional healthcare teams. The patients' main concerns were to constantly ensure protection of their own personhood in order to receive optimal care. When striving for optimal care, patients can develop specific types of behaviors to the respective healthcare environment and in response to healthcare professionals' attitudes

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and behaviors towards patient expectations. Patients tend to exhibit one of three types of behavior. Thus, a typology of these behaviors emerged: propitiation, vigilance, and confidence. Types of patient behaviors are differentiated by their position on the control continuum, their level of trust in healthcare professionals, and their past experiences. The typology of behaviors has the power to show patients' levels of empowerment and the way they are engaged in their own optimal and humanized care.

Keywords: humanism, caring, personhood, patient experience, patient role, healthcare professionals' attitudes, empowerment

Background

Respect for others combined with an ethic of care are the foundations of most healthcare professions. Yet, healthcare professionals who are caught up in day-to-day work may unconsciously think of an individual patient as *good*, *difficult*, or even *bad.* Reasons for such perceptions may include the way patients react to the specific healthcare context and the requirements they are facing. Understanding the different types of patients' behaviors can alert providers to problems that may arise and may help them to be better prepared to provide needed support, appropriate interventions, and advocacy. Awareness of types of behaviors and the social/psychological forces that influence patient behavior shape the way health professionals view individual patients and contribute to improved health care delivery. This paper is based upon a study that culminated in a previously published grounded theory article, *Protecting personhood: A classic grounded theory* (Didier et al., 2023/2024). As analysis on protecting personhood progressed, a typology of patients' behaviors also emerged. This paper offers a brief background on the original study but focuses on the description of the typology of

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patients' behaviors.

The role of the patient in the healthcare system has undergone considerable change in the last few decades. Unlike in the past, patients and their families today are encouraged to participate, collaborate, and be partners in the current healthcare system (Abelson et al., 2022; Vanstone et al., 2023; WHO, 2017). In a paternalistic model of care, the behavior of the patient has long been considered a criterion for casually attributing labels such as "good patient," "difficult patient" (Grocott & McSherry, 2018; Jadad et al., 2003; Michaelsen, 2021; Molina-Mula & Gallo-Estrada, 2020) or even a "bad" patient (Khalil, 2009). This kind of duality and labeling is outdated in the person-centered or partnership-orientated healthcare systems of today. Passivity is no longer the standard for the patient role. However, this paradigm change may not be that straightforward. Patient participation may be influenced by various factors such as patients' own beliefs about their roles, their levels of literacy and health conditions, the healthcare professionals' beliefs and attitudes, the predominant cultural traditions, and current healthcare policy. To optimize their health outcomes, patients need to be given the opportunity by healthcare professionals to seize their new role (Didier et al., 2020). However, both patients and healthcare professionals need support to do so (Martin & Finn, 2011). Healthcare professionals need to understand patients' behaviors toward the care received and the patient-healthcare professional relationship in order to respond adequately. Therefore, a study was initiated with the goal to understand more about hospitalized patients' perspectives on nursing and interprofessional healthcare delivery.

Method

Design

A classic grounded theory (GT) design was selected for this study. This design allows

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for patients to openly express their concerns during hospitalization and to freely speak from their own perspective. Participants' main concerns and how those concerns were addressed and processed were elicited. The classic GT method required the analyst to remain close to the data, to limit interpretation, and to determine patterns in the data. Concepts and their relationships emerged through the process of constant comparison of raw and coded data. Further, relationships between concepts were identified through the process of theoretical coding.

Participants/Sampling Methods

This study was conducted in two adult surgery departments (neurosurgery and ear, nose, and throat surgery) in a university hospital in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. The sample consisted of 32 adult patients, comprised of 15 women and 17 men, with a mean age of 54 years. Most patients were Swiss; only three patients originated from Southern or Eastern Europe, and two patients were from Western Europe. Participants were patients undergoing elective (n = 17) as well as emergency (n = 15) procedures. The average length of stay was 5.2 days (minimum: 1 day, maximum: 12 days). Participants were cared for by interdisciplinary healthcare teams, which included physicians, nurses, nursing assistants, physical therapists, occupational therapists, dieticians, chaplains, and others.

Human Subjects Protection

This study was conducted according to the comprehensive framework governing research involving humans in the form of the Swiss Federal Human Research Act (2011) and its accompanying ordinances (Federal Assembly of the Swiss Confederation, 2024). The processing of personal and sensitive data is protected by the Federal and Cantonal Data Protection Act (Federal Assembly of the Swiss Confederation, 2024). The study protocol was

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submitted to the local ethics committee. However, the data collected did not include health-related data. Therefore, the study did not fall under the Human Research Act (Federal Assembly of the Swiss Confederation, 2014). Each participant received written information on the study, had time for reflection, and turned in a signed consent form. All data were deidentified, and confidentiality was guaranteed to study participants. Participants' names included in this paper are pseudonyms.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected through individual face-to-face interviews. Interviews began with the following grand tour question about patients' experiences with healthcare delivery: "How was your experience in the interprofessional care environment?" As is appropriate with classic GT, follow-up questions to clarify issues allowed participants' perspectives to be more thoroughly explored. Different steps of classic GT, which were followed iteratively, included simultaneous data collection and analysis, open and selective coding, constant comparison, theoretical sampling, memoing, and sorting. These steps facilitated the emergence of the participants' main concern and the core category of the substantive theory.

The core category is of central importance in GT because it "accounts for most of the variation in the pattern of the participants' behavior" (Glaser, 1978, p. 93). As such, the core category constitutes the fundamental pattern of a phenomenon; it has explanatory power, and all other concepts are linked to it (Glaser, 1978). More importantly, grounded theory

> revolves around the main concern of the participants whose behavior continually resolves their concern. In studies of process, their continual resolving is the core variable. It is the prime mover of most of the behavior seen and talked about in a substantive area. It is what is going on! It emerges as the overriding pattern. (Glaser, 1998, p.

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The Theory and Related Typology

Both a basic social process theory and a typology emerged from this grounded theory study. Although this paper focuses on typology, it is helpful to briefly describe the companion theory, which was previously published (Didier et al., 2023/2024).

The Theory of *Aufgehobenheit,* or Protecting Personhood

The concepts of the theory are organized around the core category, which is represented by a German term, "Aufgehobenheit." For this term, there is no equivalent term in the English language. The concept emerged from the data. During the study, investigators noted that when patients perceived that they were receiving safe and protective, thus optimal care, they had a feeling of *aufgehoben*, which relates to feeling safe and being cared for. *Aufgehoben* depicted optimal care moments during interactions between patients and healthcare professionals. Feeling *aufgehoben* during care moments with healthcare professionals had the power to transform any encounter with the healthcare professionals into a positive, special, and dynamic experience. As the investigator conceptualized the process, the adjective *aufgehoben* was transformed into the noun *Aufgehobenheit* to stress its potential as a process and core concept. The substantive theory that emerged explains how patients activate processes to protect and maximize their personhood to receive optimal care. Thus, to make the concept more relatable, the phrase, *protecting personhood*, was chosen as the English term to represent the core category of *Aufgehobenheit*. The terms are interchangeable with *Aufgenhobenheit*, preferable in the German language and protecting personhood, depicting the concept in English. During the process of collecting and analyzing data for the *Aufgenhobenheit* theory, the investigators also identified the emergence of three distinct types of patients' behaviors.

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This paper describes that typology.

The Typology

Patients exhibited three distinct types of anticipatory behavior in their quest to obtain optimum care: propitiation, vigilance, and confidence. Patients were found to share common characteristics and strategies. Depending on individual patients and their experiences, these characteristics and strategies could be more or less present. In combination with the patients' experiences, the characteristics and strategies determined the stance the patients may take.

Stance

Patients' behaviors seem to be positioned on a continuum of control, either internal or external. Patients' positions on the continuum can be thought of as their stance. Stance is a social/psychological dimension of the three types of patients' behaviors. Movement along the continuum of control can be influenced by the person's experiences and/or by the level of anxiety or trust they have developed towards healthcare professionals and/or the healthcare environment, all of which may be interrelated.

Thus, stance encompasses a combination of attitudes and behaviors adopted by patients based on previous experiences. The stance adopted is related to control, trust, or mistrust. Moments of care and the way patients are treated or perceive they are treated by healthcare professionals will be decisive in patients' stance and the way they view the healthcare system and the environment. The stance will eventually inform patients' interactions with healthcare professionals. Some will vest responsibility to others, i.e., the healthcare professionals, and some will strive to maintain control. Stance is relevant to each type of patients' behaviors.

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The Stance of Vesting Responsibility. The definition of the concept *vest* is to turn over, confer, or bestow something to someone else. For the purposes of this study, the term *vest* refers to turning over control to another person, specifically a healthcare professional. Vesting responsibility means that the patient fully relies on the healthcare professionals and trusts in the hospital processes and procedures. This means patients consider they have no need to bother about anything for the care takes place automatically without any investment on their part. They trust healthcare professionals and follow their advice. Something bonds the patient to the healthcare professionals – a kind of trust that is built between the healthcare professionals and the patient. Patients feel safe in healthcare professionals' hands and believe that they do their best to meet expectations. These patients are willing to do what is recommended. Trust is enhanced through the feeling of *Aufgehobenheit,* that is, when the patient feels cared for, safe, and reassured, i.e., protected. This is how one can understand the concept of vesting responsibility as explained by Cindy: "Exactly, I am here now, and I must do what the physician tells me to do. If one does so, everything runs smoothly… He [the physician] is right, he knows his job, I do not." Patients who vest responsibility agree to take a back seat because they have observed the competencies of the healthcare professionals. They know healthcare professionals are concerned with patient safety and well-being, and that they will do their best. At this end of the continuum, patients feel safe in the hands of the healthcare professionals. They feel cared for and protected. Trust is enhanced by and in turn contributes to the feeling of *Aufgehobenheit*; when a patient feels cared for, safe, reassured and considered as a person.

The Stance of Keeping Control. Patients who do not fully vest responsibility do not necessarily mistrust healthcare professionals. They simply need to have guarantees to be sure

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that things are optimal. The need to maintain control is specific to patients who have lived non-optimal care moments with a rupture in the relationship between themselves and the healthcare professionals. These patients are keen to make suggestions to the healthcare professionals to improve their condition. They "track" information and care process. One participant, Jürgen, helped to conceptualize the concept of keeping control: "Maybe, [the role of the patient] is like a catalyst. I have the feeling that the patient's demand is like an indicator for both groups [nurses and physicians]. The urgency of the demand determines the level of urgency for both groups to communicate or not. If you say: 'Hey, now!' It will be done. If you just say, 'Please transmit it,' it is interpreted as less important." Through keeping control, patients are not passively waiting for the care to happen or the healthcare professionals to take action. Jürgen "forces" communication between the healthcare professionals because he really wants them to respond to his needs or his demands. This is due to his prior experiences, and partly due to his personality: he may be someone who needs to know and to control every piece of information. Keeping control is ensured by observing and assessing what is happening in the care environment. Another participant, Tino, explained that "errors happen because of haste, of fatigue, or maybe because of lack of attention… that is why it is important to keep control yourself." This patient is extremely vigilant; this is partly due to the fact that he had one issue concerning safe care while in the hospital. Thus, if safety is lacking, full *Aufgehobenheit* is not possible—his personhood is not protected. The patient is making sure that he is contributing to a safe environment. However, through his stance, the vigilant patient shows that he is expecting to recover within a safe and caring environment. He expects and needs to be protected, reassured, and respected. The patient is conscious of being a patient, but he is a person with wishes, needs, and fears, and these have to be addressed. *Aufgeho-*

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benheit (protecting personhood) responds to all of these aspects related to his expectations. It is something that happens between the patient and healthcare professionals, which the patient perceives and that feeds back into the person's feelings and stance. Most patients want to contribute to an optimal care environment, even when they outwardly display a controlling stance. The sense of *Aufgehobenheit* will be nurtured, shrunken, or disrupted according to the behavior/attitudes of the healthcare professionals toward patients and their needs. If *Aufgehobenheit* is disrupted, patients might feel bad or perceive themselves negatively, as if they were not able to fully protect their personhood.

Each patient develops his/her own attitude depending upon their expectations and care experiences, the *Aufgehobenheit*-generating healthcare professional behaviors, and the unfolding of interactions between patients and professionals. Before being admitted to the hospital, patients think about their future hospitalization; for example, each hopes to be treated like a person, which is encapsulated in the core category of *Aufgehobenheit*. Such an expectation, whether fulfilled or not, will contribute to the type of patient that the person being admitted becomes. Patients may evolve and move into different types of behavior based on their experiences and expectations.

Types of Patients' Behaviors

During data analysis for the *Aufgehobenheit* theory, a typology of patients' behaviors emerged. To ensure parsimony of the theory, the typology was initially set aside. While all patients seek to protect their personhood, different types of patients are distinguished by their position on the continuum of control, their level of trust in healthcare professionals, and their past experiences. The following typology includes three types of patients' behaviors that anticipate or strive for *Aufgehobenheit*: propitiation, vigilance, and confidence.

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Propitiation. Propitiation means to appease someone or make them happy by doing a particular thing or acting in a certain way. Patients who propitiate have accepted their role as patients and are anticipating it. These patients adopt the stance of vesting responsibility. They will act and play the role they believe healthcare professionals expect them to play in order to create or ensure the best conditions for "everything to run smoothly" and for receiving the best care. They agree to act like patients according to their own interpretation of what that entails; namely, patients are conciliatory. With this behavior, these patients hope to receive good care. Healthcare professionals will likely view these as "model" patients. They actually consider themselves to be in charge of creating the best atmosphere. For example, one patient said,

> What it means? It means that during that time I will not get coffee at four o'clock when I ask, or I will have to do it myself. Sometimes, you have to be satisfied with what you get. The food is not like at home. That is logical. I have to accept it.

This participant has anticipated that he will have to bear constraining, unfamiliar conditions. He has anticipated a change and believes he must adapt to his patient condition to receive optimal care. Through his attitude, he wants to ensure an optimal environment. The responsibility for optimal care is shared between patients and healthcare professionals. Hence, the concept of "model" is comprised of the fact that patients not only feel responsible for the way they are treated but also behave accordingly. They consider themselves as co-constructors of an optimal environment. The "model patient" has thoroughly observed and assessed healthcare professionals' patterns of reaction to patients' demands. Therefore, they know how to react so as not to "annoy" healthcare professionals and to satisfy their own concept of the model patient role.

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Patients who propitiate take measures to maximize their chances of creating an optimal environment and, thus, their chances of receiving optimal care. These individuals will be less sensitive to the variations in the environment, for they are trying to control these through their own behavior and attitude. Their behaviors and attitudes are related to a pragmatic personality, to the positive experiences of care moments, and/or to the awareness of healthcare professionals' behaviors and attitudes during care moments. These patients generally relate the unfolding of the care moments to their own behavior and attitude or expectation. Lydia explains it in these terms:

> …as a patient, you can have a considerable power. You can have it. […] And as a patient, you learn quite quickly, if they ask, 'Would you like to stay in bed or would you like to stand up?' […] And if I say 'no' in this same situation, in that case, it will be interpreted like a negative…. Despite that it is a very clear answer. And some day, you will earn the reputation of a difficult patient. If I say yes, in that case, I will be easier to deal with.

However, the behavior and attitudes of patients who propitiate do not correspond with passivity. They are aware of the variations in the environment. Nevertheless, these patients do not seem to be upset because they anticipate that they might need to adjust. They ask for clarification when necessary, and they do so in a diplomatic way. Interestingly, some patients have tried to be model patients without perceived success or the expected results. When patients experience less optimal, unresolved disruptive care moments, they may become vigilant towards their environment or anxious about future care moments. A non-optimal care moment that is resolved immediately or at a future time will allow (or again allow) the patient to adopt a positive stance towards the care environment. She/he might even become a model

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or confident patient, meaning that the patient trusts the care environment and the healthcare professionals again – but only to a certain degree.

Vigilance. Patients who exhibit vigilant behavior anticipate care moments with some apprehension. Reasons for this apprehension may comprise the personality of the patient who is controlling-vigilant by nature, anxious regarding hospitalization, or anxious by nature. Patients in this group may also be apprehensive due to a first or bad experience of care moments, which has not been resolved because there was no opportunity for reconciliation. Contrary to model patients (who propitiate), vigilant patients are very aware of and sensitive to any variation in the care environment, assessing everything or adopting an attitude that shows that they are distrustful: taking personal measures (personal resources, negative anticipation). Vigilant patients will be on the alert during entire hospitalizations. They adopt a stance of keeping control. These patients need to have guarantees that their care is in safe hands. Paula explains, "When I arrive at hospital… well… for the first three [hospitalizations], I guess I cannot remember anymore, but I need to be reassured." She mentioned right from the start that she is an anxious person. In the past, she had experienced challenging moments. Thus, she needs to be reassured by healthcare professionals: "I was afraid of arriving in that operating room, like in 2012. I had an anxiety attack, I believe, or whatever, but I was trembling. I just was not able to help it. I did not like that at all." Without guarantees, vigilant patients neither feel in safe hands nor feel cared for. They start anticipating negative moments and subsequently remember only negative experiences.

Confidence. Patients who exhibit confident behavior have experienced positive care moments, recently or in the past. They may have also experienced negative care moments, but these were resolved. Confident patients are mostly familiar with the environment and are

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confident about their hospitalization and recovery. A vigilant patient can transform into a confident patient if her/his concerns are adequately addressed. Confident patients tend to entrust responsibility for their care and treatment and place it into the hands of healthcare professionals more readily than vigilant patients. However, if they need some clarification, they will be more assertive than propitiating, or model, patients. Therefore, they may adopt either stance—vesting responsibility or keeping control. Contrary to vigilant patients, who might be anxious, confident patients have previously had success in trying to resolve negative care moments. Just like model patients, they consider themselves as co-creators of good care. However, they are not necessarily concerned with pleasing the healthcare professionals at all costs. Olivia is an example of a confident patient. She stated, "The patient should participate. He should accept what is happening to him. He should have the opportunity to ask questions, how, why, and yes, to participate and not just think, 'that is okay.' Not just take things like they come. And I see, I have the problem. Hence, I should take responsibility for not agreeing with every single thing." Anticipating confident patients do not just accept everything and are not concerned with pleasing healthcare professionals. They assume responsibility for being assertive and critiquing or for discussing issues they do not agree with. As noted above, patients move on a continuum. Specifically, Olivia is an example of a patient who is vigilant and anxious by her nature but has become confident during the hospitalizations because she mostly had positive experiences. One negative experience was repaired through a successful process of reconciliation. The patients develop specific behaviors, attitudes, and feelings depending on their experiences.

Discussion

This paper briefly described a classic grounded theory study that culminated a

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grounded theory: *Protecting personhood: A classic grounded theory* (Didier et al., 2023/2024) and the unexpected finding of a typology of patients' behaviors, which is separate from, yet supports and enhances the theory of *Aufgehobenheit,* also known in the English language as protecting personhood. Knowledge of different types of patients' behaviors and their motivations has the potential to improve healthcare delivery and outcomes. In particular, the study raises questions about professionals' perceptions of patients and illusions created by the different types of behaviors. The stance is related to the reaction of the person, it does not define the person but is a part of the person and is evolutive. The propitiating "model patient" is characterized by a natural tendency to anticipate the moments of care and to "over-adjust," generally ready to follow the lead of healthcare professionals in order to obtain optimal care. These patients perceive responsibility for experiencing good care moments as much as the healthcare professionals. Despite the fact that this appears as a top-down relationship, the patient is making a choice. He is playing model, but he is not passive. This contrasts with the normative approaches to relationships of certain sociologists such as Durkheim (1858-1917), Weber (1864-1920), Parsons (1902-1979) or psychiatrists as Freud (1856-1939). Parsons criticized the theory of the sick role (Parsons, 1975), defined the patient-professional relationship as one of obligations and duties (Milton, 2004), and paid little attention to the experience of the persons who live with an illness (Frank, 2013). In those approaches, the patient is passive as a child facing powerful parents (Milton, 2004). In this GT, the patient is seen as an empowered person who, however, decides to adjust according to his/her interpretation. *Vigilant Patients* generally have bad experiences of healthcare in the past. Therefore, they are on their toes, tending to expect the worst. Therefore, they are suspicious, trying to detect any problems that threaten the delivery of optimal care. These patients empower themselves in the

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sense of Freire, who is the founder of the pedagogy of the oppressed (Holmström & Röing, 2010). They do not wait, but they strive to keep their personhood intact or restore their personhood along with their sense of safety and caring (Didier et al., 2023/2024). These patients believe in the very value of caring. The importance of caring has been highlighted by Watson (2018). Similarly, the importance of values such as trust, respect, empathy and compassion has been emphasized by Buber (1965) or Mayeroff (1971) and is evident in the international codes of ethics for most healthcare professionals (ICN, 2021; International Federation of Social Workers, 2018; International Federation of Sports Physical Therapists, 2014; Nursing & Midwifery Council, 2015; Sasso, 2008; World Federation of Occupational Therapists, 2024; World Medical Association, 2022; World Physiotherapy, 2022).

The types of patients' behaviors are not permanent, as the Aufgehobenheit theory highlights, and is also emphasized by others (Groves et al., 2023). Healthcare professionals, particularly nurses, have the potential to influence the patients' behaviors by empowering them and allowing for reconciliation with patients' sense of personhood. Patients who feel safe and in caring hands, can unfold into *confident patients* provided nurses advocate for them. Similarly, nurses may help other healthcare professionals to be attentive to patients' expectations and perceptions. *Vigilant Patients* are more challenging to care for. However, they are excellent signposts for gaps in healthcare or other safety-limiting processes. Patients from this group can challenge healthcare professionals concerning their ethical responsibility. As a consequence, healthcare professionals can improve on this and provide adequate care for the patients. Understanding the processes leading to patient's types of behavior can move healthcare professionals toward including patients as part of interprofessional teams, sharing power with them, and subsequently reducing or limiting altogether patients' anxieties and distrust due to

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bad experiences (Didier et al., 2023/2024; Groves et al., 2023). The newly discovered theory of *protecting personhood* and the related typology of patients' behaviors are supported by the theoretical findings of Groves et al., (2023). Patients' sense of security and safety may be enhanced or hindered depending on the level of trust patients have developed within the relationships with healthcare professionals (Groves et al., 2023). Patients who have lived through unresolved negative experiences are more likely to develop distrust or an attitude of negative anticipation towards the healthcare system and the professionals as they do not feel in safe and caring hands, notwithstanding the social construction they have towards healthcare professionals' competencies (Hovey et al., 2011).

The classic grounded theory method was appropriate for this study because it focused on patient perceptions and patterns of behavior. As pointed out by Donaldson and Crowley (1978), "Concern with the patterning of human behavior in the interaction with the environment in critical life situations…" (p. 113) falls at the praxis of healthcare professions, particularly nursing.

The typology of patients' behavior has implications for the human-centered caring dimension of healthcare. "Being with", "caring about", and "caring for" are cornerstones of the healthcare professions. Caring about one another can lead an individual to *be with* another person in her/his world (Mayeroff, 1971; Swanson, 1991). Similarly, the nursing theorist Watson (1988), wrote that, "All of human caring is related to inter subjective human response to health-illness; environmental-personal interaction; a knowledge of the nurse caring process; self-knowledge, knowledge of one's power and transaction limitations" (p. 901). Watson suggests that caring is mindful and reflective, and it is delivered with conscious intentionality and compassionate concern (Watson, 2002, 2018). However, when patients focus

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their strategies on pleasing healthcare professionals and these professionals, in turn, gravitate toward those who make their lives easier, healthcare and more importantly patients can suffer. In such cases, healthcare professionals do not have the opportunity to really encounter patients and acknowledge their respective worlds.

Although nurses, physicians, and other healthcare professionals within an interprofessional healthcare team may applaud "model" patients (who propitiate), Buber (1965, p. 76) suggested that interhuman communication is threatened by what he termed "the lie", which emerges when people strive to "seem" a certain way—thereby stifling genuine dialogue. So, rather than proceeding from their real fears and concerns, "model" patients proceed from how they wish to seem to the staff, thus creating a barrier to authentic communication. Nurses and other healthcare professionals may be especially susceptible to the gravitational pull toward these patients. In their theory of the *Awareness of Dying*, Glaser and Strauss (1965) found that staff have certain expectations of patients. They expect patients to behave with dignity and refrain from displaying their emotions—whereby staff might judge whether patients are dying in a model or "acceptable" way—a way that diminishes the staff's discomfort yet leaves little room for caring relationships. This can produce a false perspective on the part of the staff as these patients invest energy into how they are perceived, rather than the self-focused task of healing. When professionals recognize this barrier to communication, strategies can be developed to improve understanding between themselves and patients, thus increasing the likelihood of improved healthcare outcomes (Grocott & McSherry, 2018). The other two types of patients' behavior can also have implications for professional and patient communication patterns.

The vigilant patient's reaction exemplifies the paramount significance of the experi-

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ence of the patients regarding their sense of protecting personhood (Didier et al., 2023/2024). Past and present experiences of patients have the power to shape their trust or mistrust in healthcare professionals or healthcare institutions (Groves et al., 2023). The newly discovered theory of protecting personhood and the related typology of patients is supported by the theoretical findings of Groves et al., (2023), who also found that patients' sense of security and safety may be enhanced or hindered depending on the level of trust the patients have developed within the relationships with the healthcare professionals. Patients who have lived through bad experiences are more likely to have distrustful attitudes or negative anticipation towards the healthcare system and professionals as they do not feel in safe and caring hands, notwithstanding the social construction they have towards healthcare professionals' competencies (Hovey et al., 2011).

Conclusion

This typology of patients' behaviors can help raise awareness of patient processes and interpersonal communication within the healthcare setting. Thus, the quality of healthcare may be improved. Since the typology emerged as a secondary and unexpected outcome of a larger study, further research may lead to modification, refinement, and expansion. Future studies are necessary to further understand and clarify distinctions among the three types of behaviors and to determine whether there are other types of behavior that did not emerge from this study. Also, studies are needed to identify indicators, properties, and dimensions of the three types of behaviors. This study opens the door to a greater understanding of healthcare communication and offers an exciting opportunity for future research.

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I'm Developing a Theory, but I Have No Idea What it is:

Confusion in Classic Grounded Theory

Barry Chametzky, PhD

Abstract

There are numerous academic and personal reasons to explain why some novice researchers may be anxious and thus confused when conducting a study using a classic grounded theory research design. When using this specific design, though, confusion must be tolerated and even welcomed because only through confusion can a well-developed theory be developed. In this article, the author presented four specific areas of potential confusion, explained why there might be bewilderment, and how a less-experienced scholar might overcome those perplexing moments. Specifically, the author will discuss (a) grand tour questions, (b) writing codes and memoing, (c) constant comparison, and (d) selective coding as he demonstrates why confusion is valuable in this particular research design.

Keywords: classic grounded theory, confusion, grand tour question, theory development, memoing, constant comparison, coding

Congratulations on gaining IRB approval to start collecting data for your research study. If you are like many novice researchers using classic grounded theory, you are concerned about the data analysis process because the rules are different with this research design compared to a different qualitative research design such as case study. In a qualitative

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case study, for example, you will have clearly defined parameters within which you will work. There are specific research questions you have already setup. Additionally, there are questions in your instrument protocol(s) that have been developed and adequately validated. You, as a case study researcher, know the direction in which you will go even if you do not yet know the final answers. However, in classic grounded theory, such a road map is not presented and spelled out for you; there are no predetermined research questions or instrument questions to guide you. You will be confused (Glaser, 2001, 2008, 2010, 2013a) for a great part of your research study, and that behavior is perfectly normal, accepted, and acceptable. As Dr. Lee Yarwood-Ross stated, a researcher must "be ready to . . . tolerate confusion" (Personal communication, April 26, 2024). Dr. Yarwood-Ross went on to explain that if a researcher "cannot tolerate not knowing in advance, [then he or she should] choose a different methodology. There are plenty of others at your disposal" (Personal communication, April, 26, 2024). Presuming you are ready and willing to be confused, then continue reading for in this methodological paper, the author will discuss four specific elements of classic grounded theory in light of confusion: (a) the grand tour question, (b) writing codes and memoing, (c) constant comparison and open coding, and (d) selective coding. However, before these elements can be addressed, there is great value in understanding in a more nuanced manner why there is confusion when conducting a research study using classic grounded theory.

Confusion in Classic Grounded Theory

In classic grounded theory, an important dictum is there must not be preconception (Pergert, 2014). As scholars, researchers, and human beings, we have experiences and knowledge in many different areas. Such experience and knowledge help us and others as we

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go about our lives and work. Additionally, we use such experience and knowledge to conduct research (academic or otherwise) and help people who may be less experienced than we are.

While researchers conduct a classic grounded theory study, a *tabula rasa*—to an achievable degree—must be maintained. The important idea here is "to an achievable possible" for, as we all know, it is difficult to set aside all preconceived thoughts. Yet, all predetermined ideas that are explicitly external to the given research environment must be suspended (Glaser, 2013b) and set aside so the researcher can truly listen to what the participants are saying. If a researcher adds any external influences like predetermined knowledge or paraphrasing or re-explaining a given point (Chametzky, 2024), the data will be manipulated and forced. Anytime the researcher "knows" what the participant means, interprets a comment, or makes a connection to something else in his or her head, preconception has taken place. If a researcher introduces preconception in the data collection process, then the data are bastardized (Chametzky, 2022), impure, and destroyed. When a participant states something, that idea must be accepted without change because, according to Glaser in 1996, we researchers must follow Max Weber's idea of "'*verstehen*, whereby the investigator understands a group's behavior by viewing their action through their eyes' (p. 47)" (Chametzky, 2024, n.p.). If a researcher adds a paraphrased idea or a re-explanation, then *verstehen* is not achieved.

It is exactly this practice of data bastardization that must be suspended when doing a classic grounded theory study (Chametzky, 2022). But data manipulation is not the only area of preconception that may be present in a research study. If a researcher had predetermined ideas about what the problem of the study might be and believes that he or she is "supposed to study [a specific] problem and . . . cannot find it" (Glaser, 2013b, p. 13) in the data, then

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how can the researcher study the information to know what is important to the participant? As Glaser (2013b) explained, the correct answer is "to see what you are finding" (p. 13) and not look for what you think you might need to see. From this short discussion, then, it should be clear that, broadly speaking, preconception can take place either because a researcher is using previous knowledge or is trying to look for an incorrect problem. With this basic information in mind, our attention is now turned to the grand tour question.

Grand tour question

Remember, as classic grounded theory researchers, we cannot and do not know initially what is important to our participants; that idea is exactly what we want to discover—the main concerns of the respondents and how they address them in a given environment. To determine their main concerns without presuming previous knowledge and without preconceiving, we need a broad enough question so each participant individually can determine what is important. This type of inquiry is called a grand tour question (Spradley, 1979) and comes from the field of ethnography.

There are different types of grand tour questions in ethnographic research (Spradley, 1979), but the purpose of the question is the same: to "encourage informants to ramble on and on" (Spradley, 1979, p. 87) or, in classic grounded theory terminology, to "instill a spill" (Glaser, 2009, p. 22). Regardless of which phrase is chosen, the objective is the same: to get the participant to talk about whatever is important to him or her.

A novice researcher might justifiably ask how such a question might be developed and what might it look like. Holton and Walsh (2017) offered an excellent suggestion:

> For example, if you were interested in exploring the impending status passage (Glaser & Strauss, 1971) of university students in their final year of study, you might open the

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> discussion by saying, "I am supposed to be studying how students in their final year of study prepare for what's next, but I don't know what to ask you. What do you think we should talk about? (p. 60).

What an amazing grand tour question because it is intentionally vague to allow the participant to determine what is important. Simmons (2022) offered other types of grand tour questions:

> Please tell me about a typical day in your life.
>
> Tell me about your family, growing up.
>
> What was life like when you were a child?
>
> What do you think the future holds for you?
>
> Tell me about your relationship. (p. 259).

It should be clear from these examples that if you were a participant who had to answer any of these questions, your answers would be different from someone else. And that is exactly the beauty in data obtained via a classic grounded theory study; with such a broad question, each participant can respond however he or she feels most appropriate.

Such questions have another, more practical use. Given the seemingly complex nature of classic grounded theory—at least from the perspective of novice researchers, there may be value in understanding that "the beauty of classic grounded theory is that it is all around us. We just need to be open to seeing and experiencing it" (Chametzky, 2022, p. 44). If novice researchers could practice it on a daily basis, they would discover that classic grounded theory is not as complex as they might have initially thought. To that end, I propose that they adopt the practice that I describe in the following paragraphs to help alleviate some confusion and give them an opportunity to experience classic grounded theory.

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As an online professor, I meet virtually with many students for 1-on-1 sessions concerning various issues. But sometimes, they do not tell me what they want to discuss until we are already online together. So, I have taken a cue from Simmons (2022) and ask an excellent grand tour questions to my learners: To what do I owe the pleasure of this meeting? What might be important to one person is not an issue for another, and I do not yet know what is important. Hence, my grand tour question will help the student talk about whatever topic is important and give me the desired information so I can help the learner.

In a myopic sense, when I initially connect with a student, I am confused because I do not know what we will be discussing or why. In classic grounded theory terms, I do not know what the main concern is, and I do not yet know the behaviors in which they engage to address that concern. As in classic grounded theory, I need to accept and tolerate the confusion until later in the conversation, when I will be enlightened. Such an opportunity then affords me the opportunity to allow myself to be confused and experience that behavior so that when I encounter it in research, I am not shying away but rather embracing it.

Based on the brief aforementioned discussion, a grand tour question has two different but equally important and connected goals. The first goal is to allow the participant to speak about whatever issue is important. The second goal is for the researcher to "tolerate some confusion" (Glaser, 1999, p. 838) at least until later in the analysis. But, from another perspective, the participant may be confused as well because when you start the data collection process, an explanation of the study is not to be offered to the participants (Glaser, 2001), for such an explanation would force the topic and result in preconceived information. So, when participants are not led and directed into a given topic area "and just allowed to vent, [they] will gravitate to talking about what is on their mind" (Glaser, 2001, p. 105), they are, to some

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degree, confused as well. Through all the confusion, though, a theory will eventually develop. Once the interview has ended, the next area of confusion to be experienced is coding and memoing, which will be discussed in the next section.

Writing Codes and Memoing

After your first interview (and subsequent ones until a core variable [or category] has been determined), you will code all your data; such a process is called open coding. As you are coding, you are advised to keep these three important questions in mind: "What is the main concern of the participant? What is this data a study of [and] What is actually happening in the data" (Glaser, 1978, p. 57)? With these questions, you will be able to stay more focused on the data rather than any potential interpretations and explanations you might bring to the research process. Additionally, with these questions, you will (or should) be able to determine behaviors. Remember that as a classic grounded theorist, you are looking for behaviors that participants exhibit to address their main concern.

At this point in your analysis, however, you will have a list of code words or short phrases that ultimately will be valuable to you but may currently seem vague, with minimal value, and imprecise because the required connections are not yet present. Here is another element of confusion in classic grounded theory. But, have no fear, for tolerating confusion is perfectly normal and expected (Glaser, 1999).

Now, you will start the memo process. Often, novice researchers—especially those working on a thesis or dissertation—are confused with memos because their format is not prescribed (Chametzky, 2023). These researchers need to trust the process and procedures of classic grounded theory (Glaser, 2012) in spite of their confusion and any potential imprecision they might feel is needed. When there is trust in the process (Chametzky, 2023; Glaser,

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2012), memos will be fashioned in a correct manner. "The minute the researcher cannot tolerate not being in control of the data and fears the unknown, for whatever reason(s), is when memoing will falter and the important tenets of classic grounded theory will not be addressed" (Chametzky, 2023, p. 43). What is important in memoing is the preconscious thoughts and connections you are making and presenting. How these connections are made will be discussed further in the next section on the constant comparison method.

Constant Comparison Method

For inexperienced researchers, arguably the hardest part of a dissertation or thesis is data analysis because here is where sense is made from the obtained information. In grounded theory though, the process of sense-making takes time, and the researcher must accept and tolerate frequent and repeated confusion and uncertainty (Chametzky, 2024) until much later in the analysis process when things will become clearer.

At this point, though, the researcher needs to compare one memo with another to find and uncover previously hidden connections between the memos. Such comparisons, called the constant comparison method (Glaser, 1965) and is the core tool in classic grounded theory that will help a researcher uncover and discover the theory to explain participants' behaviors as they address their main concerns.

As a novice researcher, during the constant comparison process, you undoubtedly will have many questions and more than a few moments of confusion. I will proactively address a few potential concerns and areas of confusion.

First, as you compare two codes to see their connection, you might feel that you are perhaps making things up or that there is no obvious connection between the two terms. To the first part, I would say that you are not making things up. What you are and will be

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demonstrating are the "conscious and preconscious realizations" (Glaser, 2014, p. 3) that are being established. To the second part of the concern regarding no obvious connection between codes, I would offer that you might need to reflect—perhaps in some stream-of-consciousness writing—to see what preconscious connections might be presented consciously. If there are no evident and obvious connections, that is acceptable, as that code might be connected to a different code. Set it aside for the time being. What is important as you compare each coded memo with another is that you do not rush the process. The constant comparison method takes time. According to Dr. Lee Yarwood-Ross, a classic grounded theory scholar,

> Original contribution to knowledge is not achieved in a rushed fashion. If one takes their time to tolerate the confusion and trust in the method . . . it will work! Rush it and your work will lack depth and you will not be truly proud what you have discovered. (Personal communication, April 26, 2024)

Very quickly, your memo bank (from the codes and constant comparisons) will be rather large; do not be concerned for that is acceptable, even though you might feel rather overwhelmed and confused by the entire process. And after the second and third interviews (and more) you will still be confused. Imagine being told that you are to do a 10,000-piece puzzle without a starting picture. The best you can do is find the border pieces and work from there. The same is true in a classic grounded theory study to a degree. Your memos and your comparisons of each memo form not only the border and parameters of the puzzle (that is, the theory you are developing) but also the inner pieces. Said differently, you are developing your theory now with your first memo. And you do not know what that developing theory is, and that is scary and confusing. Glaser stated that researchers need to have confidence in the

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process and believe that emergence will happen (Glaser, 1978, 2012); it does work. That advice, though difficult to accept, is what I would offer to novice classic grounded theory researchers.

As you develop your memos and find heretofore connections and start putting pieces together, you will begin to feel a slight sense of understanding. Keep in mind that though you might have been able to connect a few small pieces (that is, codes) together, and you might even have an idea of a central theme (that is, core variable or category), most likely you will not be where you think you are because not all or many connections will have yet been established. Again, the researcher is reminded of the comments from Glaser (1999) that the researcher must have "[the] ability to . . . tolerate some confusion, and . . . tolerate confusion's attendant regression" (p. 838). You will be rearranging your codes and comparing the new connections many times; the process will take as long as it takes (Glaser, 2001). Do not rush through this process, though you might want to do so. Do not believe "You've got it" until you are absolutely certain. And if the core variable or category does not emerge, you will need to get additional data, code the new data, write additional memos, and constantly compare the codes more (Glaser, 2001). Once you believe you have a core variable, you will enter the selective coding stage where further confusion may exist.

Selective Coding

At this point in your analysis, through all your memoing and constant comparing of memos, you have discovered the core variable (or category) that explains most (if not all) of your data. Congratulations, but you are not finished. At this point, you need to code your data more selectively to determine and enrich the subcategories and properties of each category in the core variable (or category). While you are now more experienced in coding and constant-

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ly comparing, there is still some confusion that may exist because you don't yet fully know about any subcategories or properties of each category in your theory. But, as you code, write, and compare memos further, such elements will become obvious just as you had done in the open coding process. Once again, being tolerant and accepting of confusion (Chametzky, 2024) is required. As you may have noticed, the level of confusion now is considerably less than when you started coding and memoing your first interview.

While you might have had a difficult time trusting my words and accepting confusion, you can see now the payoff. You can now see how confusion was and is a good thing because, without it, you would not have reached this point in your study. Doing a classic grounded theory study is highly experiential. A more experienced scholar can explain all the points in classic grounded theory clearly but if you have never done them, they are purely theoretical to you. Once you have experienced what a classic grounded theory study is like, you have a more enriched, nuanced understanding of the research design. Everyone's first time is hyper-myopic and anxiety-laden. Think of driving a car the first time you did it. For me, I was not able to listen to the radio at all because it was a distraction while I was focusing on the speed of the car, the lanes, other traffic, the lights, and the road. Now, I am able to talk, drive, and pay attention to the road all at the same time. The same is true with a classic grounded theory study. The next study you do will be so much easier.

Conclusion

Classic grounded theory, as is common with other research designs, has certain tenets to which researchers must adhere. Where classic grounded theory differs from other designs is in data collection and analysis. Novice scholars often have greater experience in other qualitative designs due to their formational training. And confusion stems from the need to

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escape the (potential) comfort of other designs and experience all that classic grounded theory has to offer (Glaser, 2008). If a researcher focuses on (a) what is occurring in the data, (b) what the main concern is for the participant is, and (c) how he or she attempts to address that main concern (Glaser, 1978), the scholar will be in a good place. Additionally, Glaser (2008) commented that the remedy for confusion in classic grounded theory is to experience and believe that the process will work—because it will—and to jump in and experience all the research design can offer; simply stated, the novice researcher should "just do it" (p. 90).

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Exploring Caregiver Grief: A Glaserian (Classic) Grounded Theory Protocol

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Abstract

Preparing a research protocol using Glaserian (classic) grounded theory (GT) is often challenging for novice researchers due to aspects of the methodology deviating from more familiar quantitative research and also from some aspects of other qualitative methods. Yet, universities and ethics review boards often expect certain information to be presented for the researcher to receive approval to begin data collection. This article provides an example of a Glaserian (classic) GT protocol approved by an ethics review board. The exemplar explains how Glaserian (classic) GT will be used to formulate a theory about the primary concerns and behaviors of spousal caregivers who have lost their partners to Parkinson's disease. In-depth interviews of bereaved spousal caregivers will be analyzed using constant comparative method to identify the participants' main concern and the behaviors used to address it. The

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unique nature of Glaserian (classic) GT necessitates navigating institutional requirements by providing the required information with the protocol while also educating the reader about GT.

Keywords: Glaserian (Classic) Grounded Theory, Research Protocol, caregivers, Parkinson's disease, ethics review boards

There is a critical need for well-constructed examples of grounded theory protocols[1] that meet both the institution and an ethics review board[2] standards. Many students and researchers, particularly novice grounded theorists and doctoral students, struggle with designing protocols that balance methodological guidelines with ethical requirements. This challenge is especially pronounced in Glaserian (classic) grounded theory, where aspects of the methodology deviate from traditional qualitative research norms. Universities programs and ethics review boards often expect specific information to be included in a research protocol. However, this can require researchers to navigate the dual task of meeting these expectations while educating the reader about grounded theory.

This paper addresses this gap by providing a protocol for a Glaserian (classic) grounded study approved by the institution that can serve as a model for student researchers and those

[1] In academia, the terms prospectus, proposal, and protocol refer to distinct documents that serve specific purposes in the research process. The prospectus is a preliminary plan outlining the investigator's ideas regarding the research topic (Howard, 2019). The proposal builds upon the prospectus and justifies the research's need. This document is more comprehensive, detailing the project's objectives, significance, methodology, and anticipated outcomes, often including a literature review at this stage (Bhosale, 2022). Finally, the protocol is the most detailed research document, serving as a manual for conducting the study while ensuring adherence to ethical standards for the chosen methodology (Bhosale, 2022; Makram, et al., 2024).

[2] Within the United States, ethics review boards are called Institutional Review Boards (IRBs). Throughout the rest of the article IRB will be used to refer to ethics review boards.

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new to Glaserian (classic) grounded theory. Once approved, the information within this protocol was used to submit an IRB application, which was also approved. This article provides a practical example that will assist researchers with meeting academic and regulatory requirements, reducing the risk of delays or rejections during the IRB review process, and supporting the integrity of their methodological approach.

Protocol Exemplar

Recently, I completed a qualitative phenomenological study to evaluate caregivers who care for their husbands with Parkinson's disease. The informative study helped detail these women's lived experiences as caregivers (White & Palmieri, 2024). During their interviews, they explained how they often put their feelings and needs aside for the well-being of their loved one with Parkinson's disease. They lost their self-identity, and all their activities revolved around the illness.

Approximately six months after the completion of the study, I received a letter from a participant explaining how she had lost her husband. She went on to explain how thankful she was to have the opportunity to participate in the prior study, which offered knowledge about that season of her caregiving career. She explained that she was having difficulty adjusting to her new role of being herself, whatever that new season meant. About two more months passed, and I received another letter from a different participant. The second participant explained in more detail that she had no idea what to do, and when she started doing research, there was very little information that could offer her guidance. I began talking with my mentor about the problem and decided that something needed to be done for these wives or husbands who gave all their time to help care for their spouses.

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Background

Information about caregiver experiences after the death of their loved one is scarce. For this reason, this study will use a Glaserian (classic) grounded theory methodology. Existing research focuses its attention on how caregivers struggle with relationship death (Carter et al., 2012; Rigby et al., 2021) and mourning (Nielsen et al., 2016) their loved ones before they pass away. The common term "anticipatory grief" (Garner, 1997), or the act of preparing for the loss of a loved one (Nielsen et al., 2016), explains the feelings these women caregivers had as they slowly lost their spouses from neurodegenerative and neurocognitive diseases. Historically, caregivers have moderate assistance before death but not after the death of their spouse. However, caregivers still need support during the time after, as many levels of emotions will be processed, which can take extended amounts of time.

Additionally, the former caregivers have now found themselves with vast amounts of time on their hands, which can lead to loneliness, guilt, and depression, as their whole identity was wrapped up in being the caregiver (White & Palmieri, 2024). Post-caregiver syndromes occur when a caregiver experiences a state of burnout, marked by symptoms like feeling overwhelmed, constant worry, frequent fatigue, weight fluctuations, and easy irritability or anger, which serves as a warning sign for potential future despair (Mora-Lopez, et al., 2022). Caregivers lose their identity during caregiving, which becomes more involved the longer the caregivers must provide care to the patient/family member (White & Palmieri, 2024). Consequently, they deserve support after their partner's death as they learn their new roles and adjust their activities and behaviors to focus on themselves.

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Purpose

This study aims to formulate a theory regarding the primary concerns faced by spousal caregivers who have lost their partners to Parkinson's disease. It will also explore the behavioral patterns that emerge after their spouse's death. Therefore, the research question has evolved into: What are the main concerns for spousal caregivers who have lost their spouses to Parkinson's disease, and what are their primary challenges?

Methodology

The proposed study employs a Glaserian (classic) grounded theory design to develop a comprehensive theory. The Glaserian (classic) grounded theory methodology is particularly suited to exploring complex social processes and behaviors, making it ideal for examining the experiences of caregivers following the death of their spouses due to Parkinson's disease. The primary objective is to uncover and conceptualize these caregivers' main concerns and the behavioral patterns of caregivers in the aftermath of their significant loss. By simultaneously gathering and analyzing data through interviews (Glaser, 1998), the study seeks to generate a theory that reveals bereaved caregivers' underlying dynamics and coping mechanisms, providing valuable insights into their unique challenges and needs.

Study Design

This grounded theory study aims to explore the experiences of spouse caregivers who have lost their spouses to Parkinson's Disease. The focus will be on understanding the behaviors of these caregivers following their spouse's death. Participants will be interviewed using the Zoom platform, with each session lasting between 30 and 60 minutes. While Glaser (1998) recommended against recording and transcribing interviews, interviews for this study will be recorded and transcribed due to institutional requirements. Field notes will also be

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taken. Field notes and transcriptions can be used as needed to begin data analysis immediately following each interview. Another reason interviews will be transcribed is that when working with a research team, having transcribed interviews ensures that all team members have access to the same exact information, which is crucial for consistent and collaborative analysis.

All participants will receive a copy of an informed consent and demographic questionnaire via email before their interview. This will give each person time to read the consent form and identify areas of concern. In line with Glaser's assertion that "all is data" (Glaser, 1998, p. 8), this demographic information will be analyzed as part of the overall data set.

To ensure the ethical integrity of this study, measures will be taken to protect participants' well-being and confidentiality. Psychological risks, such as emotional distress, from discussing sensitive topics will be mitigated by providing supportive resources and ensuring that participation is voluntary. Participants will have the option to pause or terminate their interviews at any time without penalty.

Sampling

The initial sample for this study will include spouse caregivers whose spouses were diagnosed with Parkinson's disease and passed away more than six months before the start of the study. Individuals who cared for Parkinson's disease patients but were not their spouses or whose spouse passed away less than six months prior to participation will not be eligible for this study. In addition, all participants must be over the age of eighteen and speak proficient English.

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Sampling Strategy

This study will use theoretical sampling. Theoretical sampling will help refine and expand the sample based on emerging concepts and categories (Glaser, 1978). Using this approach ensures that emerging concepts and categories from the data are fully explored to reach theoretical saturation, which is the point at which no new significant variation is found in the data (Glaser, 1998). However, when beginning a grounded theory study, there are no concepts or categories to guide theoretical sampling. Thus, this study will initially employ purposeful sampling to select initial participants from the topic area who meet the eligibility criteria and have first-hand experience with the topic.

Sampling Size

In Glaserian (classic) grounded theory, it is impossible to state an exact sample size because the sample size is based on when theoretical saturation is achieved. This study will achieve theoretical saturation by collecting data on each concept relevant to the theory until no new significant variation is found. Achieving theoretical saturation is an iterative process involving systematic coding, constant comparison, and regular team discussions about emerging concepts, as well as ensuring methodological rigor. We expect theoretical saturation to be reached with a sample size of between 25 and 30 participants.

Recruitment

Participants will be recruited from the Colorado Parkinson Foundation (CPF) membership roster in Colorado Springs, Colorado. The researcher will conduct a live PowerPoint presentation at the CPF's monthly meeting and follow up with recruitment emails containing the study flyer. In addition, flyers will be sent to Parkinson's disease caregiver groups and individuals in the membership whose spouse has died from the disease.

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The flyer will also be posted on the researcher's social media pages, including Facebook, X, Instagram, and LinkedIn. Interested individuals will be asked to email the researcher using the contact details provided on the flyer. Potential participants will receive the consent form via email before the commencement of interviews and will have the opportunity to ask questions and receive comprehensive responses from the researcher. Those who see the recruitment flyer on social media will be asked to share the flyer on their private social media pages and forward it to individuals they feel may meet the criteria.

Data Collection and Analysis

Participants interested in joining the caregiver Glaserian (classic) grounded theory study will initiate contact with the primary investigator (PI) to express their desire to participate. Upon contacting the PI, participants will be asked to provide their preferred email and physical addresses. This information is necessary for the PI to send each participant a ten-dollar Amazon gift card as a token of appreciation for their involvement in the study. If no address is given or they prefer not to provide their physical address, the gift card will be emailed to the address provided.

During this initial interaction, participants will also have the chance to ask questions about the study. The PI will provide detailed explanations to ensure participants clearly understand the study's purpose, procedures, and expectations. Once participants feel informed and agree to the study's terms, they will be asked to sign an informed consent form and return it to the PI. This process solidifies their commitment to participate and ensures they know their rights and the study's ethical considerations. At this time, participants will also select a flower pseudo-name, which will be used to maintain their anonymity and confidentiality throughout the study, from data collection to the final write-up and publication. The chosen

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pseudo-names will be known only to the PI, adding an extra layer of privacy and protection for the participants' identities.

To further ensure confidentiality, all data will be de-identified from the transcribed interviews. Physical documents related to the study will be securely stored in a locked safe at the PI's residence, while digital data will be kept on a password-protected computer. These measures are in place to safeguard the participants' information and uphold the ethical standards of the research.

Data collection will involve one-on-one interviews conducted via the Zoom platform. These interviews will be audio-recorded to capture detailed accounts from participants. The recordings will then be sent to Rev.com, a transcription service that has signed a confidentiality agreement to ensure the privacy of the data. Typically, transcripts are completed and returned within ten hours. Field notes will also be taken, allowing for a prompt continuation of the research process.

Grand Tour Question

The study will involve conducting interviews using a single grand tour question to avoid introducing preconceived biases. This approach allows participants to narrate their experiences authentically, ensuring their shared stories are genuinely their own rather than being shaped by the researcher's expectations or preconceptions (Vander Linden & Palmieri, 2023), which aligns with Glaserian (classic) grounded theory studies. The grand tour question for this study will be: "What has life been like since your spouse passed away? This open-ended question encourages participants to provide comprehensive, in-depth responses that reflect their unique journeys and challenges, forming the foundation for a grounded and

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unbiased analysis. In addition, probing questions, such as "Can you tell me more about?" will elicit a deeper, more detailed response to specific aspects of the participant's narratives.

Data Analysis

Data analysis will consist of a constant comparative method, coding, and memoing. Once the first interview is completed and the transcription is received, the PI will simultaneously check the document and audio recording for accuracy. The data analysis in Glaserian (classic) grounded theory aims to systematically generate theory from data (Glaser, 1998). The process begins with formatting each interview to allow for a "line-by-line" (Glaser, 1978, p. 57) open coding process and remembering that "all is data" (Glaser, 1998, p. 8). Each sentence will be closely examined and initially coded, not by describing but by looking for the underlying conceptual patterns within the data. The coding process will begin upon the first reading of the interview to allow for a natural emergence of the concepts. The focus in the data analysis phase is for the researcher to limit their influence on the data and focus on the emergence of concepts from the data (Glaser, 1978, 1998).

Substantive Coding

Substantive coding is the initial stage of the data analysis process in Glaserian (classic) grounded theory. It aims to identify key patterns, concepts, and categories directly from the data. There are two distinct areas of substantive coding: open and selective coding. The first phase will involve open coding, which includes looking for initial categories, properties, and dimensions (Holton & Walsh, 2017). The process will help break down data into discrete parts to closely examine and identify a comprehensive set of concepts and their relationships, which become the building blocks of the theory (Glaser, 1998). During this phase, the researcher identifies a wide range of possible concepts and categories that reflect the data's

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complexity and richness. The main concern often begins to surface during open coding, a critical aspect of Glaserian (classic) grounded theory (Chun Tie, Birks, & Francis, 2019). The main concern is a primary issue or problem of people within the substantive area, and it guides the development of the core category, which explains the patterns of behavior used to address the main concern (Glaser, 1978).

Once open coding has generated several preliminary categories, selective coding will be used to refine and develop core categories that are central to the research. In this phase, the researcher will focus on selecting the most relevant and frequent categories that emerge from the open coding process (Glaser, 1998). During this stage, the relationships between the core category and other subcategories are explored and elaborated upon, leading to a more detailed understanding of the data and emerging theory (Simmons, 2022). Using both open and selective coding will increase the rigor of the codes, which will assist in the theory development (Holton & Walsh, 2017). By continuously comparing data and refining codes, the researcher ensures that the emerging theory is deeply grounded in the participants' realities and addresses their primary concerns (Chun Tieet al., 2019).

Constant Comparative Method

The constant comparative method is the analysis method used within the Glaserian (classic) grounded theory methodology (Holton & Walsh, 2017). This method involves systematically comparing each new piece of data with previously coded data to identify similarities, differences, and emerging theoretical patterns. Researchers iteratively refine and expand their coding categories through constant comparison, allowing concepts, patterns, and relationships to emerge directly from the data rather than imposing preconceived frameworks. (Simmons, 2022). This iterative process ensures that the analysis remains grounded in the

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data, facilitating a deeper understanding of the phenomena under study and supporting the development of substantive theories (Holton & Walsh, 2017).

Memoing

Memoing is a critical component of the Glaserian (classic) grounded theory methodology, capturing the researcher's thoughts, insights, and hypotheses that emerge during data collection and analysis (Vander Linden & Palmieri, 2023). Memos are written reflections that form connections between codes or categories (Chamestzky, 2022). In this study, memos will be written immediately after each interview and during the transcription and coding phases. Memoing allows the researcher to reflect on the data, explore emerging concepts, and develop a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences. As recommended by mentors Dr. K. Vander Linden and Dr. O. Simmons, memoing will consist of an audit trail by referencing the interview and line number (e.g., B:17) so the memo can be easily traced back to the exact quote or grouping of words. This continuous and iterative memoing process ensures that the analysis remains grounded in the data while facilitating connections between different codes and their relevance to each other (Glaser, 1998).

Sorting and Theoretical Outline

The sorting process is a pivotal stage of data analysis in the Glaserian (classic) grounded theory methodology, used to systematically organize memos and codes to assist in building a theoretical framework (Simmons, 2022). During this stage, memos that help capture insights or generate hypotheses are reviewed and categorized (Vander Linden & Palmieri, 2023). The careful organization of memos and codes during sorting helps "identify concepts, similarities, and conceptual reoccurrences in data" that might not be immediately apparent during initial coding (Chun Tie et al., 2019, p. 6). Sorting involves an iterative process in which memos are

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compared and contrasted, allowing the researcher to continually refine the categories and subcategories. This process not only helps in honing the theoretical constructs but also ensures that the final theory is both coherent and comprehensive.

Theoretical Codes

Theoretical codes are essential to the sorting process and the development of the theoretical outline in grounded theory, as they help connect and organize the core concepts that emerge from the data (Holton & Walsh, 2017). These codes show how different categories and concepts relate, making building a clear and complete theory easier. Using theoretical codes, researchers go beyond just describing what they see; they find patterns and processes explaining what is happening on a conceptual level rather than a descriptive level (Glaser, 1998). Theoretical codes help researchers discern the underlying structure of the theory, ensuring it is based on real data and providing a clear and understandable explanation of the studied topic; however, researchers must be careful not to form preconceived expectations of specific codes (Simmons, 2022).

Theory Development

The primary focus and critical stage of a Glaserian (classic) grounded theory study is the development of the theory. At this point in the research, the data, codes, and memos will be synthesized to build a theory that explains the behaviors of individuals who have lost their spouse to Parkinson's disease. Using synthesized data will result in a theory that goes beyond descriptive analysis, systematically explaining the underlying processes and patterns observed in the data. The ultimate goal of this study is to develop a theory that will contribute valuable insights to the field. The theory can then be moved into a grounded action study,

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which will assist in social change for the participants and those like them (Simmons & Gregory, 2003).

Conclusion

The current article presents an exemplar protocol using the Glaserian (classic) grounded theory methodology while also addressing many of the often-required elements in a research protocol. These required elements are often defined by institutions of higher education and ethics review boards and based on qualitative research norms. The unique nature of Glaserian (classic) grounded theory often makes it difficult for novice researchers to navigate institutional requirements while developing a research protocol. This often requires a balance between providing the required information and educating the reader about grounded theory. This article provided one example of how a grounded theorist may be able to address common elements required in a research protocol and by IRBs while educating the reader about Glaserian (classic) grounded theory.

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GROUNDED THEORY REVIEW
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Moving Beyond Substantive Grounded Theory: Mid-range Grounded Theory, Formal Grounded Theory, and Applying Grounded Theory

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Abstract

The grounded theory methodology has been primarily used to develop substantive theories; however, since its inception, the developers of the methodology have encouraged researchers to move beyond substantive grounded theory by developing mid-range and formal grounded theories and applying grounded theories. While still a "neglected option," this article discusses each of these options and explains how these options all involve the continued collection of data within new areas and new populations, the use of the constant comparative method of analysis to compare indicators within the data, and the modification of the existing theories for fit and relevance. The article concludes by discussing some possible barriers to moving beyond substantive grounded theory. With awareness of these obstacles, we may be better able to address them and increase the development of mid-range and formal grounded theories and the application of grounded theories.

Key Words: mid-range grounded theory, formal grounded theory, applying grounded theory, grounded action, grounded practice

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In 1967, Drs. Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss articulated a new research methodology, grounded theory, which was designed to systematically generate theory from data. In the years since, many substantive theories have been developed using grounded theory. A substantive grounded theory is a grounded theory that has been developed within a specific setting and population.[3] However, from the beginning, Glaser and Strauss discussed that the grounded theory methodology could also generate formal grounded theory. A formal grounded theory extends the reach of a substantive grounded theory's core category by analyzing data from many different areas using constant comparative analysis (Glaser, 2007). Mid-range theories extend beyond the bounds of a substantive area but do not reach the scope of a formal grounded theory. While many substantive theories exist, mid-range and formal grounded theories are less frequent. While developing mid-range and formal grounded theories may be an end goal for some researchers, these types of grounded theories may begin to be developed as researchers work on applying grounded theories to new areas.

This article will explore moving beyond substantive grounded theory in two ways: (1) developing mid-range and formal grounded theories and (2) applying grounded theories. Core to moving beyond substantive theory in both the development of mid-range and formal grounded theory and the application of grounded theories is the continued collection of data within new areas and new populations, the use of constant comparative methods of analysis

[3] This is not how Glaser and Strauss (1967) originally defined substantive grounded theory. Originally, they defined it as a theory "developed for a substantive, or empirical, area of sociological inquiry, such as patient care, race relations, professional education, delinquency, or research organizations" (p. 32). In an interview, Odis Simmons explained that as grounded theory expanded beyond sociology and was increasingly employed by professionals within the practicing fields, Glaser shifted the meaning of substantive theory from one originally designed to produce theory for "a substantive, or empirical, area of sociological inquiry" (p. 32) to theory focused on a particular setting and population (Institute for Research and Theory Methodologies, 2024).

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to compare indicators within the data, and the modification of the existing theories for fit and relevance (Glaser, 2007, 2014).

Developing mid-range and formal grounded theories

Glaser and Strauss (1967) introduced the idea of formal grounded theory in the *Discovery of Grounded Theory.* They explained that the constant comparative method of analysis can produce substantive or formal theory and that these types of theories lie along the same continuum but vary based on generality. "Substantive and formal theories exist on distinguishable levels of generality, which differ only in terms of degree" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 33). However, Glaser and Strauss also explained that a substantive theory must be formulated before moving towards a formal theory and that both are developed from data.

The process of moving from a substantive to a formal grounded theory involves collecting data from theoretically similar settings and/or populations[4] and analyzing that data via the constant comparative method of analysis. As the researcher gathers, analyzes, and modifies the substantive theory based on data collected from theoretically similar areas, the generality of the theory increases. Just as in the development of a substantive theory, data collection is guided by theoretical sampling[5] as the researcher explores the fit, refit, and emergent fit of concepts and categories (Glaser, 1978) and the relevance of the theory, including the core category and main concern to the new areas. Fit means that concepts and

[4] A theoretically similar setting or population is one that shares key theoretical concepts with those in the original theory. A theoretically similar setting or population may appear very different on a descriptive level while being similar on a theoretical level. For example, Lee's (1993) theory, Doing time: A grounded analysis of the altered perception of time in the prison setting and its effects was based on a study of prisoners, yet the concepts in the theory are conceptually similar to how people "do time" on long airline flights (Simmons, 2022).

[5] Theoretical sampling is the approach to sampling used in substantive and formal grounded theory whereby the researcher uses the concepts and developing theory that have emerged from previous data collection and analysis to guide the researchers to what data is needed next (Glaser, 1978).

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categories must fit the data. Refit means that modifications should be made to concepts and categories based on additional data so that they fit all the data. “The analyst should readily modify them as successive data may demand. The analyst's goal is to ground the fit of categories as close as he can” (Glaser, 1978, p. 4). Emergent fit is the process of confirming that existing concepts from literature are grounded in the data from the study. Glaser (1978) explained,

> We do not have to discover all new categories nor ignore all categories in the literature that might apply in order to generate a grounded theory. The task is, rather, to develop and [sic] emergent fit between the data and a pre-existant category that might work. Therefore as in the refitting of a generated category as data emerges, so must an extant category be carefully fitted as data emerges to be sure it works. In the bargain, like the generated category, it may be modified to fit and work. In this sense the extant category was not merely borrowed, but earned its way into the emerging theory (p. 4).

This is specifically relevant to the development of formal grounded theory because Glaser discussed the use of literature as a beneficial source of data for developing formal grounded theory (Glaser, 2007).

When moving along the continuum from substantive to formal grounded theory, the theoretical outline from the substantive theory is a useful tool for guiding data collection via theoretical sampling within new areas. The theoretical outline provides a quick view of the concepts, categories, and their interrelationship. As data collection begins within a new area, the researcher begins looking for the fit, refit, emergent fit, and relevance of the concepts in the theory, especially of the main concern and the core category. Initial focus on the main

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concern and core category is important because if they are not present in the new area, it is unlikely that the theory fits and is relevant to the new area.[6] In this case, the researcher needs to move to a different area that has theoretical similarities.

If the researcher discovers the core category and the main concern fit and are relevant to the new area, the researcher uses selective coding and constant comparative method of analysis to (1.) identify which concepts from the substantive theory also fit and are relevant, (2.) identify any new, relevant variation based on the data from this new area modify the concepts for refit, and (3.) be open to new concepts which may emerge for this new data. As new variations and concepts emerge, the researcher follows the grounded theory process of collecting data, coding, and memoing while engaging in the constant comparative method to develop and integrate this new information into the theory. Just as in the development of a substantive theory, sorting is used, which will likely lead to modifications to the theoretical outline and theory.

Moving from substantive to formal grounded theory is likely to involve raising the level of abstraction of the theory to account for the new variations. Once the researcher discovers and integrates the variation in one area, the researcher moves to additional new areas, repeating the process. As the researcher gathers and analyzes data, modifies the existing theory to reflect the variation discovered in these new areas, and integrates new concepts and

[6] Movement from a substantive theory to a formal theory may be hampered by poor selection of the next setting from which to select data. While a new setting may appear theoretically similar, the researcher will not actually know if the new setting is theoretically similar until data is collected and analysis within this new setting begins. The researcher should expect to find areas where the theory fits and can be expanded and other areas where it does not fit. When such areas are found, the researcher has found a grounded boundary. A grounded boundary is a condition(s) where the theory longer applies because, under those conditions, the pattern of behavior being explained (i.e. the core category) no longer explains how the main concern is being resolved.

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relationships into the theory from increasing numbers of areas, the theory moves from substantive to mid-range to formal grounded theory.

Applying Grounded Theories

Just as Glaser and Strauss (1967) introduced the idea of formal grounded theory in the *Discovery of Grounded Theory*, they also envisioned the applicability of grounded theories from the research method's inception. They stated, "We shall discuss how grounded theory has been developed in order to facilitate its application in daily situations" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 237). While applying grounded theories to daily situations was a goal of the methodology from the beginning, its application has been limited. So much so that in 2014, Glaser wrote *Applying Grounded Theory: A Neglected Option,* wherein he stated, "The application of GT has been almost totally neglected in the literature on GT, yet it is a vital topic for our profession and for ourselves" (p. 2). The application of grounded theory is still mainly limited to the informal and casual application of individual concepts (usually core categories) from a theory rather than a systematic approach to applying concepts or a whole theory (Glaser, 2014).

Glaser (2014) provided five necessary properties for a grounded theory to be applied. He stated, "to be applied a GT must fit the area to be applied, must be relevant to the people applied to, must be understandable to the people in the area applied, must be sufficiently general, and must give the appliers some control" (p. 2).

Fit

As mentioned previously, fit means that concepts and categories must fit the data. To be applied, a theory must fit the setting and population to which it is being applied. The fit of a theory is foundational to the other properties necessary for a theory to be applied (Glaser,

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1967, 2014). A substantive theory that has been developed within the topic area will fit the area and be directly applicable to the area because the theory is "closely related to the daily realities (what is actually "going on") of the substantive area and so to be highly applicable to dealing with them" (Glaser, 2014, p. 45).

Relevance

Rather than entering the topic area with a predetermined research problem, relevance is achieved by allowing the problem[7] and theory, which explains patterns of behavior used to address the problem, to emerge through analysis of data collected from the research area. Relevance is achieved by following the lead of the data to understand, conceptualize, and explain (not describe) what is happening within the topic area. Glaser (1978) stated, "Grounded theory arrives at relevance because it allows the core problems and processes to emerge" (p. 5). Thus, what emerges is directly relevant to the research area and the people within it.

Understandable

A grounded theory is understandable when it fits the data. Such a theory reflects the "daily realities (what is actually "going on")" (Glaser, 2014, p. 45) and is understandable. It "makes sense" (p. 46) to the people within the research area, which makes people more receptive to the application of the theory in addressing their area(s) of concern. Glaser (2014) stated, "Their understanding the theory tends to engender readiness to use it, for it sharpens their sensitivity to the problems that they face and gives them an image of how they can potentially make matters better" (p. 46).

[7] Within the grounded theory methodology, this problem is often referred to as the main concern. The main concern emerges from the analysis of the data collected as a main problem, issue, or concern being experienced by the people within the area being studies (Connor et al., 2024, Glaser, 1992).

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General

Grounded theories are conceptual, not descriptive. Description, as common to many qualitative methods, limits the generality of the research. Such research is bound by time, population, context, etc. Grounded theories are conceptualized, becoming abstract enough to transcend time, population, context, etc. It is an abstract conceptualization of the data rather than a description of it that makes a theory general and flexible enough to explain and serve as a guide to the multi-conditional and ever-changing daily realities of the situation (Glaser & Strauss, 1965; Glaser, 2014). However, the theory should not be so abstract that it loses its fit, understandability, and applicability to the substantive area.

Control

In order to apply a grounded theory within a setting or population, there must be a level of control. "The substantive theory must enable the person who uses it to have enough control in everyday situations to make its application worth trying" (Glaser, 2014, p. 53). The theory does this by providing the person with understandable yet abstract concepts that fit the situation. These concepts are not isolated concepts; they are part of an integrated theory that can and should be used to guide the change and help predict the outcomes. To do so, the theory must provide controllable concepts with "much explanatory power" (Glaser, 2014, p. 56), guide the person applying the theory, and help control the interaction among the concepts, which often involve multiple people's interactions. The theory must also identify access concepts that allow, guide, or give access to the controllable concepts or to the people who control them (Glaser, 2014, p. 57) in order to manage the controllable concepts with minimal unintended disruption to other aspects within the situation. A grounded theory with controllable concepts and access concepts can be used to bring about change in the situation by

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providing a "theoretical foothold" (Glaser, 2014, p. 53) and leverage points where change is possible.

Grounded Action

While Glaser explained the properties necessary for a grounded theory to be applied, repeatedly exhorted the application of grounded theories, and discussed how some specific concepts and theories could be applied, he provided little guidance on how to do it. However, he included a chapter on grounded action by Simmons and Gregory in *Applying Grounded Theory: A Neglected Option*. Grounded Action is a research-based approach for applying grounded theory. Grounded action is a pragmatic, applied research method that expands on grounded theory as a research-based approach to planning and implementing action or change within a substantive area (Simmons & Gregory, 2003; Simmons, 2022). Grounded action is built upon the same principles and methods as classic grounded theory to ensure that the application of the theory is grounded in the data. The application may take various forms, including but not limited to actions, interventions, strategies, programs, and models (Simmons, 2022).

The process of applying a grounded theory using grounded action involves a systematic, six-step process where the first step is developing a grounded theory (Simmons, 2022; Simmons & Gregory, 2003). In grounded action, this is referred to as the explanatory theory because it explains "what is actually going on, not what ought to go on" (Glaser, 1978, p. 14) in the substantive area. Using the explanatory theory as a guideline or theoretical framework, the researcher creates an operational theory that identifies where actions to promote change are possible within the substantive area (Simmons, 2022). The operational theory operationalizes the explanatory theory. Then the researcher uses the operational theory to develop a

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specific action plan to implement within the substantive area (Simmons, 2022; Simmons & Gregory, 2003). As the action is implemented, the researcher continuously collects and analyzes data using the constant comparative method of analysis while implementing the action (Simmons, 2022; Simmons & Gregory, 2003) following the same idea that "all is data" (Glaser, 2001, p. 145). Theoretical sampling, constant comparative method of analysis, and memoing that began during the discovery of the grounded theory continue with grounded action and are used for modification at any level needed. As change happens as a result of the application, it is expected that modifications will be made (Simmons, 2022; Simmons & Gregory, 2003). This may include modifying the action, the action plan, the operational theory, or the explanatory theory based on the analysis of new data. This aligns with the tenet that a grounded theory is always modifiable based on new data. Glaser (2014) stated, "The person who applies the theory will, we believe, be able to bend, adjust or quickly reformulate a grounded theory when applying it, as he tries to keep up with and manage the situational realities that he wishes to improve" (p. 74). Using grounded theory to guide practical actions within the substantive area increases the likelihood that the actions will produce the desired effects. Grounded action provides a research-based approach for designing and implementing such action.

Grounded Practice

Another option for applying grounded theory is grounded practice. Grounded practice is the application of the logic of the grounded theory methodology and the skills used within the grounded theory methodology to inform the work of practitioners. They may also apply relevant grounded theories that fit and are relevant within their practice. Several examples of grounded practice currently exist. Grounded therapy (Simmons, 1994, 2022) is an example of

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grounded practice applied within the therapeutic setting. According to Simmons, grounded therapy[8] is "a client-centered, non-pathologizing method of counseling/therapy that uses the logic, cannons, and procedures of classic grounded theory" (p. xviii). Another approach to grounded practice is grounded learning[9]. "Grounded learning is an application of the GT methodology to the art and practice of teaching" (Olson, 2008, p. 7). Finally, grounded leadership and emergence coaching (Wright et al., 2022) are additional examples of grounded practices. These practices were developed across several disciplines as practitioners recognized the applicability of the logic and skills used in grounded theory to their fields. However, none of them went so far as to identify the overarching category of grounded practice, as identified within this article.

Grounded practice is a client[10]-centered approach where the practitioner develops an individually customized action plan to meet a client's needs. Grounded practice begins by gathering information (data), often directly from the client but also from other relevant sources, following the "all is data" approach used in grounded theory. Gathering data from the client frequently involves a conversation-based approach, similar to open-ended interviewing, including the use of a grand tour or spill question.[11] The conversation may begin with a question as simple as "What brings you here today?" The practitioner uses the information (data) and the grounded theory question, "What are they working on?" to discover the main concern of the client and to determine the client's current state or, as Glaser (1978)

[8] For more information about grounded therapy, see Simmons (1994, 2022).
[9] For more information about grounded learning, see Olson (2008) and Olson & Raffanti (2004, 2006).
[10] Client is being used here to describe the population with whom the practitioner works, such as patients, students, etc.
[11] A grand-tour or spill question is "a very open common non leading question slash inquiry designed to prompt a respondent to say what they want about the topic on their terms" (Simmons, 2022, p. xviii).

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would say, “what is actually going on” (p.14). This information is then used to determine what action the practitioner may take. This may involve looking for a grounded theory that fits and is relevant to the situation. If such a theory is found, the practitioner can follow the step outline in grounded action; however, this is often done more informally than in a grounded action study. It is used as a form of professional practice rather than research. If no grounded theory currently exists, the practitioner may use the logic and skills used within the grounded theory methodology to identify the client’s patterns of behavior and the factors influencing these behaviors. When conceptualized, this information can provide a deeper level of insight for the practitioner and a theoretical foothold where action may promote change for the client. The logic and skills with grounded theory and grounded action also provide the practitioner with a way to assess the client’s progress and modify how the practitioner works with the client over time.

This article presents a general discussion of the application of grounded theory and a couple of examples of how grounded theory may be applied. However, this is not meant to imply that these are the only ways to apply grounded theory; rather, it is meant to provide some possible options for applying grounded theory since there has been limited work in this area to date. Next, we will look at some possible reasons for this.

Obstacles to Moving Beyond Substantive Theory

Since the inception of grounded theory, Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Glaser (2007, 2014) advocated for moving beyond substantive grounded theory, primarily in two ways: the development of formal grounded theory and the application of grounded theory. Despite repeated calls for more development in these areas, it is still a “neglected option” (Glaser, 2014). I propose that there are three main reasons:

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1. One and Done: Burnout
2. Limited articulation of how to develop a formal grounded theory and how to apply grounded theory
3. Lack of mentorship

Many grounded theorists I have encountered used grounded theory for their dissertations or theses. While they love the grounded theory methodology, they feel burned out after their dissertation or thesis. For many of these researchers, choosing to use the grounded theory methodology meant fighting for the methodology and doing it without much support or guidance. They are one and done, meaning they did one grounded theory, and now they are done. They never do another grounded theory study or do more with their existing theory. This, combined with limited articulation and mentorship of how to develop a formal grounded theory and how to apply grounded theory, contributes to the limited number of formal grounded theories being developed and the limited application of grounded theories.[12]

While Glaser has mentioned formal grounded theory and applying grounded theory in multiple publications, only one book on each topic delves deeper into the subjects. These books focus more on the need for it rather than systematic guidance on how to generate a formal grounded theory or apply a grounded theory. Since many grounded theorists only complete one grounded theory, they may not feel they have mastered the methodology enough to move beyond a substantive grounded theory, especially with limited guidance.

Despite the number of grounded theory studies that have been conducted since the development of the research methodology, there are still very few experienced grounded theory mentors, leaving many novice researchers to navigate their first study alone. Even fewer

[12] It is also possible that grounded theories are being applied but in ways that do not lead to a formal write-up for publication.

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grounded theory mentors are available to mentor people through the development of mid-range and formal grounded theories and the application of grounded theory, grounded action, and grounded practice. More guidance in these areas might encourage more researchers to move beyond their substantive theories.

Conclusion

While the grounded theory methodology has been primarily used to develop substantive theories, Glaser and Strauss encouraged researchers to move beyond substantive grounded theory by developing mid-range and formal grounded theories and applying grounded theories.

Mid-range and formal grounded theories expand the scope of a substantive grounded theory beyond the original population and setting through the collection of data within new settings and populations, the use of the constant comparative method of analysis, and the modification of the existing theory. Developing mid-range and formal grounded theories is one way to move beyond substantive grounded theory; another is applying grounded theory. While the application of grounded theory has been mainly limited to the informal and casual application of individual concepts, grounded action and grounded practice are two ways of applying grounded theory. However, for researchers and practitioners to heed the call to move beyond substantive grounded theory to the development of mid-range and formal grounded theories and to the application of grounded theories, more instruction, mentorship, and support are needed.

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

Alvita Nathaniel, PhD, APRN-BC, FNP

Tom Andrews, RN; BSc (Hons); PGDE; MSc; PhD

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

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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 Anslem Strauss, *Doing Grounded Theory* is considered one of the foundational books that illuminates the method. Glaser's grounded theory oeuvra 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 Anslem 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:*

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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

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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

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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).

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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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GROUNDED THEORY REVIEW
An international journal

Classic Grounded Theory: Common Misunderstandings and Confusions

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Abstract

Grounded Theory continues to be the most widely used methodology in qualitative research. Although it is based on what people do naturally (to act habitually and a tendency to theorise), it can be confusing for those new to the methodology, particularly Classic Grounded Theory. This is usually but not limited to the use of the literature, coding, theoretical sampling, the commonly held view by those using constructivist GT that CGT is objective in nature and theoretical coding.

Keywords: Classic Grounded Theory; Constructivist Grounded Theory; coding, literature review; theoretical sampling; objectivist grounded theory; theoretical coding.

In this short paper, some of the confusions and difficulties experienced by researchers new to classic (Glaserian) grounded theory will be briefly discussed and possible solutions recommended. These issues come out of the numerous GT workshops, discussions and seminars I have attended and participated in over the years. They are by no means the only confusions and difficulties experienced but are brought up time and again. The discussion is necessarily limited but will be the subject of a longer article in a future edition of the GT Journal. The difficulties experienced can have a very demoralising effect on those new to CGT and lead to avoidable difficulties in how the methodology is applied. At its core, it is a

simple methodology based on the idea that people engage in habitualised behaviour and have a natural tendency to theorise. Nonetheless it can be confusing and difficult in practice because it involves rethinking what research is. In methodology classes, it is usual to differentiate between quantitative and qualitative research, without considering that CGT is a general methodology that can be used with any data or philosophical perspective. Common difficulties that those new to CGT experience are centred around line-by-line coding, knowledge of the substantive area, theoretical sampling, justification for using other variants of GT and theoretical coding. These will be discussed in turn.

Line-by-line coding

In classic grounded theory (CGT) a very common issue is to misinterpret what Glaser means by line-by-line coding. It does not mean code each line. This way of coding originally applies to the coding of fieldnotes, at a time when tape recording was rare. It was not designed to apply to data generated through long interviews that are digitally recorded and transcribed. For one thing, there may be a lot of extraneous data generated that may not need to be coded. Code by starting to read the data line by line and comparing the unit of analysis, the incident, all the time looking for patterns (Glaser, 1978; Glaser, 1998). The incident is found in a phrase, a sentence or two, or even in a paragraph (Glaser, 1998). It is important to identify incidents in the data that indicate the concept, using one or two words per code (Holton & Walsh, 2017). Coding line by line may lead to what Glaser (1998) termed incident tripping, where each incident is coded rather than looking for patterns of behaviour. In one Troubleshooting Seminar, there was a student who generated over 600 codes in three interviews. Another student generated over 900 codes from one interview. This is clearly unsus-

tainable and overwhelming. Both were coding incidents rather than looking for patterns in the data.

Codes are not interpretations of the data but rather names that represent indicators in the data (Simmons, 2022); it is based on a pattern of behaviour that emerges incident after incident and not just based on one incident (Glaser, 1998). Unless an incident is part of a pattern of behaviour then there is no need to code it (Simmons, 2022). For those new to CGT, it is very common to over-code at the beginning of a study. However, as researchers begin to understand CGT more and more, and as conceptualisation develops, many initial codes merge. This happens as the conceptual level increases, and there is a realisation that what seemed like different behaviours are the same once conceptualisation is increased. This happens through constant comparison and by consideration of what varies what people do. Be assured that this works!

Another common issue is that those new to coding the GT way code using the jargon of their profession rather than staying open to generating their own codes. For example, one of my PhD students is a midwife, and her initial codes reflected her profession's jargon. In response to my query about where the women in interviews really used those words, she agreed that they did not. She was coding as a midwife and not as a researcher. Once she re-coded the data, very useful concepts were generated. GT encourages researchers to code as analysists and not as members of a particular profession (Glaser, 1998).

Knowledge of the Literature

This can sometimes be cited as a reason for not using CGT, since Glaser asks that reading literature in the substantive area is avoided until much later in a study. However, researchers and research students are very well read and it is entirely consistent with Glaser

(1998) when he says that researchers should be well read to develop and maintain theoretical sensitivity. Therefore, being well-versed in literature is not a barrier to using the CGT methodology. Glaser (1998) warned that researchers can be influenced by received concepts (in this context, concepts from the extant literature) that may not fit or be relevant or that a preconceived or professional problem will be developed that has no relevance. Again, this is in the interest of staying open, so what is actually going on is allowed to emerge.

When it comes to preconceptions, Gibson and Hartman (2014) noted that there is a world of difference between having preconceptions and being influenced by them. Another way of thinking about preconceptions is bias. Constant comparison is how CGT deals with bias and the issue of forcing concepts or theoretical codes onto the data. Glaser (1998) wrote that when done carefully and honestly, it weeds out many of these biases. If an individual is worried about preconceptions, another way to deal with them is to interview oneself. While reflexivity is unnecessary in CGT, it does not preclude researchers making reflective memos if they feel this is something that will help.

Theoretical Sampling

This is the process where data collection and analysis are done concurrently (Glaser, 1978). It involves going back and forth in a continual inductive-deductive relationship between data collection and analysis (Simmons, 2022). Researchers have to start somewhere, and Glaser advises that this could include talking to people who are knowledgeable to help figure out what is relevant. Also, researchers could go to groups that they believe will maximise the possibility of obtaining data (Glaser, 1978). This could be termed purposive sampling. Once analysis begins and concepts begin to emerge, researchers then begin theoretical sampling, where data collection is based on what is emerging from coding. In interviews,

these generate questions to be asked or topics to be explored further. Concurrent data collection and analysis mitigates against researchers becoming overwhelmed by gathering data first and then beginning the analysis.

Be cautious, however, because an unintended consequence may be that researchers could limit data collection by narrowing the questions asked or topics pursued at the interview. This could lead to the emergence of a thin theory, one that may not be relevant to participants and be of very limited practical application. To avoid this, researchers should continue to keep an open mind as to the issues of importance to participants by collecting data based on broad topics while simultaneously engaging in theoretical sampling and not to delimit data collection prematurely. In other words, like all aspects of CGT, keep an open mind and be theoretically sensitive to all possibilities.

Justification for using other versions of GT

In justifying the use of other versions of GT, particularly Constructionist GT, those new to the methodology often cite the claim by Charmaz (2014) that classic GT is derived from positivism and is therefore objectivist. This contention is supported by a series of statements rather than a cogent discussion. These are mainly focused on the use of language and researcher positionality. Examples of language use are words like variable and discovery. For Charmaz (2014), these are associated with positivism. However, a variable is simply something that varies, while discovery is commonly used in qualitative research (Murphy et al 1996).

The word “discovery” simply means to find something, and this is how Glaser (1998) used the word. It is consistent with not having predefined categories involving the imposition of assumptions (Murphy et al 1996). For these authors, the analytical processes employed in

GT will prompt theory discovery and development rather than the verification of pre-existing theories. Glaser did not believe that there is an external reality out there waiting to be discovered. Interestingly, Charmaz (2014, p234) acknowledged that in practice researchers draw on both objectivist and constructivist positions. She also used the word "discovery" in a way that is consistent with its use by Murphy et al. (1996) and Glaser (1998). These somewhat undermine her statements based on language about the objectivist nature of CGT.

Charmaz (2014) saw researchers using CGT as distant and separate from research participants while assuming a neutral stance; they are distant experts. For Glaser (2003), GT is a perspective-based methodology, and he acknowledged people have multiple perspectives. Consistent with this, Glaser (1978,1998) emphasized time and again that the focus of CGT is on participants, their issues, experiences, and perspectives. When it comes to coding, researchers are not some distant experts but are able to name the patterns of behaviour because they see them over and over again, based on multiple data. Researchers take on the perspectives of participants. It is interesting that Charmaz (2014, p85) viewed the researcher as the final arbitrator of categories and that the methodology (constructivist GT) enables researchers to take successively more analytical control over their data collection and emergent theoretical ideas. Again, this seems a somewhat contradictory perspective, given her criticisms of CGT. In an interview, Charmaz maintained that everything she ever read by Glaser was in objectivist in nature (Puddephatt, 2006). In seminars and his countless interviews and discussions with Glaser, Simmons (2022) never read or heard anything from him or other classic grounded theorists claiming the possibility of complete dispassion or neutrality. For a more in-depth discussion of these issues, see Simmons (2022, p. 31 to 39). In summary, CGT is not an objectivist or interpretivist methodology, but rather is conceptual.

From the above, what Charmaz maintains about CGT is at variance with what Glaser writes. It seems, therefore, that researchers justifying their use of constructivist GT based on the objectivist argument is not justified and does not stand up to a careful reading of what Glaser writes. Also, in reading Charmaz, her position and use of language are arguably closer to Glaser than is commonly acknowledged. It follows that those choosing to use constructivist GT need to provide a more robust justification for its use. Such justification might include wanting to write a sociological story or develop a descriptive theory, or that constructivist GT gives voice to participants and is more consistent with the researcher's own interpretivist stance.

Theoretical Coding

Theoretical codes (TCs) are slippery (Glaser, 1998) and seem to be difficult to understand for those new to CGT. They conceptualise how the substantive codes relate to each other as hypotheses. TCs make it easier for the theory to be written because they make explicit the relationship between concepts, particularly the core and sub-core concepts. However, in writing up the theory they are implicit. Most researchers take methodological classes and are used to the idea of conceptual and theoretical frameworks. They are common to both quantitative and qualitative research. For the latter, they are used by researchers to provide a predetermined theoretical or conceptual framework for guiding the research process. They can be used to guide data collection and/or analysis. The easiest way to understand theoretical codes in CGT is to think about them as conceptual frameworks, that is, their function is to integrate the theory. However, there is one major difference: they are not predetermined, but like everything else in CGT, they emerge; they must earn their way into the theory. While there is one overarching TC organising the theory, which might be a process, a strategy or

more commonly what Glaser (1978) referred to as the 6Cs, there will be many more in a study, which usually integrate the sub-core concepts with other concepts. It is commonly believed that CGT only generates one type of theoretical code, a basic social process, but this is a misunderstanding. There are several TCs that can be used (Glaser, 1998, 2005), and researchers may even discover their own, but they must have earned relevancy.

Conclusion

Hopefully what is written above will be of some use to those using CGT methodology for the first time and those interested in understanding GT in general, irrespective of the variant. It can be difficult, particularly for minus mentees, to understand the writings of Glaser and, therefore, easy to misinterpret the various texts. At times researchers can get bogged down in the mechanical application of the GT methods and may lose sight of the purpose of what they might consider as the rules of CGT. Glaser (1998) himself admits that some of his earlier writings may have been overly prescriptive. Bear in mind that the purpose of these is to encourage researchers to remain open to what is going on in the substantive area, to minimise bias, to trust in emergence, and above all, to trust the methodology. It is only by carefully reading and studying original texts by Glaser, and authors writing about the methodology as originated, that those new to CGT and GT in general can evaluate whether what is being written about classic GT is based on misunderstanding, misinterpretation, bias or is justified. In that way researchers can evaluate the evidence for themselves. Taking account of the discussion in this article may help researchers to avoid some of the confusions and pitfalls common to those new to the methodology, particularly in relation to having too many codes, the use of TCs and encourage those using other variants to provide a more robust justification for their choice.

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GROUNDED THEORY REVIEW
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Story vs. Concept:

A Few Notes on a Challenge Journalists and Grounded Theorists Share

Vivian B. Martin, Department of Journalism, Central Connecticut State University

Abstract

In grounded theory, concerns about the tension between description (storytelling) versus theorizing mirrors the tensions between description and analysis in journalism. In this essay, the author, a former journalist, discusses some of the shared history between journalism and qualitative research and suggests how a journalistic organizing practice – "the nutgraph" — can raise the conceptualization of even some theoretical work.

Keywords: Robert E. Park, journalistic method, grounded theory history, Chicago Sociology, Barney Glaser

To some of their critics, sociologists doing qualitative research in the late 19th century were not doing much more than descriptive journalism. Some critics still throw that kind of shade at qualitative research. In grounded theory in particular, concerns about the tension between description (storytelling) versus theorizing mirrors the tensions between description and analysis in journalism. "Stop the story talk. What's the concept?" was Dr. Barney Glaser's frequent admonition at troubleshooting seminars when people eagerly shared—overshared in Glaser's view—data at the sake of conceptualization. The Journalist

Resource (2016) quoted Nicholas Lemann, an accomplished nonfiction writer and former dean at the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism, on the challenge:

> A central problem in the practice of journalism is that most of the time, we are trying to engage in narrative and analysis at the same time. They don't naturally go together. Journalists more often unwittingly let the narrative distort the analysis than vice versa (para. 2).

As a former journalist, now a professor and grounded theorist, I wish more grounded theory was accessible to lay people and that more journalists produced work that was smarter. I agree with the sentiments expressed by both Glaser and Lemann, but I often think about how a better balance can be achieved in both. It is not an easy challenge for grounded theorists or journalists, but I write this essay to give grounded theorists a little insight into the shared historical challenges. It is an old problem.

Robert E. Park, a leading figure in the development of sociology at the University of Chicago, worked as a newspaper reporter in several cities before he went to Germany to earn a doctorate in sociology. He saw the sociologist as being a "a kind of superreporter like the men who write for *Fortune (influential magazine founded in 1929)* ...reporting on the long-term trends which record what is actually going on rather than what, on the surface, merely seems to be going on (as cited by Denzin, 1997, 285). Park's interest in merging elements of journalism and theorizing began early in his career. As the University of Chicago Library (n.d.) noted in a centennial tribute, in the 1880s, while an undergraduate at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, Park studied with philosopher John Dewey and, along with journalist Franklin Ford and Dewey conceived of the "Thought News," a "philosophizing newspaper," never launched, although it foresaw the ways journalism and qualitative re-

search n would grow in sophistication using interviews, documents, surveys, and statistics. Qualitative work evolved in this way as well.

Park's studies with sociologist Georg Simmel in Germany resulted in urban sociology and the early studies in social interactionism that provided the foundation for symbolic interactions and broader concerns with social processes. At Chicago, the first sociology department in the country, Park also created the first course on race relations, having spent seven years as public relations advisor to Booker T. Washington, the noted African American educator who built the Tuskegee Institute after returning from Germany. The path from Park to grounded theory is a fairly clear one. Park's student, Howard Becker, was on the team of Chicago sociologists, along with Anselm Strauss, who conducted an in-depth study of the process of medical students becoming doctors. Without the *Boys in White* (Becker et al., 1961), there would not have been Awareness of Dying. *Boys in White* helped Strauss develop as a medical sociologist, eventually moving to the University of California-San Francisco, where he started the graduate nursing school and soon recruited Barney Glaser and his analytic techniques from Columbia University.

The specifics behind the San Francisco death and dying projects do not need to be elaborated here, but I invoke the Awareness Context, not just because of its landmark status, but in illustration of the tension between description and conceptualization in a journalistic project close to 30 years ago that I did in a hospital. I am intentionally descriptive about my process to discuss the similarities between a longform journalism project and a grounded theory project.

In 1995, I was a contributor to a Sunday magazine, an almost nonexistent product today, suffering along with the decline of newspapers that carried them. At the time of this as-

signment, the hit television drama *ER* was getting a lot of attention in the press; its compelling storylines and attractive cast (actor George Clooney played a pediatric specialist assigned to the ER) resulted in many feature stories about life in real ERs. My editors wanted to take advantage of that interest, perhaps linking it to some of the issues, such as gang violence in our city, which was resulting in weekly shootings, and led to beefed up police security as rival gangs showed up in the emergency room after shootings. I started hanging out on the 3-11:30 p.m. shift, observing and sending memos to my editor. At that point in a story, the goal is just to observe and take notes and help people get comfortable with your presence, and keep the editors interested. I needed to find a character or small group of characters through which I could bring together a story on concerns in the ER. One evening, the public relations director who was my minder, asked, "Have you spoken with Pat yet?" I was not even sure who she was at that moment, but I took notice; like many in his position, the public relations man was a former news reporter. I got the hint. Meeting Pat, the charge nurse, would give me the center for the story, which I worked on for several months. At the time I met her, Pat was just back from a four-mouth leave she took after the kind of tragedy that leaves one breathless upon first hearing about it. As she had started her shift on a day in September, her husband called to tell her that her seventeen-year-old son "had done something to himself" and was being airlifted to the ER. Her son took his life with a gunshot to the head after an embarrassing arrest with pot. As she sat in the family room, she saw colleagues, some who had come in from days off, going in and out of the trauma room. Eventually, the trusted surgeon came into the room, took her chin in his hands and said, "He's gone."

It took time before I heard the entire story from Pat. The door cracked open one night when I noticed the little elephant jewelry, she wore each day and asked her the significance

of it. She said she would tell me eventually. The story came out in small pieces. She had started wearing the elephant to ease the discomfort of colleagues who avoided mentioning the tragedy when she returned to work. Taking on the elephant in the room was her way of breaking the silence and healing herself and the emergency department. As Pat spoke to me more, I noticed her colleagues were ready to speak with me about the night, one of those dynamics in ethnographic work as people follow the lead of the gatekeepers. Her cooperation was the signal they could talk to a reporter about that night. Shadowing Pat and her interactions with patients and families allowed me to see how she worked and put the ER in context with issues ranging from trends in nursing to the ER as a depository for social problems ranging from abandoned children to the publicly inebriated. As a form of literary journalism, there was quite a bit of description, from scenes in the trauma room to the sounds of keeling from someone whose child had died. The black oblong bag Pat is described as holding at the beginning of the story is last seen in a plastic bag carried out of the hospital by the son of a woman who died after a car accident.

Whenever I teach feature or magazine writing, sometimes using this article, I emphasize storytelling, description, the need to engage the reader's senses, I sometimes hear Glaser in my head: "Description runs the world, conjecture is a close second." After meeting Glaser, I began to see how true this is, and often, I get annoyed with the overemphasis on description and journalist's identification of themselves as storytellers rather than thinkers.

Inadvertent pickups of random descriptions can divert attention. After the ER story ran, there were the expected compliments for the story, but there were also a few people triggered by the detail that her son was home with the family's older bichon. What happened to the dog? they asked worriedly. Inadvertent pickups of random descriptions can divert atten-

tion. Yet I also know that complex social processes need characters and narratives to engage nonspecialists.

In grounded theory we propose a core concept that holds together categories. We do the same thing in journalism through the nut graph (or nutgraf) to orient readers to the larger unifying idea. Nutgraphs pretty much write themselves in short event-oriented stories. In long pieces like the ER story, it takes lots of time to develop the orienting neck of the story. After the opening scene, the nut graph, which signals what the article is about and its layers, comes together through a mix of memos of impression, images and data points. In this case, it's a section that underscores the uncertainty and fragility the ER symbolizes. The start to the approximately 800-word nutgraph reads:

> The emergency department, or ER as it is colloquially called, is daily witness to the way fragile moments can turn against people, sometimes altering lives forever. It is a detour off of the routine course usually traveled, a fall into a zone in which time and life as they are usually experienced are suspended. With some glaring and troubling exceptions, people don't wake up in the morning thinking, '*Hmm looks like a nice day to visit the ER.*'
>
> It's not something you plan for, like a trip to the hairdresser or family doctor for an annual checkup. When life takes an abrupt turn to the ER, it unleashes the kind of feelings expressed by a 29-year-old woman wheeled into an operating room with both legs broke after an automobile accident one weekday afternoon in March, '*I don't have time for this in my life,' she cried out from the gurney* (Martin, 1995, p.11).

Grounded theorists can take something from this process. Glaser counseled that grounded theorists should think theoretically and write substantively. In many ways the nut-

graph helps connect the dots and move stories along. A good nutgraph raises the conceptual level of memos and, subsequently, the conceptualization. It would filter the use of descriptive details to the most poignant.

One reason sociology is eschewed by journalism and others in the public sphere is that it is heavily jargonized, and grounded theory contributes to some of these writing problems with its language use. Like it or not, theorists need some writing techniques to attract readers and help them engage with important concepts. On the other hand, journalists are often accused of "not letting the facts get in the way of a good story." Like Lemann, quoted earlier in this essay, I think much of it is unwitting and tied to various professional dictates. I have a couple of projects with which I am hoping to blend the strengths of both of my worlds, but I have been too long in the grounded theory world to bury a good concept.

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GROUNDED THEORY REVIEW
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Pressing the Reset Button:

Celebrating the Unlearning of Grounded Theory in the People's Republic of China

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Abstract

This round of the "giant leap forward," principally involving grounded theory in the People's Republic of China, has been replete with the notion of three-level coding, which arose from the coding procedure alone of the Strauss and Corbin variant. Given the efforts of many colleagues and students both in this country and elsewhere, we are beginning to witness the gradual dissociation of it from and the return to the original methodology intended by Glaser and Strauss and reiterated by Glaser. In addition, academic misconduct in this field has been, and will definitely continue to be, the very focal point of this methodological debate simply because it has reached epidemic proportions in this part of the world. It has also emerged over the past few years that there is now a new generation of grounded theory researchers that remain faithful and yet critical in their adoption of this methodology.

Keywords: grounded theory, Glaser, China

Amid the widespread misuse and abuse of the grounded theory (GT) methodology in the People's Republic of China (PRC) over the past two decades or so, some encouraging signs have now emerged which mark the return to the original methodology (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978) and the dissociation of any deviations from it including the

Strauss and Corbin (1990) variant in particular. This essay traces the journey of unlearning GT by covering the gradual dissociation of the notion of three-level coding in the PRC from GT, academic misconduct at the epidemic level in this field, and the emergence of a new generation of GT researchers from multiple subject areas.

Dissociating the notion of three-level coding from GT

Like many novices in other parts of the world who came across the Strauss and Corbin (1990) variant first, a vast majority of students in the PRC used to believe that the GT methodology was all about the coding regime per se. Thus, the Strauss and Corbin (1990) variant has been labeled conveniently as "three-level coding", the latter of which was coined by the mainlander (Chen, 2000) and has been used either in studies claiming the adoption of the GT methodology, including its variants or in non-GT studies (e.g. case study) merely as a set of tools for qualitative data analysis, often with the use of qualitative data analysis software. The Strauss and Corbin (1990) variant has been confronted fiercely in the mainland over an extended period of time, focusing on academic fields such as education and sport science. As a result, an increasing number of studies (with the use of either the three-level coding or other forms of coding) have now been consciously dissociated from GT.

For those who chose to adopt the Strauss and Corbin (1990) variant, they (e.g. Yang & Lin, 2023; Ma et al., 2023) all have failed to examine this variant in-depth, given there exist numerous changes, inconsistencies and contradictions within itself over the years, without even realising the fact Strauss (1987) himself made it absolutely clear in explicating his style of research that "[f]or more detailed statement of these technical aspects of the grounded theory mode of analysis, readers are advised to consult [Glaser's (1978)] *Theoretical Sensitivity*" (p.22, italics in original). I am also particularly intrigued by the fact that the very phrase,

"grounded theory" has been distorted and replaced by "rootedness theory" and "rooting theory" in Ma et al.'s (2023) paper. This is indeed very telling when it comes to the overall GT picture in the PRC.

The efforts to dissociate the notion of three-level coding from GT have undoubtedly annoyed many in the PRC who have spent nearly all their careers in the three-level coding and the multi-version business, including those who profit financially from the qualitative data analysis software and the qualitative methods training programmes amid the marketing strategies in which coding per se is often misleadingly dictated by the commercial software. Andy Lowe, with whom Barney Glaser established the Grounded Theory Institute (Glaser, 1999) has certainly been targeted in nasty attempts to silence him for sharing some of the details as follows surrounding his meetings with Strauss on several occasions, which novices like Shi Zixin (personal communication, 9 June 2023) find utterly shocking:

> Sometime during the early 1990s I made direct contact with Anslem Strauss by asking his wife permission to meet him at their San Francisco home. It was necessary to seek prior permission because Anslem Strauss was elderly frail and not at all well. Reluctantly she allowed me to see him just for one hour. I began our conversation by asking him about the book authored by Julie Corbin and Anslem Strauss called The Basics of Grounded Theory published by Sage. Anslem Strauss told me that he was somewhat embarrassed to have his name attached to this book as co-author because he did not actually write the book. He told me that Julie Corbin was [one] of his students and as a favour to her he agreed to write the for[eword for] the book. Later Julie Corbin persuaded Anslem Strauss to have his name as co-author because it would help her academic career. Since Anslem Strauss had a very close relationship with Julie Corbin he

> agreed under pressure. When I asked him more about his role as co-author of the book, Anslem told me that not only did he not co-author the book, he had not even read the book from cover to cover. (Andy Lowe, personal communication, 15 May 2023)

Tackling academic misconduct in GT research

Following Glaser's (1992) account of intellectual property infringement in this methodology, it has emerged unsurprisingly that there, too, exists widespread academic misconduct in the PRC. And it is not uncommon to discover that the universal rules and regulations governing academic conduct are often disregarded. It might be helpful to know that the PRC, together with Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Russia, are indeed among the countries with the highest retraction rates over the past two decades (Van Noorden, 2023, p.480). Even the Consulate General of the PRC in Los Angeles (2024) has recently had to issue a reminder, overtly alerting the PRC nationals of the consequences of academic misconduct.

In pursuit of the agenda for localising GT, in other words, to come up with a self-styled, PRC version of this methodology (e.g. Jia & Heng, 2020) which in itself is a non-academic business (Shao Zhouren, personal communication, 30 October 2024), the original GT texts have been falsified to substantiate their claim (Jia & Heng, 2020) that primary data must be collected through interviews and/or observations in GT research. A classic example of this is the fact that the notion of "quality surveys" in quantitative GT (Glaser, 2008, p.34) has been deliberately falsified and substituted by "qualitative investigation" in Jia and Heng's (2020, p.160) desperate bid for the localisation of GT. This characteristically PRC-style propaganda has now been countered in full force by the very first orthodox GT research in the PRC which is based entirely on a novel with no interviews and/or observations whatsoever (Feng, 2021).

Other forms of academic misconduct in this "giant leap forward" include containing books that haven't been actually read in the reference list (e.g. Xie & Lin, 2023; Mao & Pan, 2024) and the fact that someone else' work in pain management has been plagiarised by Wu and Li (2020) (The editorial office of Sociological Studies, personal communication, 7 April 2020), all of which are indeed in an attempt to further develop, expand and ultimately, modify the original GT methodology. It is also sheer madness that in the case of Mao and Pan (2024), nearly the entire set of key texts of Barney Glaser's in English were put in the reference list despite their own admission in the final paragraph of the paper that only materials from other sources had been referred to. And the explicit mention of the joint collection and analysis of data per se in the very first paper on the GT methodology in the PRC (Fei, 2008, p.34) has been distorted as if it were the case otherwise, thus legitimising the "new perspective" of Mao and Pan's (2024). This sort of dirty, legitimising-by-falsifying trick is indeed a common occurrence on this land. Needless to say, the classic GT methodology has been typically remodelled, becoming Mao and Pan's (2024) own variant of this methodology in which the sampling techniques, the timing of literature review and the estimation itself of the size of the sample, to name a few, are utterly contrary to the classic GT methodology.

Nurturing a new generation of GT researchers

Given the successful completion of studies adopting the GT methodology at both master's and doctoral levels (Feng, 2021; Wang, 2022), more novices have continued to remain faithful in their learning of this methodology. New sources of secondary data have now been exploited in their GT endeavours, e.g. policy documents in researching into data governance at the local legislative level in the PRC (Shao Zhuoren, work-in-progress), online forums concerning the incorporation of physical education into the nationwide unified exam-

ination for admissions to general universities and colleges (Guo Yuncheng, work-in-progress). They, too, have been constantly reminded of the common misbelief that the GT methodology is merely about coding the data. Among the students (e.g. Zeng Xiaoqing, work-in-progress) that have been overseen closely in the PRC, it is now part of the standard procedure of reading Glaser's core texts in English critically to begin with in any given GT study. In so doing, it is intended to avoid the situation reaching this point whereby GT has been adapted and modified globally, thus becoming "the grounded theory they teach and do, however recognizable as grounded theory" (Glaser, 1999, p. 838).

Most recently, a proposed GT study of the volunteers at the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games has been given the go-ahead (Chen, 2024). In the proposal itself, there is neither a research problem nor specific literature review, which nearly all of the committee members at the oral defence stage were not at all familiar with and thus, concerned about naturally. She was even challenged by the un-GT practices in studies claiming the adoption of this methodology otherwise. Given Chen's (2024) thorough preparedness both during the proposal writing and prior to the oral defence, she has managed to convince the gatekeepers successfully the feasibility of an authentic GT study.

Summary

As far as the PRC is concerned, an incredibly huge amount of effort has been put into the dissociation of the Strauss and Corbin (1990) variant or the notion of three-level coding from GT over the past two decades or so, toppling it ruthlessly from being in any part of this methodology. It is indeed dreadful that many haven't actually read any text on the variant of their choosing, let alone the original methodology intended by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Instead, previous studies adopting the three-level coding have just been replicated without any

knowledge of this methodology whatsoever. It is also discovered in this rat race that academic misconduct is literally all over the place in the PRC. The rules and regulations governing academic conduct both at home and abroad are generally disregarded, whether knowingly or not.

The disruptive work in the PRC has unquestionably paid off, as there are now a growing number of novices that have chosen to adopt the original GT methodology in their dissertations and theses, and heightened levels of awareness of academic misconduct, especially in the subsequent workplaces of theirs, the latter of which according to Chen Yin (personal communication, 15 July 2024). And quite extraordinarily, their characters and attitudes toward academic research have been reshaped, having been inspired profoundly by the whole GT experience. As nicely put by Wang Yin, a then doctoral candidate in Nursing (Wang, 2022) and now a lecturer, her journey of learning GT is also one of re-discovering the meaning of scholarship (personal communication, 7 October 2024). Having said that, I am certainly mindful of the fact that losing no momentum is absolutely crucial in this mission, as suggested by Wang Jun, who has been seriously let down by what is happening in sport science and, thus, has been fighting against it (personal communication, 13 October 2024). Last but not least, those lacking critical thinking skills in the collectivist, PRC-style, "giant leap forward" circus which needs no further elaboration may find it unthinkable that I am even critical of my own colleagues, let alone those elsewhere, and wish that I were more open-minded towards "all versions" of this methodology and less obsessed with academic misconduct in this enterprise. It is indeed worth stressing that as far as the original GT methodology is concerned, any existing deviations from it in the methods literature must not be used as a pretext by anyone, whether from the PRC or not, for misuse and abuse of GT fur-

ther. I have also firmly rejected their "kind advice," particularly those concerning academic misconduct, feeling anxious that colleagues and students who play by the book will be disadvantaged as it is already the case in the PRC.

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