GROUNDED THEORY REVIEW
An international journal

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From the Editor's Desk:
Be Patient; Trust the Process

Barry Chametzky, PhD

I was talking with a doctoral candidate the other day. I'll call this person John. During our talk, I was reminded how close my advice to John was to what we do, as classic grounded theorists, when we are memoing. Allow me to explain.

John is working on his dissertation and was having some challenges writing one of the early chapters. I would offer suggestions, and he'd respond with a new draft within hours. While this sounds like an ideal situation, it was not because, while the changes were present, the needed finesse and flow were not.

My advice to John, since he was trying to hurry up and write the chapter, was to be kind to himself and not be in such a hurry. The chapter will get done in due course, but the finesse takes time and diligent thought. My suggestion to him was to do something else to get his mind off writing his dissertation.

Writing a dissertation or a thesis takes great time and finesse for whatever changes are needed must be carefully added into the manuscript to ensure good readability and flow. Such requirements cannot happen immediately. Glaser offered the same advice: don't force anything; it will happen—whatever "it" may be—in due course. We need to trust the process. I'm sure that he does not believe me. Just like when I was working on my dissertation and had pages and pages of memos with no end in sight, and could not yet determine the core category. The younger me would not have believed me either. Yet the advice is valuable. If I could go back in time, I'd

give myself the same advice: just be patient, and it will all come. Sometimes information takes time to develop, like preconscious connections in memos.

So, dear readers, I offer the same advice to you whether you are working on an especially challenging piece of research or trying to accomplish a task quickly: be patient; do something else, and what you want (and perhaps need) to have happen will arrive. As Glaser has often said, trust the process because it works. Very often, we human beings forget to trust.

We, at the *Grounded Theory Review*, are pleased to offer a number of fine articles in this edition. The first article is by Octaviana Rhombe, Hong Ching Goh, and Zuraini Binti Md Ali called "A Grounded Theory of Safeguarding Culture by Reminiscing." In this study, Rhombe et al. discussed the concept of culturescape on safeguarding culture. In looking at the indigenous Torajan coffee shop culture in Indonesia, Rhombe et al. presented a perspective that has not yet been explored.

The second article is by Barry Chametzky entitled "When is Grounded Theory (GT) not Grounded Theory: Methodological Convergences and Divergences." In 2022, Glaser explained that grounded theory terminology has grab and that everyone wants to use grounded theory terminology. While this exposure may seem good, there are concerns with such action. In his article, Chametzky discussed methodological similarities and differences when one talks about "grounded theory." He looked at classic grounded theory along with the research designs proposed by Kathy Charmaz, Strauss, and Corbin and offered similarities and differences between the three designs.

The third article in this edition is by Kara L. Vander Linden and Odis Simmons entitled "A Front-row Seat to the Development of Grounded Theory," in which Vander Linden interviewed Dr. Odis Simmons, one of the few remaining people "in the world who learned

grounded theory directly from Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss" (para. 3). Simmons has offered readers valuable insights into what learning classic grounded theory from the developers was like.

In reading the fourth article, entitled "Is the Theory of Moral Reckoning in Nursing Ready for Modification?" I am reminded how a classic grounded theory is not eternally static because each time we, as human beings, read it, we gain new insights. Additionally, as we develop and reflect on new things in our lives and read different works, we are able to make connections and develop new insights into the theory that previously were not possible. In this article, Alvita Nathaniel reflected on a theory she presented years earlier: moral reckoning in nursing. In this article, Nathaniel presented "a glimpse at the original theory and some of the popular, empirical, and theoretical literature focusing on healthcare professionals' experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic" (para. 1).

In our next and fifth article, Ile Doyer and Michael K. Ayomoh wrote about "Staying True to the Data: A Visual and Quantitative Approach to Showcase Coding Rigour and Theoretical Saturation." In this article, Doyer and Ayormoh used classic grounded theory in a visual and quantitative manner to demonstrate and monitor theoretical saturation. The authors presented a "novel approach" (Abstract) to demonstrate an important level of rigor in using the given research design.

For our sixth article, Annika Barzen wrote a paper entitled "Revisiting Grounded Therapy." Discussing the idea of a modified application of Grounded Theory as a tool for self-reflection in therapeutic processes. In this paper, Barzen explained how a researcher can "decipher emotional conflicts or behavioral patterns" (Abstract) during therapy. And this more

nuanced perspective can help clients as well as therapists understand and address psychological conflicts, which could lead to healing.

For our next and seventh article, Silvana Ilievska has offered a book review of Helen Scott's new book entitled *Using Grounded Theory: How to Develop Theory for Managed Change*. In the review, Ilievska offered a comprehensive analysis and overview of Scott's book. Ilievska explained that the book is a "valuable, fun, colourful, easy-to-follow and engaging" (Abstract) way to learn about grounded theory and is a practical way to learn the design.

Our next article, a reprint from one of the grounded theory readers, is by Odis Simmons entitled "Grounded Therapy." In this article, Simmons discussed a "methodology by which to achieve therapy" (para. 5). Simmons wrote about how such a methodology, based on the grounded theory research design, can assist in the therapeutic process and the therapist-patient relationship.

Michael Thomas offered our next submission—a second review of Helen Scott's book. Thomas explained how Scott's book is a highly practical piece of scholarship that aligns extremely well with doctoral learners who want to use classic grounded theory as their dissertation research design. Thomas explained that Scott's tone is "in a friendly, practical, and accessible voice" (para. 1) and such a tone is valuable not only to graduate students but also to "practitioner-scholars, and organizational researchers interested in developing substantive theory that can inform and support systemic change" (para. 1).

Our 10th submission is another review of Helen Scott's new *Using Grounded Theory* book. In this submission, John Fullerton commented that the book serves "as an accessible and supportive resource" (Abstract) for novice researchers interested in classic grounded theory.

In our final article, Astrid Gynnild presented "Memoing for Conceptual Emergence: A Key Process in Developing Grounded Theory" in which she wrote about how memos form a foundational element "for theory building" (Abstract) and for reflection which is needed and "cruicial to a researcher's personal growth" (Abstract).

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A Grounded Theory of Safeguarding Culture Through Reminiscing

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Abstract

This study began with an interest in creating a theory about the Torajan coffee culture. *Reminiscing about the culture* emerged as the core category and served as the starting point to resolve the main concern of *safeguarding culture*. By employing classic grounded theory, the study discovered a theory about how culture is safeguarded through reminiscing about culture using material symbols. The material symbols help the community to reminisce about their cultural, historical, and spatial memories. The theory contributed to the literature by adding a theoretical understanding of the role of the culturescape and material symbols in safeguarding cultural values, providing a new understanding of the transmission of cultural values. This transmission is essential for ensuring the preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, and revitalization of intangible cultural heritage, a crucial aspect of sustaining a community and place's identity.

Keywords: classic grounded theory, safeguarding culture, culturescape, material symbol, reminiscing culture, place identity

This study began with an interest in the Torajan coffee culture, which is rooted in its extensive history of coffee cultivation in Indonesia and its significance in cultural heritage. The purpose of this study was to develop a theory about the Torajan coffee culture. To provide some background for the study, it may be helpful to know about the Torajan people and the Torajan coffee culture, including rituals and ceremonies and the Tongkonan house. Then, this article will explain the methodology used and the resulting theory and end with a discussion.

Background: The Toraja and Torajan Coffee Culture

Toraja

Toraja is located on the island of Sulawesi and is part of the Indonesian Republic. Toraja is one of Indonesia's richest and oldest cultural heritage cities and is famous for its coffee in international and national markets. Furthermore, Toraja belongs to the name of an indigenous group of people in South Sulawesi, the eastern part of Indonesia. Toraja people still maintain the legacy of their culture through their *rambu solo'* sorrow ceremonies, Tongkonan architecture, and land-use systems, which together hold the indigenous beliefs *Aluk Todolo*, a kinship system, and the life philosophies of *tau* and *tosangresekan.* This legacy of their culture is firmly passed on through storytelling and collective memory.

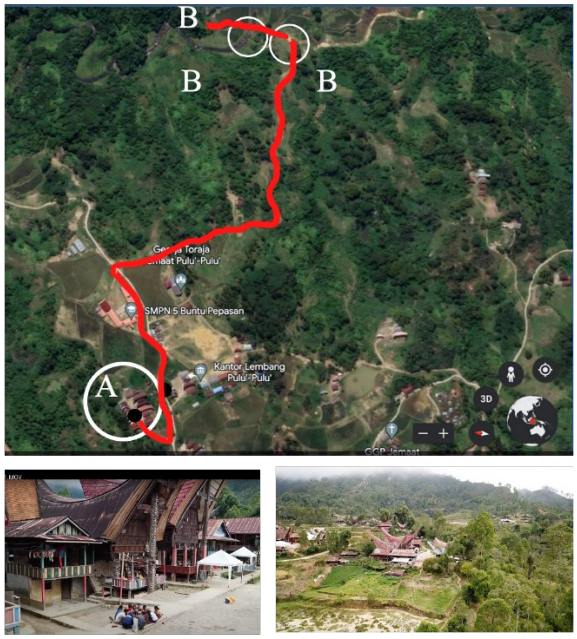
Torajan coffee culture

The Torajan incorporate coffee, a commodity with economic significance, into their sense of place and culture. Coffee and its linkage activities, from cultivation to green bean processing to roasting, brewing, and drinking, create a coffee culture that is an integral part of their culture—an embedded culture. The site plan of the Tongkonan house and land-use system (see Figure 1) is significant to Torajan cultural beliefs and socioeconomic activities, as it serves as

gathering places for socializing and promoting crops and playgrounds for cultural and religious ceremonial activities.

Figure 1

Image and Map of the Tongkonan House Site Plan.



Note:
A. Tongkonan village & *kombongna*
B. Coffee farm in *paqpalakapangna*
Route from where coffee is cultivated and harvested and processed

The Tongkonan yard is a location for processing coffee harvests in the Toraja culture. The coffee processing activities are family ones that involve the entire family in Tongkonan culture. Toraja carving motif used in Tongkonan *refers to the Toraja's house society and reflects* the kinship system. Moreover, the *passura,* the carving motif on the building, tells a story about the Toraja's beliefs and daily wisdom.

Classic grounded theory was used to study the Torajan coffee culture, which is rooted in its extensive history of coffee cultivation in Indonesia and its significance in cultural heritage. It

utilized the indigenous Torajan perspectives to gain an in-depth understanding of the larger picture and discover shared patterns from the indigenous culture of the Toraja community.

Methodology

Classic grounded theory (Glaser, 1978, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was used for this study's research design and method. The study's purpose was to discover a theory that explains the main problem faced by the Toraja community of specialty coffee producers and the shared patterns of the Indigenous cultural behaviours used in the continuous resolution of the problem.

Research Flow

Figure 2 illustrates the inductive research process the researcher used to conduct the study, from the topic, purpose, and goal to presenting the final version of the theory. It reads from the bottom to the top, from the particular to the general.

Data Collection

This study first planned to use observations and interviews as primary data collection methods and archival data only as a secondary method. However, the COVID-19 pandemic caused the researcher to adapt the data collection methods to virtual interviews via Zoom and archival data including photographs, videos, and social media. Data was collected from the indigenous Torajan perspectives to understand the coffee culture in a specific society.

The observations from October 2018 to July 2022 were done in Toraja and outside Toraja to understand the entire coffee production process, from cultivation to how the coffee is brewed and enjoyed, which occurs outside Toraja but affects Toraja's culture. In Toraja, the observations were done in Buntu Pune, Ke'te' Kesu,' To'Barana, and Rantepao, while outside Toraja, the observation was done in Jakarta, Yogyakarta, and Abu Dhabi. Multiple interviews were conducted with seven people who were experts in or who were part of Toraja's culture.

Data collection was guided by theoretical sampling. Theoretical sampling is a process in which the researcher self-questions and analyzes emergent data within the process of collecting and analyzing the data, which is guided by the emerging theory to decide when data saturation is achieved (Glaser, 1998; Glaser & Holton, 2004). Theoretical sampling led to various forms of data being collected in different phases. Phase 1 reflected the need to collect data about coffee culture in Toraja and the Torajan cultural heritage, and it was performed using participant and visual observation, with the outcomes being field notes and a visual data repository. Phase 2 reflected the need to complete the understanding of coffee culture in and outside Toraja as it impacts Toraja coffee culture. Phase 2 was also performed using participant and visual observations, with the outcomes being field notes and a visual data repository. Phase 3 was added as a response to the requirements of the COVID-19 pandemic protocols when the study was conducted. It was performed using interviews via Zoom and archival data, including photographs, videos, and social media.

Data Analysis

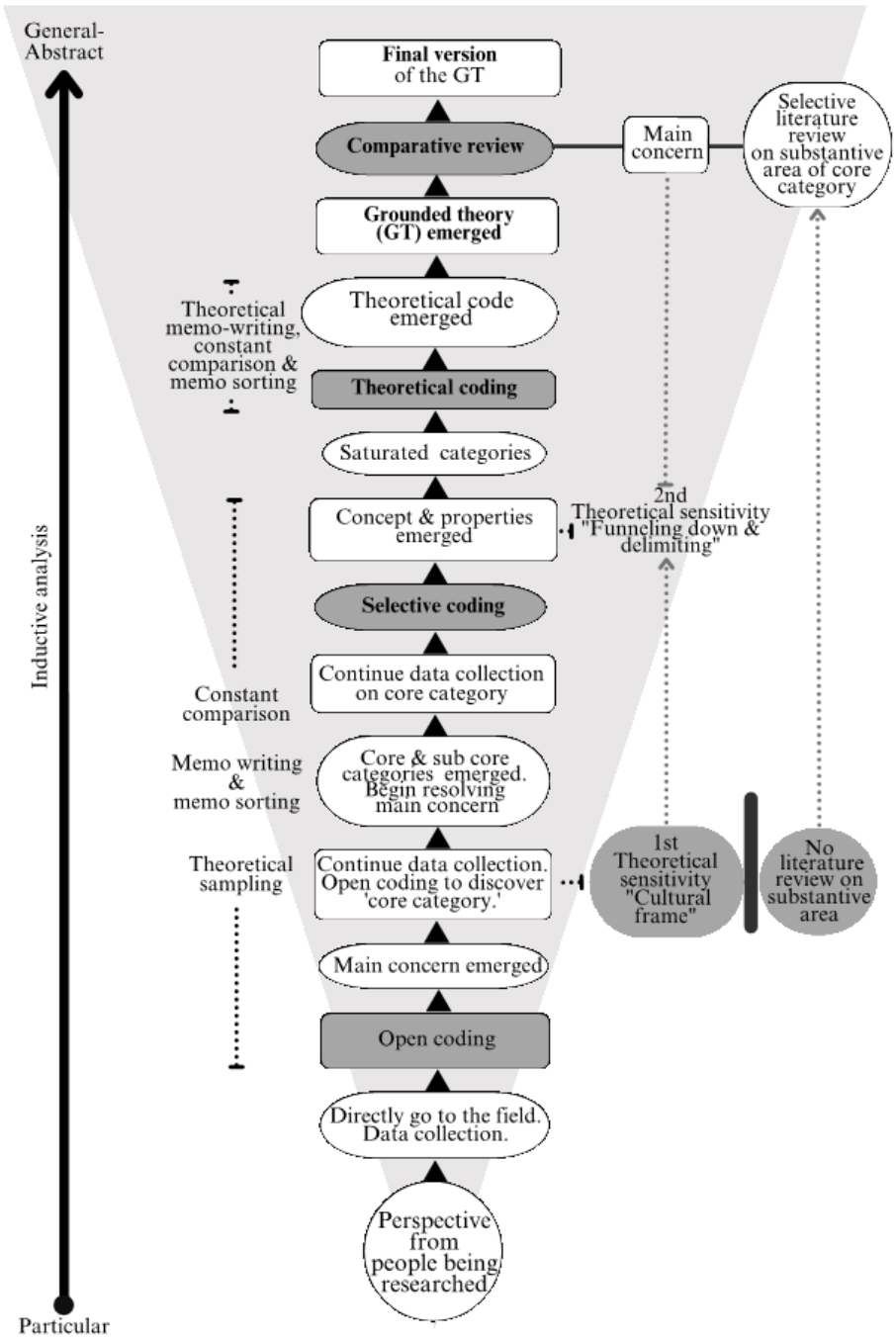
The data was analysed using constant comparative analysis, including coding and memoing. Figure 2 shows the three significant stages relating to the coding procedure in grounded theory (Glaser, 1998). Stage I —the open coding— refers to a process of identifying substantive codes emergent within the data (Glaser, 1998; Glaser & Holton, 2004). Stage II —selective coding—entails restricting coding to only those codes that link to the core category in critical enough ways to generate a *parsimonious theory* (Glaser & Holton, 2004). Stage III —the theoretical coding—is the process of going further into the abstraction level to see the framework pattern that integrates the theory (Glaser, 1998; Barney. G. Glaser, 2005; Glaser & Holton, 2004; Walsh, 2014). Furthermore, Glaser (1978) defined *theoretical code* as "a way of conceptualising

how substantive codes may relate to one another as hypotheses to be integrated into a theory" (p. 72). Theoretical codes define the possible relationships between the categories developed during selective coding.

Memo sorting occurred throughout the constant comparison process. It consisted of reviewing and sorting numerous memos related to categories and their properties to evaluate each memo's fit and work, their significance, and how they contributed to the theory's continuous development. Once the theory emerged, a comparative review of selective literature was conducted to pinpoint the key theories related to the core category and its primary concepts. Then, the theoretical and conceptual frameworks from the literature review were compared and synthesized with the grounded theory from this study.

Figure 2

Grounded Theory: Significant Coding Stages.

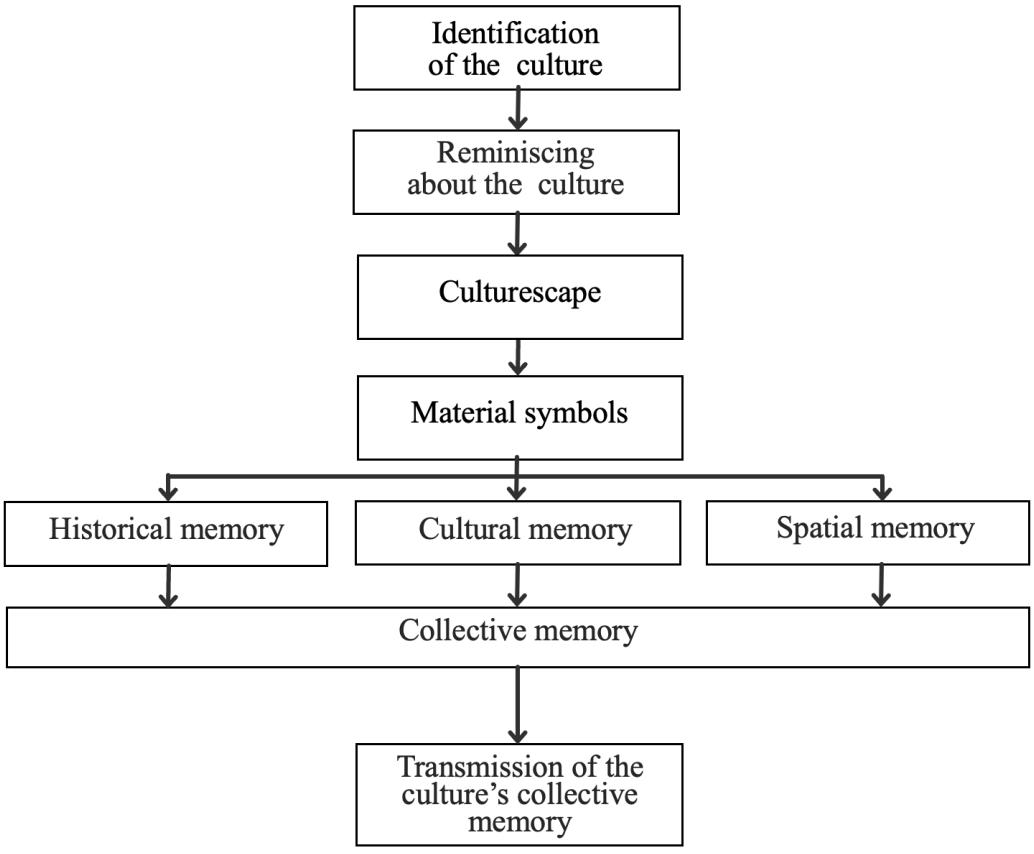


Theory of Safeguarding Culture Through Reminiscing

In this theory, *safeguarding culture through reminiscing* refers to the efforts and strategies implemented to protect the intangible cultural heritage of a community, which involves ensuring the accessibility, continuity, and integrity of cultural practices and traditions that define a community's identity. The loss of intangible cultural heritage is a prevalent concern within many cultures. This theory explains how the Torajan people address this concern by safeguarding their coffee culture through reminiscing (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

Diagram: Safeguarding Culture.



The main concern of this study is *safeguarding culture*. *Reminiscing about the culture* arose as the core category.

Reminiscing About the Culture

Reminiscing about the culture is recalling and transmitting memories about one's past while incorporating various cultural elements from a person's *culturescape*. *Culture* refers to the shared values, belief systems, customs, behavioural patterns, and treasures that characterize a society. It represents the traditions and ideologies of society, which have been developed and transferred from one generation to the next, and shapes how people acknowledge and engage with the environment and surroundings. One aspect of culture is culturescape.

The *culturescape* is the complex interplay of natural and cultural landscapes, senses, and livelihoods constituting the human environment. It is the complex cultural environment in which society's livelihoods, identities, beliefs, and sociocultural structures are inextricably linked. When Torajan reminisces about their culture, Torajan incorporates elements of their culture, such as their traditional house and all its decorative elements, to help them reminisce about their culture. Exploring culturescape is one way of reminiscing about the culture.

Exploring Culturescape

Exploring culturescape refers to recalling and transmitting a series of reminiscences to help others understand the complex interplay of natural and cultural landscapes, senses, and livelihoods constituting the natural and cultural landscapes. It occurs when reminiscing about the culture using the cultural perspective of the people reminiscing.

The *natural landscape* consists of all the elements within the naturally-made environment, such as *kombongna* and *paqpalakapangna (forests)* where the coffee is grown, and *sawah* (rice fields), mountains, and rivers. In contrast, *the cultural landscape* consists of man-made elements within the environment, such as architecture, land-use systems, and ceremonies, which record the cultural footprints of people's cultures in the past and present. A cultural

landscape is an imprint of civilization on the natural landscape. The cultural landscape goes beyond the definition's basic scope (which implies a one-dimensional view of human agency over nature) to scrutinize the intertwining of nature and *culture*. For example, several aspects of the Torajan civilization that have imprinted to create the cultural landscape are the Tongkonan house and land-use system such as *kombongna* and *paqpalakapangna (forests) where the coffee was grown and sawah (rice fields),* and the livelihoods practiced on them, which include the ceremonies and practice of coffee culture on the landscape.

Exploring culturescape is often tied to one's *senses* because it is a complex reaction encompassing individuals' emotions and experiences and how individuals perceive, interpret, and assign meaning to a specific environment. Exploring culturescape using one's senses involves how individuals react to sight and aroma and the memories triggered by specific sights and aromas. For example, a Toraja coffee cupping session is a cultural practice built on using the senses. The cupping activity identifies the quality of the coffee based on its aroma, such as dark cherry and spicy aromas, and flavour, such as nutmeg, and sugary sweetness. One participant, in describing the attributes of the coffee identified during a cupping session, said, "It is not flawless, but something intriguing about it keeps you returning for more." The cupping activity determines the classification and price of the coffee. It also identifies the coffee's origin and the type of process employed.

Exploring the culturescape may also include elements of livelihood. *Livelihood* refers to the activities that people engage in to earn a living. This is especially the case when much of the community's livelihood is tied to the natural environment. It is part of the concept of culturescape, which forms a human ecosystem. Torajan livelihood, mostly, is growing coffee and

rice in kombongna and paqpalakapangna (forests) and sawah (rice fields) and collecting them in the granaries for further processing in the courtyard.

Utilizing Material Symbols

Exploring culturescape often involves the use of material symbols. *A material symbol* is a tangible element of cultural heritage that represents and encapsulates specific cultural values. A material symbol represents rich data on the visual language of the intangible cultural heritage of the people's unwritten knowledge and wisdom. Utilizing material symbols is a form of communication about a culture's beliefs, traditions, and practices. Utilizing material symbols occurs when elements such as architecture, ceremonies, food and drinks, music and art, etc. trigger memories of the past and are used in the reminiscing of the associated cultural elements.

For example, the Torajan process their coffee in Tongkonan village, where the Tongkonan houses and granaries are set as the backdrop and cultural context of the Torajan coffee community. The Torajan coffee community uses the material symbol of the Tongkonan house and its cultural elements, such as Buffalo facade ornaments (*kabongok'*) and Passura' carving motifs, as a symbol of specific cultural values that remind them of Torajan coffee's cultural and historical memories and the spatial memories of the origin of coffee.

Material symbols are used to *remember historical, cultural, and spatial memories*, transmit memories about them, and retain a collective memory. *Historical, cultural, and spatial memories* are part of the collective memory.

Reminiscing Historical Memories

Reminiscing historical memories is recalling and transmitting memories of historically significant community experiences. These historical memories are composed of experiences that happened in the past but shaped the present culture. The historically significant community

experiences are ones that are part of the historical timeline that shapes the present culture. The community incorporates the historical significance of community experiences to create a collective memory.

Torajans use the Tongkonan house to reminisce about their historical memories of coffee. For example, the following quotations, which were translated from Bahasa Indonesia and Torajan languages, demonstrate how the Tongkonan house, as a material symbol, brings back memories of their childhoods and the coffee. “Seeing photos of my Tongkonan home reminds me of the great coffee we had as a child” (Torajan participant, 2022). “These photos— Tongkonan back home reminisced me about processing coffee with my family when we lived in Toraja” (Torajan participant, 2022). Sharing these memories helps them become part of a collective memory.

Reminiscing Cultural Memories

Reminiscing cultural memories is recalling and transmitting memories, which are memories of culturally significant community experiences. Culturally significant community experiences are cultural practices that have been celebrated over time. The community reminisces about the cultural significance of community experiences to incorporate them into the collective memories. In addition, *cultural memory* refers to interpreting past events, individuals, and cultural practices within a community or society. It encompasses how people remember, interpret, and pass on knowledge and information about the past and its impact on their identity, values, and beliefs.

According to Roxana Waterson, Tongkonan is a reminiscent house that has a life within itself. It is more than a metaphor for the Toraja. She wrote:

> To say that it is 'alive' is to grant the house its own subjectivity and make of it a communicable-with entity. The interaction between humans and houses must then be regulated to ensure a harmonious balance between their respective vitalities. These ideas are reflected in conceptions of the house as body, and the need for the proper performance of rituals associated with it (Waterson, 2009, p. 183).

Furthermore, Waterson (1988) referred to Tongkonan as a house that Torajan uses as a way of documentation and symbolizing, representing, and encapsulating Torajan's shared values, as follows:

> A carved house—hence, a noble one—is called banua sura'. Both words may also be used to mean "painting" or "writing" (the Toraja, unlike the Bugis and Makassarese, did not have any indigenous script at the time of Dutch takeover in 1906, although some Torajan nobles were literate in Buginese) (p. 42).

Transmission of the culture's collective memory passes down shared knowledge about cultural, historical, and spatial memories from one generation to the next within the community. The transmission involves the transfer of community identity and self-pride through ceremonies, rituals, traditions, storytelling, visual records, and others that express the community's memories about their heritage.

Discussion

Existing Literature

Preserving culture is a topic that is covered in the literature. One example is the framework developed by UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage (2022). The framework entails preserving, protecting, promoting, enhancing, and revitalizing the tangible part of the cultural heritage, followed by transmitting the intangible cultural heritage in both formal and informal

contexts (UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage, 2022). UNESCO's framework has some similar points, and some points are different from the theory of safeguarding culture through reminiscing. Both were started with the significance of the culture and its preservation. One of the areas that differ is understanding how material symbols can be used in reminiscing to understand a place's culturescape by aiding in identifying its heritage, culture, and cultural heritage, as discussed with the theory of safeguarding culture through reminiscing. The cultural landscape (Dieterich & Straaten, 2004; P. J. Fowler, 2003; Sauer, 1925, 1927; UNESCO World Heritage Committee, 2014; UNESCO World Heritage Convention, 2005), senses, and economic values of the place distinguish the culturescape (Eagleton, 2000, 2016; Franchi, 2023; Schafer, 1976; Wolde, 2017).

However, based on the literature review and UNESCO theoretical framework, the theory of safeguarding culture through reminiscing contributed to the literature by adding a theoretical understanding of the role of the culturescape and material symbols in safeguarding cultural values. Furthermore, understanding the role of culturescape and material symbols has provided a new understanding of the transmission of cultural values, encapsulated in collective memories. This transmission is essential for ensuring the preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, and revitalization of intangible cultural heritage, a crucial aspect of sustaining a community and place's identity.

The grounded theory of safeguarding culture through reminiscing expands the literature by providing a theoretical framework for understanding how the culturescape and material symbols contribute to safeguarding cultural values. It offers fresh insights into the transmission of these values, which is essential for preserving, protecting, promoting, enhancing, and revitalizing intangible cultural heritage—a fundamental element in sustaining a community's

identity and sense of place.

Limitations

There were two main limitations experienced in this research. First, grounded theory is very language-based; this was a constraint for translating the substantive stories of Toraja indigenous wisdom presented with visual language into conceptual English. Second, the grounded theory relies on the researcher to develop the power to translate the stories into concepts. Various interpretations from other researchers on conceptualizing the stories will broaden the perspective of the emergent theory.

Future Research

There are several recommendations for future research based on the outcomes of this study. First, expanding the scope of the grounded theory of safeguarding culture through reminiscing. The theory of safeguarding culture through reminiscing is conceptually abstract, allowing for modifications in the future depending on new data from within or beyond the Toraja community and coffee culture, broadening the perspective on safeguarding culture for any community. Furthermore, it is sufficiently adaptable to meet the main concern of safeguarding culture through reminiscing further depending on the introduction of new data within the same core category of reminiscing about culture.

The researcher also encourages additional research into the collective memory in other indigenous and nonindigenous cultures using the same concepts of cultural, historical, and spatial memories. A future study on the concept of collective memory to safeguard culture could also be proposed for other research projects if more information about memories other than cultural, historical, and spatial ones becomes available. It would increase our understanding of the relationship between culturescape and culture, as well as the roles of culturescape in

safeguarding culture. More research in these areas could help move the theory of safeguarding culture through reminiscing toward a mid-range or formal grounded theory.

Next, the researcher recommends that in the future, additional research should embrace the use of classic grounded theory in order to get a comprehensive understanding of the values of culture and architecture from diverse perspectives. This inductive study demonstrates how classic grounded theory generates a novel and original theory and is validated in the following ways: fit, workability, relevance, and modifiability—qualities that are essential for research using classic grounded theory.

Future research could explore concepts discovered within this theory. Future research could further explore the role of human senses in exploring culturescape. This theory focused on sight, scents, and taste, but future research could explore the impact of other human senses on collective memory.

Future research could expand the theory with other cultures and by other researchers. Furthermore, it is recommended that more collaborative research be undertaken because grounded theory relies on the researcher's capacity to interpret stories into concepts. Other researchers' interpretations of the data used in this study and additional data from other cultures may broaden the emergent theory's perspective.

There are a lot of existing theories and literature related to the study of safeguarding culture. Another area for future research would be to compare the theory that emerged from this study to the existing body of literature on safeguarding culture done by others, aside from UNESCO, which was reviewed in this article. Further work could also link this theory of safeguarding culture to the UNESCO tangible heritage conservation approach.

Finally, future studies are strongly needed to develop practical guidelines for communities to safeguard culture and sustain a place's identity based on this study's grounded theory of safeguarding culture.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to develop a theory about the Torajan coffee culture which is rooted in its extensive history of coffee cultivation in Indonesia and its significance in cultural heritage. Through this study, it was discovered that the main concern was not limited to coffee, but rather the safeguarding of the Torajan's rich and deep culture and history. The theory developed through this study gives an insight into the role of the culturescape and material symbols in safeguarding culture by reminiscing, which emerged from the data of the Toraja community regarding coffee culture. The grounded theory suggests the use of material symbols, specifically the Tongkonan house and its cultural decorative elements, which are found in the culturescape to help communities recall their collective memories regarding their cultural, historical, and spatial memories. The theory enhances the literature by offering a theoretical perspective on how the culturescape and material symbols help safeguard cultural values. It provides new insights into the transmission of these values, which is vital for preserving, protecting, promoting, enhancing, and revitalizing intangible cultural heritage—a key factor in maintaining the identity of a community and its sense of place**.**

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When is Grounded Theory (GT) Not Grounded Theory: Methodological Convergences and Divergences

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Abstract

The term grounded theory, in the vernacular sense, has a certain *je-ne-sais-quoi*; it sounds scholarly and is appealing to many researchers worldwide. Since its formal inception in 1967 with Glaser and Strauss the design has, for good or bad, undergone many modifications. However, the name has remained. To present the original design as grounded theory and modified versions of the design also as grounded theory seems awkward and confusing especially for students who are trying to learn the design. This confusion begs the question: When is grounded theory not grounded theory? In this paper, the author will present several methodological convergences and divergences in the design.

Keywords: grounded theory, technology usage, ChatGPT, qualitative data analysis, contradictory paths

Grounded theory is a research design researchers use to develop a theory from data (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2019; Glaser, 1998, 2009; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). At this point, no one would disagree with such a statement. However, as a way to start this discussion and perhaps fuel an ever-existing and divisive nature of what grounded theory is and is not, I will make what some scholars might view as a bold, brash, and perhaps contentious statement but please allow me to explain. There is only 1 version of grounded theory that exists: Classic (or Glaserian) grounded theory.

Beginning with the pointed commentaries that Barney Glaser wrote to his long-time friend and colleague Anselm Strauss about Strauss' 1990 book on qualitative analysis misidentified (Glaser, 1992) as grounded theory, Glaser's life-long belief was that there was only 1 type of grounded theory—the one he started to develop in 1965 with the Constant Comparison Method (Glaser, 1965) and subsequently became Classic (or Glaserian) Grounded Theory. Regarding Strauss' book, Glaser (1992) stated was it

> is not based on emergent relevance with categories that fit and work, and the product is not grounded theory. Again, it is preconceived, forced, conceptual description, which can be very significant in its own right, but again it is not emergent grounded theory. (p. 4)

Glaser (1992) explicitly stated to Strauss that what Strauss had created was something completely different from grounded theory. Indeed, Charmaz (2000) stated that Glaser and Strauss (along with his co-author Juliette Corbin) went in "conflicting directions" (p. 510). The implication is that while Glaser was ultra-conservative in his beliefs about defined grounded theory, Strauss and Corbin took a number of liberties and modified the original design; some of these changes will be discussed throughout this paper.

Kathy Charmaz went in a different direction from Glaser as well. Her constructivist version was considered by Glaser (2002) to be a type of qualitative data analysis (QDA) not grounded theory. In fact, he stated that to call what Charmaz developed grounded theory "is a misnomer" (Glaser, 2002, para. 1). One can understand, then, that my perhaps overly brash comment at the start of this research is not blatant bias but rather founded on documented information.

Yet, at this point, though, further clarity is vital. Glaser never stated that the Straussian design (by Strauss or by Corbin and Strauss) and the constructivist design (by Charmaz) are bad; in fact, he commented that one design is no better or worse than another (Glaser, 2010, 2011). Glaser's only contention was that those designs are not to be called grounded theory but rather QDA. Glaser (2010) went on to state that

> Grounded theory refers to a specific methodology on how to get from systematically collecting data to producing a multivariate conceptual theory. It is a total methodological package. . . . Now, all research is grounded in data in some way. It is implicit in the definition of research. Thus, research is grounded by definition, but research grounded in data is not grounded theory, although many jargonizers would have their work designated that way. (p. 1)

This subtle yet important distinction will provide a starting point for this research. With the belief that each design has its own merit (Glaser, 2010, 2011), the objective of this scholarship, then, is to compare various elements of Glaserian grounded theory with corresponding elements from the Straussian and Constructivist designs to understand in a perhaps more nuanced manner the "conflicting directions" (Charmaz, 2000, p. 510) that Strauss and Corbin, and Charmaz took from Glaser.

Though there are many incompatible paths (Charmaz, 2000) that could be presented, I will focus on (a) emergence and forcing data and (b) description and conceptualization. Then, there will be a brief discussion of some methodological convergences. Each section will be discussed in turn.

Emergence and Forcing Data

The concepts of emergence and forcing of data can be studied in different ways with respect to the designs of Glaser, Strauss, and Charmaz. While emergence, and more broadly speaking, data collection and analysis, can be potentially a polemic topic, the objective here is not to be antagonistic but neutral where the reader can determine what is most appropriate for the research. Within this section, 2 subthemes will be presented: (a) coding with technology or by hand and (b) co-construction, axial coding, and natural emergence. Each subsection will be presented in turn.

Coding with Technology or by Hand

The discussion of coding with or without technology will start with a comment from Glaser (1998, 2009) that technology should not be used in coding. For Glaser, using technology poses several issues. Glaser spoke of recording interviews as a bad thing because of several reasons. First, creativity is greatly restricted. Second, recording interviews "superficializes the data" (Glaser, 1998, p. 112). Additionally, taping becomes a "psychological crutch" (Glaser, 2001, p. 54) which does not allow the brain to make important subconscious (Glaser, 2001). Tangentially, with recording would come transcription and overly detailed information and what Glaser (2012) described as "worrisome accuracy" (p. 119). Finally, and perhaps most importantly, with Glaserian grounded theory, tools are not used because of the great potential to force data into pre-determined codes. Glaser (1978, 2012) believed that emergence will happen

in due course, by hand. For Glaser, then, coding and interviewing are two aspects of grounded theory that must be done by hand. Glaser (2017) used the term "natural coding" (p. 25). By extension, one may describe coding done by hand as naturally emerging.

Given the ubiquitous reliance on technology in the 3rd decade of the 21st century, very few people, if any, would argue that technology is not beneficial or even vital in their lives and research. After all, consider the fact that I am using technology to create this article. Imagine writing and editing it solely by hand. It would not be hyperbolic to state that in the 3rd decade of the 21st century, the most innovative technology is artificial intelligence (AI). One type of AI is ChatGPT, a tool that uses

> an AI language model developed by OpenAI. It can understand and generate human-like text, making it useful for a variety of applications, such as answering questions, providing explanations, assisting with creative writing, and more. It uses machine learning to generate responses based on the input it receives, aiming to provide helpful and relevant information in conversation. (OpenAI, 2024)

In 2022, Chametzky published a paper on coding and presented a mock interview with the resulting 10 codes that were obtained through line-by-line analysis by hand. Here are those 10 codes:

> (a) Being unsure and reaching out; Testing one's viewpoint; (b) Opening to suggestions and evaluating alternatives; (c) Self-reflecting; (d) Struggling to find a path; Feeling frustration; (e) Developing a plan; Remaining optimistic; (f) Determining a plan; Confronting unrealistic expectation; (g) Overcoming obstacles; (h) Reasoning out the plan; (i) Seeking information; and, (j) Raising self esteem [sic]; Experiencing self-efficacy. (Chametzky, 2022, Section 5)

If one were to use ChatGPT to find codes in the aforementioned text, one would discover these in-vivo codes: (a) aha moment, (b) wear 2 hats, and (c) respectfully disagree, and these thematic codes: (a) struggle and frustration, (b) mentorship and guidance, (c) autonomy in learning, (d) integration of knowledge, and (e) reflexivity. There is now value in discussing, albeit briefly, the resulting codes. While the in-vivo codes might be valuable in a discussion, most probably, they would add little insights into what is taking place in the data (Chametzky, 2022). Additionally, they are too descriptive rather than conceptual. And in Glaserian grounded theory, the use of description is rather localized so that data are not abstract of "time, place, and people" (Glaser, 2009, p. 24). There is value in taking a brief detour to explain this quote of Glaser from 2009.

The objective of Glaserian grounded theory is that the theory needs to be relatable to many different groups of people, not just those in the substantive area. A good example is a study done by Chametzky in 2017. In that study, he explained about how online students dealt with the anxiety of taking online foreign language classes. When stressed, the behaviors they exhibited—screaming, crying, isolating, ranting to other people, praying, giving up, etc.—are exactly some of the behaviors that each of us may experience during stressful times in our lives. Thus, the theory presented Chametzky in 2017 is said to be broader than the substantive area because it demonstrates universality rather than being limited to specific people at a certain time and place (Glaser, 2009).

Returning to the discussion about codes, from another perspective, while these codes are generally very good, there are some subtle differences between what ChatGPT presented and what a human has presented. First, the number of codes that ChatGPT produced is half of what was done by hand. That reduction can potentially create issues during the memo writing and analysis phases. Additionally, mentorship and guidance are not adequately reflected in the

participant's experiences as much as it is an external influence on the participant. Such a different perspective causes the focus of the analysis to change and potentially veer off path. Similarly, the codes of integration of knowledge and reflexivity, while connected to the aforementioned human-produced codes, do not reflect the progression of learning that is manifested in the mock interview text. And this progression is what led to the aha moment. So, while the ChatGPT-generated codes are generally good, they lack the subtle details and the required finesse that humans have (Chametzky, 2022).

While ChatGPT isn't at the required level now, given how fast the technology is developing, there is reason to believe that within a few years, the tool may be at the same level or better than human analysis. At that point, then, one may wonder whether Glaserian grounded theorists could indeed use technology and discover codes which are as valuable as ones derived by hand. Glaser (1998) was certainly not opposed to technology (see page 185), though at that time, there were insurmountable caveats placed on technology. But those caveats are slowly evaporating as ChatGPT gets better.

For the Charmazian design, on the other hand, Charmaz (2014) explained that codes are constructed during the active naming process. There is no mention of computers associated with Charmaz (Stern, 2010) so one presumes that the construction is done manually. This presumption is quite plausible because, since the researcher is to make note of any unspoken elements during the interview (like "non-verbal cues" [Charmaz, 2014, p. 68]), recording interviews would make sense and be deemed acceptable, even necessary so that the researcher may pay full attention to the participant and their ideas.

However, according to Soca-Díaz and Valverde-Berrocosco (2022), "Strauss adds new instruments of analysis, such as the interpretive description of data, axial coding, diagrams, the

matrix, or the use of computer programs" (Section 1). Strauss even commented that the researcher is to tape the interviews (Strauss, 1990) with the resulting transcriptions to be analyzed. Further, technology could potentially aid the researcher during the coding and analysis process. In a later edition of Strauss' 1990 work, Corbin explained how a tool like MAXQDA could be valuable during coding and memo storage.

For Corbin and Strauss (2008), a "computer program [like MaxQDA] is an option, a tool, [that is] meant to facilitate and not distract from the [p. xii] analysis process" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, xi-xii). In terms of keeping track of codes or memo storage, computers are ideal (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The human component is still needed, to think and reflect on the data, though (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Yet, with ChatGPT though, it might be possible, in the very near future, to provide some questions along with codes to get potentially appropriate and meaningful memos. Right now, though, computers cannot reflect, code, and write the required memos (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

But, given the state of technology in the 21st century and where tools like ChatGPT seem to be going, there may be a real concern about the erosion of Glaserian grounded theory (Boychuk Duchscher & Morgan, 2004; Glaser, 2002; Rieger, 2018) and the further development of the other research designs. Slowly the design is changing—for good or bad—and calving much like an iceberg. Whether the elimination of calving is possible or not with Glaserian grounded theory remains to be seen. Additionally, how much change in the other designs because of technology remains to be seen. Attention and focus can now be turned to the concepts of axial coding and co-construction as compared with natural emergence.

Co-construction, Axial Coding, and Natural Emergence

A discussion in this section will focus first on interviews and then on coding. In Glaserian (or Classic) grounded theory, during interviews, researchers are to set aside, to the extent possible, any preconceived ideas about what they might previously know about the data being heard or read (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). During interviews, listening and perhaps only broad inquiries (Glaser, 2001) like “What do you mean by XYZ?” or “Would you explain XYZ further?” may be asked. In this instance, the researcher is passive and takes the data as accurate without modifying it. Glaser (2002) believed that "in-depth interviews where mutuality can grow based on forcing type [sic] interview guides (Charmaz, 2000)" (p. 2) is imprecise. Glaser (2002) believed that "GT interviewing is a very passive listening" (para. 5) experience. The researcher has no right, according to Glaser (2002) to offer another way to view the data given the experience is so individualized and personal. Stated a bit differently, a researcher employing Glaserian grounded theory needs to adhere to Max Weber’s notion of *verstehen*, “whereby the investigator understands a group’s behavior by viewing their action through their eyes” (Glaser, 1996 Gerund, p. 47).

Given how simple emergence of important ideas from interviews can be, one might describe the process as a natural emergence as opposed to the possibly more formulaic emergence common in the Charmazian or Straussian designs. Charmaz believed that emergence is an interactive process (Charmaz, 2007, 2024; Glaser, 2002) where the researcher and participant co-construct (Charmaz, 2024; Charmaz & Belgrave, 2019) the information during an interview as the “"interview is contextual and negotiated" (Charmaz, 2007, p. 27). According to Charmaz (2007), "an interview is contextual and negotiated" (p. 27) where the researcher describes what he or she thinks is taking place in the data (Charmaz, 2014). Having some

predetermined ideas, called “sensitizing concepts” (p. 117), are needed to help a researcher code the data (Charmaz, 2014). A symbiotic relationship exists with the research and the data collection in the Charmazian design.

With the Straussian design, interviews are often structured (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Jones & Alony, 2011) to help the researcher focus on the topic and know where to begin. Additionally, Strauss (1990) believed that researchers need to have an idea and turn it into a hypothesis and assess whether it would or would not work. While Glaser (1998) believed that hypotheses are possible, they do not occur at the beginning of a research study to gain data or topic sensitivity. Thus, a point of convergence between Straussian and Glaserian designs exists. However, for Glaser, such structure and imposition of information constitutes preconception and violates the basic tenet of Glaserian grounded theory. Only through natural emergence, coding, and memoing will a researcher become sensitized to the data. And becoming sensitized to the data takes time and objectivity.

The idea of being sensitized to the data takes a different perspective with the design of Charmaz compared to Glaserian grounded theory where imposing previous ideas on data constitutes preconception (Glaser, 2001, 2014). The idea of interactive emergence (Charmaz, 2024; Glaser, 2002) for Charmaz is fundamental to the design.

There is now some value in viewing researcher interaction (Charmaz, 2007; Glaser, 2002) during the interview process from a different perspective. Researcher interaction is a common and foundational principle in the three designs, and the researchers have attempted to explain that grounded theory is a way to explain emergent data (Charmaz, 2008; Glaser, 1992; Strauss, 1990). However, how the interaction takes place points to a vital distinction that distinguishes Glaserian grounded theory from the other two research designs. The paradigmatic

difference (Mohajan & Mohajan, 2023) in the interviewing process deals with subjectivity versus objectivity.

From a Glaserian perspective, the researcher takes a passive, objectivist role in the interviewing process and does not add any interpretation (Rakhmawati, 2019). The role is that of an outsider—an etic perspective. The researcher accepts what is heard during the interview because the information is true for the participant.

In the designs of Corbin and Strauss, and Charmaz, the role of the researcher is different and contrary to the objective perspective of Glaserian grounded theory. In the designs of Corbin and Strauss and Charmaz, the researcher takes a more active and constructive (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Weiner, 2010) role during the interview process where the researcher interprets and constructs (as well as co-constructs) the information (Rakhmawati, 2019). For these researchers, interpretation and context (Thai et al., 2012) are vital. Charmaz (2014) was clear when she wrote that "Your grounded theory journey relies on *interaction*–emanating from your world-view, standpoints, and situations, arising in the research sites, developing between you and your data, emerging with your ideas . . . (p. 321). This perspective of interaction stems from symbolic interactionism in which "human behavior is a product of meanings constructed through social interaction" (Simmons, 2022, p. xxi) and how the researcher tries to understand the reality of the participants where "subjective meanings are co-constructed and interpreted" (Lindqvist & Forsberg, 2023, para. 2) by the researcher.

The focus can now shift to coding. Each of the researchers believed in close, line-by-line or idea-by-idea reading of the text. Glaser believed that codes are developed from the data without predetermined patterns like axial coding that Corbin and Strauss proposed. While the idea of axial coding—coding around a given axis or point or a "coding paradigm" (Strauss, 1990,

p. 423)—and the concept in Glaserian grounded theory of selective coding are similar, the important distinction is that with Corbin and Strauss (2008) the patters are predetermined whereas with Glaser they are not; the researcher does not know *a priori* what the "properties, dimensions, and such" (Simmons, 2022, p. xxi) of the core variable or category might be. For Charmaz, coding, like interviewing, is interactive requiring a connection between the researcher and the data as well as the participant.

The issue for the researcher, then, is whether pre-determined codes and, more broadly, structured questions (Jones & Alony, 2011) by Strauss or co-construction of ideas by Charmaz—are justifiable with the chosen research design. A clear divergence exists between Glaserian grounded theory on one hand, and the designs by Strauss and Charmaz on the other. The debate comes down to one rather straightforward point. Though one design is no better or worse than another (Glaser, 2011), the basic issue is whether the researcher feels justified in actively interacting with and modify the data (Boychuk Duchscher & Morgan, 2004).

Description and Conceptualization

The final section of this research deals with description and conceptualization—two often diametrically opposed elements. As a way to start this discussion, a brief explanation of the terms will be offered along with a practical example from research that Chametzky did in 2020. In his research, Chametzky (2020) wrote about how doctoral students become candidates and then doctors thereby progressing from consumer to creator of knowledge. One of the ideas is particularly apt in this discussion: the difficulty of doctoral learners (students and candidates) to balance or juggle time between teaching, working full time, having a family, and other responsibilities was challenging. This idea is an excellent description as it explains or depicts a given situation at a given time by a certain person.

Conceptualization is different because it is broader than description. In the aforementioned descriptive idea, if one were to conceptualize it, one might use the code of prioritizing because each task needs to be prioritized in terms of importance to know which task will get done and when it will get done. With such a conceptualized code, the limitation that some doctoral learners might experience is broadened to be applicable to a different population, time, and location (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Glaser, 2009). With this broadened perspective and wider audience, generalizability (Chametzky, 2022) is increased. As Glaser (2001, 2007, 2009) stated, conceptualizations are not connected to a specific location, time, or people. With the code of prioritizing, then, one could see how it connects to doctoral students,but could equally apply to office workers doing multiple tasks at once or doctors in the emergency room conducting a triage on several patients.

With Glaserian grounded theory, descriptions and conceptualizations pose potentially two interrelated issues. First, students find conceptualization difficult. Such a statement may be completely understandable given that "descriptions run the world" (Glaser, 2002, p. 24) and everyone describes all the time (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Everyone likes descriptions with numerous examples—Glaser (1998) referred to this as "incident tripping" (p. 153)—because they think that more details are better and valuable. And in some instances (as with the research designs by Charmaz and Corbin and Strauss), they may be, but not in Glaserian grounded theory. "Conceptualization must come from a series of interchangeable indicators showing a pattern to conceptually name" (Glaser, 2009, p. 48). Thus, it takes time to develop such finesse.

The concept of interchangeable indicators is potentially confusing and bears a brief explanation here. As a researcher is analyzing the data, several codes may point to a particular category. The researcher will need to compare each of those codes one with the other and write

memos on those comparisons. The process of comparing each code with another within a given potential category is what is meant by interchangeability of indicators (Simmons, 2022).

The second reason that conceptualization is perhaps a challenge for some researchers using Glaserian grounded theory is that, in general, for other research designs like case study, phenomenology, ethnography, etc., descriptions are vital to understanding the data. Thus, Glaserian grounded theory "stands out" in its requirements when compared with some other (qualitative) research designs.

At this point, attention can now be turned to Charmaz and see how she handled the concepts of description and conceptualization in her design. Though Charmaz had studied under Glaser and had known Glaserian grounded theory well, she was also quite knowledgeable in the Chicago school of thought from Strauss (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2019; Charmaz, 2005; Konecki, 2021). Charmaz had even commented that theory, like data, are constructed rather than discovered (Konecki, 2021). Thus, with this school of thought, also referred to as symbolic interactionism, descriptions of each person's reality are needed to understand more fully the perspectives of the participants. Thus, for Charmaz, "intensive interviews" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 55) with "rich [and] detailed data" (Charmaz, 1996, p. 33) mandated "thick description (Charmaz, 1996, p. 34). Scholars who follow the constructivist design proposed by Charmaz need and "want to show the complexity of individual worlds, views, actions, and experiences" (Konecki, 2021, p. 104). As Konecki (2021) stated, "Charmaz comes close to ethnographic descriptions" (p. 102). One can understand, then, the level of description required in this design. Anything other than such detail would be inadequate and unacceptable.

With respect to coding, after open coding, Charmaz (1996) proposed "focused coding" (p. 40) where there is more conceptualization. Yet, even as codes are "raised to a category [there

is some description as to] its consequences" (Charmaz, 1996, p. 41). Even here, Charmaz has not fully escaped the need to describe, which offers some additional validation to Glaser's (2002) comment that "descriptions run the world" (p. 24).

Given his educational background, Strauss, and later Corbin and Strauss developed the research design through the lens of symbolic interactionism (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Mohajan & Mohajan, 2022). As with Charmaz, Corbin and Strauss believed that "moving from the descriptive story (or sentences) to the theoretical explanation" (Cullen & Brennan, 2021, Section 2.2) was valuable. Only through descriptions can a researcher, according to Charmaz, develop a comprehensive and rich picture of the data.

For Corbin and Strauss, intense and highly detailed explanations and descriptions of data (Charmaz & Thornberg, 2021) were required to understand the perspectives of the participants and to understand the resultant data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Through a highly myopic perspective during the open coding process, Strauss (1990) believed the researcher could give the reader the impression "that probably nothing of great importance has been left out of the theory" (p. 31). Such a perspective may be valuable, too, in the development of the theory and for "verification and qualification of the theory" (Strauss, 1990, p. 31). As the researcher develops the theory, the "conclusions drawn in the course of the research can vary greatly by level of abstraction" (Strauss, 1990, p. 4). Therefore, description and some conceptualization (Cullen & Brennan, 2021) work together in the research design.

Some Methodological Convergences

Though the 3 designs by Glaser, Charmaz, and Strauss (later Corbin and Strauss) come from different ontological perspectives (Mohajan & Mohajan, 2022), they share similar roots and

have several elements in common. With rather detailed discussions in the aforementioned sections, there is now value to discuss briefly two commonalities that all the designs share.

The first element is coding. Regardless of how it is done, coding is one of the intermediate steps between the raw data and a well-developed theory. Delving a bit deeper, one sees coding falling broadly into two or three levels or types depending on the research design in question. Broadly and conceptually speaking, the levels can be seen as primary, secondary, and, if present, tertiary where in each of the steps, the focus becomes increasingly narrower. Each of the types or levels of codes is shown in Figure 1. For Charmaz, only two levels of coding are generally required: initial and focused coding (Charmaz, 2014).

Figure 1

Coding in the Three Research Designs

Name	First level/type	Second level/type	Third level/type
Glaser	Open	Selective	(Theoretical if used)
Corbin and Strauss	Open	Axial	Selective
Charmaz	Initial or Open	Focused	--

The second element is memoing. Regardless of how coding is done, the researcher needs to find a way to get from those isolated words or ideas to a fully-developed theory; memos address that absolute need in the process of developing, understanding, and presenting the newly-discovered theory (Strauss, 1990). Glaser, Corbin and Strauss, and Charmaz did not state a required length to the memos as that is highly specific to the individual researcher. Additionally, there is no one right way to write a memo (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser, 2014). What is common among the researchers, though, is that memos must be created to get from the raw data to the theory.

The final convergent element concerns the simultaneous process of collecting and analyzing data (Charmaz, 1996, 2024). Regardless of whether a researcher is following Glaserian

grounded theory or the research designs by Charmaz or Corbin and Strauss, there is a cyclical interplay between data collection and analysis. As Stough and Lee (2021) explained, all 3 designs share the processes of data gathering, analyzing, conceptualizing (Stough & Lee, 2021)

Conclusion

Given the great interest in grounded theory (Glaser, 2011), one can see how it is the buzz-word in [some] academic circles" (Glaser, 2009, p. 1). One downside to this buzz, though, is that the terminology "continually regenerates the GT vocabulary wrongly" (Glaser, 2009, p. 1). Indeed, as Corley (2015) stated, with the extant variations, "it is no longer possible to tell precisely what researchers have done methodologically when they say they used 'grounded theory methods'" (p. 601). Corbin and Strauss (2008) commented that "throughout the years, what was initially grounded theory has evolved into many different approaches to building theory grounded in data" (p. viii). The result is that "a researcher ends up—as a number of them—claiming to have used a grounded theory approach, when indeed they have used only some of its procedures or have used them incorrectly" (Strauss, 1990, p. 419).

One is reminded that a "multi-version view of GT, based on jargonizing, is unstoppable" (Glaser, 2022, p. 2). The reason for this inability to stop is easy to see: grounded theory has great grab (Glaser, 2010, 2022). "People are latching onto it and feeling confident about producing something; they are feeling creative, original, and meaningfully relevant" (Glaser, 2022, p. 5). Such a statement may explain the *je-ne-sais-quoi* comment that was made earlier in this research. Yet, through this modification with other research designs and practices, the pure, orthodox form of grounded theory gets "totally contaminated" (Glaser, 2022, p. 3).

As a final comment, the 3 designs (by Glaser, Charmaz, and Corbin and Strauss) are, in their own ways, complicated for novice researchers; if a researcher attempts to use any of these

designs without the experiential knowledge may result is procedural disorder (Glaser, 2005) because if the researcher might inadvertently pick and choose from different designs thereby causing further erosion of the designs since not all the precepts had carefully been followed. It is recommended, therefore, that the researcher carefully stick to one design based on the needs of the research and use whatever design best fits the study as one design is as acceptable as another (Glaser, 2010, 2011). Additionally, so as not to experience the unfortunate methodological confusion that Corley (2015) discussed where the term "grounded theory" can refer to a mixture of different designs, the researcher advises readers to use the term "grounded theory" to refer solely to Glaserian grounded theory.

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A Front-Row Seat to the Development of Grounded Theory: An Interview with Odis Simmons

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Abstract

Dr. Kara Vander Linden conducted this interview with Dr. Odis Simmons for the 2024 International Virtual Conference for Qualitative Research and Theory Methodologies. In this interview, Dr. Odis Simmons described what it was like to be a student of Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss at the University of California, San Francisco. He explains how his friendship with Glaser and Strauss gave him a front-row seat to the development of grounded theory. Dr. Simmons also shared information about a shift Barney Glaser made in the meaning and development of substantive grounded theory that has never been previously shared. This interview has been edited for clarity and readability.

Keywords: grounded theory, Barney Glaser, Anselm Strauss, history, substantive grounded theory

Kara: Hi, my name is Dr. Kara Vander Linden. I'm the founder and director of the Institute for Research and Theory Methodologies, including the Glaser Center for Grounded Theory. Today, I will share a discussion with Dr. Odis Simmons, who told us what it was like to be a student of Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss at the University of California, San Francisco. His friendship with Glaser and Strauss gave him a front-row seat to the development of grounded theory. Dr. Simmons will also share with us some information about the development of grounded theory that, as far as we know, has never been previously shared. I hope you enjoy it!

Odis, thank you for agreeing to be interviewed today. I want to introduce you to our listeners. Dr. Odis Simmons is the person I learned grounded theory from about 20-plus years ago. He was a student of Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss. He's been doing and teaching grounded theory for over 50 years and is probably the most experienced grounded theorist in the world at this time.

So, Odis, you are one of the few people left in the world who learned grounded theory directly from Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss right after they published their *Discovery* book. I know that you also developed a lifelong friendship with Barney Glaser and his family. Can you briefly tell us about how you discovered grounded theory and what it was like to learn grounded theory from Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss?

Odis: Yeah, I actually discovered grounded theory when the *Discovery of Grounded Theory* book was first published in 1967. I was an undergraduate student at Sonoma State College, which is now a university and is where Kathy Charmaz (another grounded theorist, integral in constructivist grounded theory) spent her career as faculty. I was just browsing through the bookstore. I spent a lot of time browsing in the bookstore and the library. I've always

loved libraries and bookstores. Anyway, I saw this book, *Discovery of Grounded Theory*. The title looked interesting. I picked it up and started thumbing through it, and I thought, boy, that looks interesting. So, I bought it.

As I began to read, now you must understand that I didn't know much about methodology and, in fact, knew very, very little about methodology, and as I read it, I thought, you mean that isn't the way it's always done. I was amazed, you know, amazed that Glaser and Strauss were writing about how, in their methodology, the data comes first and then the theory. At the time, I was trying to decide what I wanted to major in, and that book, you know, sealed the deal for me.

Then, sometime later, I was taking a class. I took several classes from John Lofland, who was on the faculty at the time. He's now [professor] emeritus at UC Davis. He was a symbolic interactionist; in fact, all but one of the faculty members of San Francisco received their degrees from UC Berkeley. Herbert Bloomer was the chair of sociology at UC Berkeley, and he was the one who coined the phrase symbolic interaction.

Lofland was a student of George Herbert Mead, whose work led to the symbolic actionist perspective. And I might mention, Mead didn't have a PhD, nor did he ever publish anything. He has books, but these books were his notes put together by his students. They put them together. He would not even get a job in today's academic world, which would have changed the history of sociology. So, I was very well-versed in symbolic interactionism by the time I left [Sonoma State College].

John Lofland has been a very successful symbolic interactionist. And in a casual conversation, I mentioned to him that I really liked the *Discovery of Grounded Theory* book by Glaser and Strauss. And he said, "Oh, well, you know, Glaser and Strauss have developed a new

program at UCSF and my wife is in the first cohort." Lynn Lofland was her name. She was a very nice person and another very well-accomplished symbolic interactionist. And so, I thought, "Boy, I want to study under these guys."

The next year, I applied to the new program at UCSF, but they selected their students earlier than most universities, so they didn't have to compete with the more established departments, and they'd already selected their students.

So, another one of my early mentors, Stanford Lyman, was leaving Sonoma State and going to the social psychology program at the University of Nevada, Reno. And he said, "Follow me up there." So, I spent a year there, and then I reapplied at UCSF and got in. I started at UCSF in 1970, which was three years after the *Discovery of Grounded Theory* book had come out. I was in the third cohort. Charmaz was in the 2nd, and Lynn Lofland, John's wife, was in the 1st. Lynn Lofland was the first graduate of that program. I think Charmaz and I might have been the 2nd and 3rd graduates. I'm not quite sure of that.

When I first arrived there, Strauss was in Europe consulting with the World Health Organization. And so, I took one or two quarters of Barney's analysis course in the program at UCSF [before Strauss returned]. Barney lived in Mill Valley, and I lived at the time in Petaluma, which is quite a bit north of there. At that time, it maybe was a 1/2-hour drive; but now, it is about two hours given the traffic there.

We [Baney Glaser and Odis Simmons] would meet in the parking lot at the Safeway store in Mill Valley and then commute into the city together. And that was always interesting to me because I dropped out of high school. In fact, I still don't have a high school diploma. The high school I dropped out of was right across the street [from the Safeway store in Mill Valley]. I had all these incredible conversations with Barney across the street from the school I dropped out of.

So, we just immediately connected with one another. I had two daughters. He had three daughters, and they were around the same age. Both Barney and my youngest daughters were not only the same age; they had the same name, which was Bonnie. In fact, Barney's Bonnie runs the whole operation [at Sociology Press] now that Barney's passed on.

But we just became very good friends at the time. And our family saw one another socially. We had a huge amount of fun together. Barney had a swimming pool, and we'd go down to his place and the kids would play in the pool. Barney and I would sit there and talk grounded theory all the time. And on our commute, we would talk grounded theory. And on the way home, we would, you know, talk grounded theory. We'd sit in the parking lot in the Safeway store for an hour or hour and a half, talking grounded theory and Barney is fiercely taking notes with these little stubby pencils. I don't know how he could write with those things- and lots of those discussions ended up in his book, *Theoretical Sensitivity*.

It was an adventure learning from Barney because his classes were - I sometimes called them, this may be a little overdoing it kind of, an intellectual riot, you know, very free-flowing. He treated all his students like colleagues, you know, like he didn't talk down to us. He wanted us to help him explore more about grounded theory because, as both Glaser and Strauss, at the time, said, it's really at this point a theory about a methodology because the only time it had been used is during the death and dying research that they were doing at UCSF.

So, Barney and I became lifelong friends. We shared a sense of humor and did a lot of laughing together. I really, really miss the man.

Well, then, when Anselm came back from overseas, there was a party to greet him back. And I went to the party, and I said to Anselm, "Well, I've been really anxious to meet you."

And he said something that I always laugh when people do this. He said, “No, you were eager to meet me.”

And I went, “Oh yeah, that is a more appropriate word, isn't it?”

And so now, when I see people using the word anxious when really eager would fit better, I always chuckle and remember Anselm. But Anselm was just the nicest, sweetest man, just so kind to everyone, so supportive of everyone.

Barney was also very supportive of everyone. Barney was not an institutional man. You know, some of his colleagues would get irritated at him because he wouldn't go to faculty meetings because he just said, “Oh, it's in-presencing[1]. They never do anything.”

He's right about that, you know. But Anselm, he was a real institutional man. He knew the institution; he knew the ins and outs. He was very, very savvy about how to get things done. And I became, and you know, I say this humbly, they both considered me their best student. In fact, I still have a letter that Anselm wrote for me that just almost brings tears to my eyes. It's so supportive.

I had a family with two kids, one an infant. Anselm always made sure that I was first in line for money. We weren't as close friends as Barney and I were, but he frequently invited me over to his house to have lunch with him and his wife, Fran. And we talked about grounded theory. Well, what he thought was grounded theory. And as he's talking, I'm thinking, “He's not talking about grounded theory. He's talking about symbolic interactionism," which I knew quite well. I cut my eye teeth on that. He was a symbolic interactionist.

I'd taken these courses from Barney, and he talked about the importance of suspending preconceptions (and he didn't use the term at the time) but not being constructivist. As I said in my book[2], the term constructivist grounded theory[3] is an oxymoron because Barney is the one

who created grounded theory. The two main contributions of Anselm were that he helped Barney understand the value and importance of meaning-making because that was not so much in Barney's background, but that's what symbolic interaction is all about. It's how people construct meaning to organize and run their lives and so forth. And that's the symbolic interactionist perspective. And Barney certainly, in the work they did together, saw the importance of that which previously I don't know that he'd seen as clearly. And the other contribution from Anselm was that he was a high-status sociologist, well known and still is. He was on the list of who's who in sociology, and Barney was unknown at that time until the *Discovery of Grounded Theory* book.

The earliest statement of what became grounded theory was Barney's article in 1965 in the Sociology journal *Social Problems*, which was probably the number three journal in sociology at the time. The article was about the constant comparative method, which became Chapter 5 in the *Discovery of Grounded Theory* book. The constant comparative method was authored entirely by Barney. That's the guts and core of grounded theory. That's how grounded theory is non constructivist from the point of view of the researcher.

Now, as I pointed out in my book[4], there are three types of constructivism that you need to consider. One is sort of fundamental constructivism, as one of my early mentors, Stan Lyman put it in a book with Marvin Scott called *A Sociology of the Absurd,* is the symbolic interactionist position that the universe is inherently meaningless. All meaning is a construction of human beings. You can't avoid that. At least if you adopt that perspective, you know, which I clearly do. In other words, there isn't any kind of solid structure of society. Society is the ongoing creation of meaning and the interaction between people and what is around them. So, in that sense, you can't avoid the creation of meaning. Then there's the constructivism of the people you're

studying. That is how they are constructing their lives to work on their major concerns and so forth. Including the issues and problems they're trying to resolve. But what Barney designed out of grounded theory, as a methodology, was the constructivism of the researcher as the theorist. The researcher should be as non-constructivist as humanly possible. It's impossible to be 100% non-constructivist because we use language and meaning.

And that's where Barney and Anselm parted. Anselm didn't really understand that. And Anselm was still a symbolic interactionist to the end. And the first seminar I took from him when he came back from Europe, the first day he started discussing, here are the kinds of dimensions and issues and questions you want to pursue. And I thought that's symbolic interactionism. He was talking about what he later termed axial coding. And that violates the original primary canons of grounded theory as Barney designed it. And I saw this really clearly, and it kind of stunned me, but I didn't want to say anything. I'd just met the guy, you know, and I liked him a lot. He was just wonderful and a very good teacher. He was just an absolutely brilliant man. I absolutely adored him.

And so, on the way home that day after Barney's seminar, I said, “Barney, you and Anselm are not talking about the same thing.” And my statement didn't connect for Barney. You know how you can be talking with somebody, and you both think that you're in the same place as the other and you're not? Because if there's enough similarity, it's easy to believe that that you are talking about the same thing, but you are not. So, it didn't connect in Barney's mind. And he didn't really realize that he and Anselm were not talking about the same thing (i.e. not articulating grounded theory the same way) until the book that Strauss co-authored with Corbin came out[5]. That book really upset him. He was hurt and angry, and he wrote a book in response,

and he sent me that book[6]. He would send me his books and ask what I thought. And I told him what I thought.

What I told him was, "Barney, you got way too much passion in here. And it's going to end up becoming a soap opera if you don't reduce that." He got upset at me, which he hardly ever did. He accused me of siding with Anselm. He eventually calmed down, but he didn't do anything about it. And what happened, it became a soap opera. That's when the so-called "schism" happened. Now the content of *Basics of Grounded Theory Analysis* is actually quite good. It's very clarifying. But that passion, people see that, and that's what they tend to focus on. And whenever I would point things like that out to Barney, he would say, "Well, they wouldn't make good ground theorists anyway." People thought the schism was personal, but it wasn't. They remained good friends. Even after Anselm died, Barney would visit his wife, who was then in a care facility, and have lunch with her.

A lot of people thought that Strauss was horrible. I remember once I was at a ground theory conference, and one of the participants said, "Oh, Strauss must have been a horrible person." It kind of shocked me. I said, "No, he was a wonderful person." But the conference participant really had believed Strauss was horrible; that he had stolen grounded theory from Glaser. That's just not the way it went down. Barney did some perks from his association with Anselm at the time due to Anselm's high status as a sociologist. And maybe it's still that way, when a higher-status person signs on to the work of somebody else, usually a younger person, who's got fresher ideas and so forth, and the reputation of the higher-status person helps the lesser-status person's career, but the bulk of the work is done by the lesser status person.

Well, that's the case with Glaser and Strauss. Grounded theory is Glaser's ideas at core, what we now call classical grounded theory, which to me is the authentic grounded theory. I am

not saying that Charmaz's constructivist grounded theory and the different versions are bad research. They're just not grounded theory. I mean, they're a nice methodological addition to symbolic interactionism, but they're just not grounded theory because they violate the central canon, which is to be as non-constructivist as humanly possible. And that's why I consider it to be, you know, to consider that to be an oxymoron.

But at any rate, [back to my time at UCSF]. Anselm's classes were very interesting. I learned a huge amount from him. It deepened my understanding and respect for symbolic interactionism. But he didn't really get grounded theory, as Barney said in his retort to Corbin and Strauss's book. Barney said, "Anselm, he never really understood me." And Barney was right. He was absolutely right. I think it's sort of tragic that it took him so long to figure that out. Maybe I should have been a little more assertive about it, but you know, I loved Anselm. It's really hard for me to talk about this because I don't want it to come across as criticizing Anselm.

I've known a lot of really smart people, including Anselm, but Barney was just off the charts in terms of the way he thought. Barney was a creative genius. He was able to put things together in a way that I can't imagine anyone I've ever known being able to do except him. He picked up what he did when he was in the army in Europe, at the Sorbonne, etcetera. The stuff he learned at Columbia about quantitative methods and theory and all of that. He just put it all together into creating grounded theory. I think it's just an absolutely brilliant method that counters the mistakes made by Emil Durkheim, who was the original sociologist at the University of Paris, the Sorbonne. Durkheim was the first actual chair of sociology. He developed a methodology based upon the scientism model of nature and "hard sciences," using the concept of social facts and the idea that some patterns of human conduct and so forth are so concrete you can treat them as if they're things. And that's the biggest difference between the sort

of quantitative view and the positivist view of sociology and the more symbolic interactionist meaning-making view. That's the biggest contrast there.

It was an absolute thrill meeting both Barney and Anselm. I still love them to this day. Barney and I had so much fun together. I loved his family. I still love his family. They're wonderful people. He fundamentally altered my life. It's like my life became very, very different when I met Barney, not just sociologically, methodologically, or theoretically, but in my personal life by serving as an example. So that's my story up to that point, I suppose.

Kara: Well, Odis, it seems like your relationship with Barney, and Anselm for that matter, really gave you a front-row seat in observing the development of grounded theory since 1970. Can you tell us more about how Glaser continued to develop grounded theory over the years?

Odis: Yeah, if you've read his books, he said all is data, and he really meant that. He used the discussions from the original seminars [at UCSF] that I took from him with the other students. During those sessions, Barney would take notes of the discussions and of the things that we spent a lot of time doing, which was processing data, that is, doing analysis. He had a very unique way of teaching. He didn't tell you how to do things. He would put you in a position to have to discover it for yourself, so you owned it. I think it can be a very effective teaching method, but for some people, it is very frustrating and scary. But we got very used to him.

He sometimes was difficult for people to understand because, as I told him, “Barney, you're the only Barney Glaser alive, and you think everybody is as smart as you, and you're wrong. They're not. They don't think like you, initially. Maybe they think like you more as they get to know you and listen to you and understand you.” But I remember after some of the seminars, it was not uncommon for students to come up to me and say, “What did Barney say today?” Because they weren't quite clear.

At Barney's [UCSF] seminars, we did a lot of analyzing data, and we would get data from colleagues and other universities and so forth. And we'd analyze it so that we would get that practice. The whole time Barney's taking notes, that's data to him. The conversations that we had during our commutes, which was data to him. The conversations that we had as our children were playing together, that was data to him.

One of the primary reasons Barney started Sociology Press[7] was that he wanted to talk to the people who were reading his books. He used those discussions as data for the next book because it enabled him to understand what was confusing to people and what more they needed to know. It would give him ideas about growing the method, about elaborating and clarifying it more. That's what he meant by all his data. It truly means that not only just in the research context but in the context of how he dealt with life. And that was one of the many important things I learned from him. Don't be kind of numb to the things that are going on around you because they all mean something that could be valuable to you.

I remember many of my students at Fielding would call to order a book, and he'd answer the phone, and they were, like, wow, he actually answered the phone. But that's the way he did it. He wanted to talk to people to find out why you're buying this book. What's your understanding? What do you want to get out of grounded theory and these kinds of questions? That was data to him, and that's how he grew the method. Then, as his students started doing dissertations, he could see how they were doing it. And that was data for him.

He was always open to ideas. He was always open to the ideas of his students. The people he worked with, he considered colleagues. I remember once, at one of the seminars in Manhattan, New York, I said to him, "Barney, you always treated me like a colleague." And he

went, “Well, you were my colleague.” That's the way he treated me as we're having these conversations across from the high school that I dropped out of.

I look back on all of this, and I go, wow, what an opportunity I had. It all started when I walked into the bookstore, and I said, “That's an interesting title,” and I picked up the *Discovery of Grounded Theory*. That fundamentally altered my life forever, including right now. If that hadn't happened, we wouldn't be doing this right now because you might not know anything about grounded theory.

You know, I love your story about how you went to the introductory session for Fielding, and Tony and I were there talking about grounded theory. You'd never heard of it. So, I think you called home and said, look this up [on the internet]. At that time, we didn't have smartphones. You asked, “Is this a real thing, or did they just make that up?”

You know, I wrote that article about grounded theory entitled “Is that a real theory or did you just make it ?”. The idea for the article was actually based upon the experience of a musician friend of mine who wrote a lot of songs and so forth. We used to go to his gigs, and this woman came up during the break and said, “Is that a real song, or did you just make that up?” My friend was like, “Yeah, it's a real song and I made it up.” What makes a song real? What makes the theory real?

Before Glaser and Strauss came along, it really was that [what made a theory] real was some high-status sociologist who created it. They conjectured it. And one of my favorite phrases of Barney’s is that they created it “without being burdened by data.” It still perplexes me as to how people think that the theory should come before the data. It doesn't make sense to me, not even today. [They make up theory and then test it.] I'm not saying that that form of research is useless. All forms of research create meaning. They create information. They create

understanding. But the one that I've always favored, far and away, is what we now call classic grounded theory. I just think it's the best approach.

One of the enormously satisfying parts of my life has been teaching grounded theory to so many other people like you and then seeing what you're doing with it. It is just absolutely fascinating to me. It's very rewarding, as was using classic grounded theory in my other professions as a therapist and counselor, and so forth.

Classic grounded theory is not just useful in an academic context. It's useful in your whole life. Just simple things that I learned from Barney, like if you want to understand why people are behaving that way, ask the questions, "What are they working on? What is the issue or problem they are processing or that they're trying to solve?" And that's an incredibly valuable question. And it's so simple. Another one was, when I was doing my dissertation in the field of alcoholism, I was interviewing the patients at Laguna Honda Hospital in San Francisco. The patients were just BS'ing me, and I told Barney, "I don't know if I'm going to be able to collect data there. These people won't be straight with me." And he just said, "Make your problem your topic. Why are they doing it? They're doing it for a reason. Find out why, that's what they're working on." And that just opened up my whole dissertation from his statement, "Just make your problem your topic. What are they working on?" Those two questions can be really powerful. Barney had a way of getting at the core of things.

Barney was always coding everything. I would have conversations with Barney, and we would just be having a conversation. He would be coding it. I would be like, "Do we have to code everything?" He was always coding, and then he'd say, "OK, what's the core variable?" I couldn't think as fast as him, and I said, "I don't know." He'd say what it was, and I'd go, "Oh wow." His core variable would get at the core of things. His mind was like no one else's.

So, back to your question about how Barney continued to develop grounded theory over the years. I think the shorter answer to your question is that he saw everything as data, and he used that data to elaborate and refine what grounded theory is. He didn't just make it up, which was kind of the tradition of the big sociologists, like one of his professors, Robert K. Merton. You know, they just made up their theories out of their own sort of personal genius.

By the way, when I was introduced to sociology before I found the *Discovery of Grounded Theory* book, I thought, "I'm not smart enough to do that. I can never do that." And that's why when I picked up the *Discovery of Grounded Theory* book and started reading it, I thought, "I can do that. I can figure that out because it's got some guidelines." The *Discovery of Grounded Theory* book was really more about why to do it than how to do it.

It was *Theoretical Sensitivity*[8] that really told you how to do grounded theory. To me, that's the core book, that book and *Doing Grounded Theory*[9]. That's where Barney really laid out the constant comparative method in enough detail for people to be able to follow grounded theory.

Another thing I would say about the difference between Anselm and Barney is that Anselm saw grounded theory as one form of qualitative analysis, along with many other forms. Barney saw grounded theory as a full methodology, and that's what he outlined in the *Theoretical Sensitivity* book.

Kara: Can you tell us a little bit more about the difference between grounded theory being a method versus it being a methodology?

Odis: Well, a method is something that's focused on one task. A methodology is the whole thing. It is how you collect the data, how you analyze the data, how you write up the data, and so forth. It's the full ball of wax, so to speak. Whereas the method is the constant comparative method. It's

not the constant comparative methodology. It's the data analysis method that is used in the methodology of grounded theory.

But there are also things about collecting data. All is data, but some data is actually more useful than others. If you're doing open interviews, which most people do because it's a richer form of data, you start with a grand tour question. This isn't specifically a grounded theory term, but it's used in grounded theory. A grand tour question just gets people talking about the subject. I've certainly learned a lot about people by using a grand tour question.

In fact, I used it in counseling and therapy practice, and it was powerful because people would come in, and we had to fill out all these forms beforehand, where you [the practitioner] are supposed to diagnose people. But I always started out with a grand tour question, like, “To what do I owe the honor of this visit?” Let them talk about it and see where it goes. When I started my anger management program, which was based upon the ideas of grounded theory, what I call grounded action. I started that by saying, “This is a new program. I've never done this before. How would you do it?” And I took it from there rather than coming in with some sort of preconceived model, as it was very common at the time and is still common, unfortunately. And it completely misses the boat about what people are working on. And, when you connect with what people are working on. [Using a grand tour question] they're more apt to trust you. They're more apt to be open to you.

Kara: You and I have previously discussed one area where Barney made a shift in his original conceptualization of substantive theory. So, can you tell us more about it? You saw this shift happen firsthand.

Odis: Yeah. Anselm, Barney, and I were sociologists. Our interests were in advancing sociological theory since we were working within the field of sociology. And I always joke with people, if you're doing grounded theory, you're a sociologist whether you like it or not.

The focus [of the research and emerging theory] was on the core variable[10], not on the substantive area[11]. So, Barney encouraged us to go to different substantive areas to see how that core variable worked out because you're going to find variations around that core in these different areas[12]. So, the focus wasn't on the substantive field; it was on that more abstract level[13]. And that's the way I learned it. I still like that way because, as a sociologist, the motivating question of sociology is what makes society work.

I had a fantasy for a long time to write a theory of society. But I am too old to do it now. I would die long before I finished it because it would be like a lifetime's work. But, I can kind of see a theory of society as being the most fundamental core variables [that have been developed across various grounded theories] and how they play out universally [in relationship to each other], you know, because a good core variable is really pretty universal. For example, Barney and I discussed what Barney called fortressing. You know, a fence is a fortress, a prison is a fortress, a bank is a fortress. It's meant to keep people in and keep people out. A bank is meant to keep people out. Your fence is meant to keep neighborhood dogs out of your yard and your neighbors from encroaching and so forth. In Western societies fortressing is pretty universal.

Another example of a more universal core variable is from my original study of milkmen, and the core variable that I discovered was what I called cultivating relationships. You find it isn't just milkmen that cultivate relationships. It's pretty endemic to the way that people operate their lives and so forth. But core variables are things that are, if not universal, certainly very

widespread through more than just this culture, and that's the sort of thing that sociologists are interested in.

Well, Barney came up with the idea that he was going to try to do what he ended up calling problem-solving seminars[14]. When he put the first one out on his website, there were only a couple of people signed up for it and he was going to cancel it. So, I pulled together a group of Fielding students and got them to sign up. And so, the seminars happened. Otherwise, there would be a lot of people today who would not have had that option. Grounded theory would have shrunk. I mean, it wouldn't have grown the way it did through Barney's seminars because so many of the people around the world who are grounded theorists learned it from Barney at those seminars.

Kara: So, it was through those seminars that there was a shift in the conceptualization of substantive theory.

Odis: Yeah, because what happened was the people who began signing up for those seminars were people in the applied professions, social work, education, and the medical field, particularly a lot of nurses working on PhD's in nursing because [the original program at UCSF was in the nursing school]. These professionals have a different focus. They came in, they were doing a dissertation in a specific field, and they wanted to use their dissertation in their field. And that's when Barney began to focus more on the substantive level[15], then on the just pure methodology level and so forth. And that's when some of the nomenclature changed.

Now, I think I taught you [Odis was referring to me, the interviewer, personally] the more the original version of the core variable being the main focus, and the substantive area being considerably less focus. [In the original version], if you want to find variations, you go to different places [different substantive areas], because the core category is going to be handled

differently, and that feeds your data about that core variable at a more abstract level. Well, Glaser shifted that focus because he was dealing with the data in front of him, which is what the people [at the troubleshooting seminars] wanted to do which was create theory in a more substantive way. And that's where that shift came from. He followed that data [from what the attendees at the troubleshooting seminars wanted].

Kara: So, the later grounded theories focused more on a substantive theory related to the substantive field, the setting, and the people from [the original setting]?

Odis: Yeah, and how that main concern led to the understanding of what the core was and how that played out within that profession within that context. So, it was more context-oriented than abstract theory-oriented. This shows that the method can be used in more than one way. It still works very, very nicely on that more abstract level. The nice thing about the more abstract substantive theory is that it's so easy to see how it applies elsewhere.

The example I always give is Judith Lee Kissel's study of doing time in prisons and how that applies to a long airline flight, a boring classroom, or a boring job. You know that the same conditions are there, and the response is very, very similar. I used to always say that grounded theory is movable over space and time. You can put it at that more abstract level, but you can stay on that much more substantive level. And that's how most people, the people who went to Barney seminars, that's how they learned it. And so, you know, I know both ways.

Kara: Well, thank you, Odis. I think that many people aren't aware of that shift because I don't think that Glaser ever expressly wrote about that shift occurring. He made the shift, but he never actually wrote about that shift and why that shift occurred. And so, I think many people aren't aware of that shift.

Odis: Well, it also changed the nomenclature a little bit too, which can be confusing for people. Well, why does he use this here and use that there? Why? Well, the reason is that shift. I'm not even sure if he was fully aware of how much he had shifted because he was focusing on today, not yesterday. He was focusing right now. That's the data that he was responding to.

Kara: Well, it's interesting. We now refer to grounded theory as classic grounded theory and a lot has been written about that original version that was originally published in 1965 and 1967. It's how Glaser originally developed it. And yet what you're showing us here is that Glaser responded to all his data, like all of the feedback that he was getting from people that were using it [the grounded theory methodology]. The method was alive, it grew, it developed over a period, over the period of his lifetime. It wasn't static. While we call it classic grounded theory, I'm starting to use Glaserian, now that he's passed away, to capture [the dynamic methodology that he developed over his lifetime]. I know that when he was alive, he didn't like the use of Glaserian.

Odis: Yeah, he said it was too personal.

Kara: Right, but [using Glaserian] links it to him. It links it by saying this was the version he created and that it wasn't fixed in time. It developed over time and in response to the people who were using the method.

Odis: Yeah. There's a sort of tragic element to this, which is, I know from very early, first-hand experience, grounded theory is Glaser's [creation].

Kara: I just want to thank you so much for the conversation and for being willing to have this discussion about the history of grounded theory over the last 60 years and your experience with it. I do want to put a plug for your book. Can you tell us the name of your book?

Odis: *Experiencing Grounded Theory*

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GROUNDED THEORY REVIEW
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Is the Theory of Moral Reckoning in Nursing Ready for Modification?

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Abstract

This paper is a personal reflection on the original theory of moral reckoning in nursing, which seeks to answer the question, "Is the Theory of Moral Reckoning in Nursing Ready for Modification?" I was reminded recently to pick up some data I had gathered and left dormant about nurses' experiences with COVID-19. A question was posed to me about published modified grounded theories. This triggered me to think more about modifying my own theory of moral reckoning to make it more relevant, explanatory, and predictive in today's healthcare environment. In this paper, I share snippets of data I gathered a couple of years ago and bits of popular, empirical, and theoretical literature which both impel me toward modifying the existing theory.

Keywords: classic grounded theory, modifiability, rigor, relevance

I'm asking myself, "Is it time to modify the theory of moral reckoning in nursing?" In 2006, I published the theory of moral reckoning in nursing when I was a practicing nurse (Nathaniel, 2004, 2006). In the subsequent years, I left nursing practice and moved to full-time academia. During that time, the healthcare environment, and indeed the world, underwent tremendous challenges. A couple of years ago I asked myself if the theory of moral reckoning requires modification in order to remain relevant, so I gathered a pile of interview data. But I left the data lay and moved on to other tasks. Recently, I was triggered to think about this again when I received communication from an esteemed nursing researcher, educator, and author, asking if I knew of any published modifications of classic grounded theories that she could show her students. If modification is one of Glaser's (1978) four criteria for rigor, surely, we could find good examples. I didn't know of any off the top of my head, so I contacted a network of classic grounded theory experts from around the globe. No one has been able to offer an example of a published theory that had been modified after the original publication. (Many are modified during the thesis/dissertation phase, sometimes after the oral defense.) The person requesting the information had published two modifications of an original theory, but, otherwise, there seems to be a dramatic scarcity of published modifications (Beck, 1993, 2012, 2022). So, here I go—picking up where I left off a couple of years ago. This paper is not a modification of the theory. I commit to doing that in the near future. Rather, it is a glimpse at the original theory and some of the popular, empirical, and theoretical literature focusing on healthcare professionals' experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. Illustrations in this paper listed as "personal communication" are from the data that I gathered before I moved on to other things. The purpose of this paper is simply to share with you some of my data and a sample of the literature that

nudges me toward modifying the theory. In order for you to understand why modifications to the theory may be needed, it is important to begin with a look at the original theory.

The original theory explains and predicts a three-stage process of moral reckoning. After being asked to describe a troubling patient experience, participant nurses in the original classic grounded theory research study reported that they began their professional lives in a stage of ease in which they were comfortable with rules and expectations. The work of nursing was fulfilling, and they knew what to expect. They were gaining technical skills and had a sense of at-homeness in the workplace. Internal and external values and expectations were congruent, and core values, professional norms, and institutional norms were complementary. The nurses reported that at some point they experienced a sudden and dramatic situational bind in a patient care situation in which their core beliefs came into irreconcilable conflict with social or institutional norms. For instance, one nurse was ordered to administer a dose of medication to a terminally ill patient that she thought would likely be lethal, another was ordered to forego lifesaving interventions on a premature newborn. These situational binds constituted critical junctures that forced each nurse out of the stage of ease and into the stage of resolution. At this point, the nurses attempted to resolve the conflict by choosing among conflicting values. Immediate and long-term resolution included either giving up or making a stand. Some performed actions that they considered reprehensible (giving up) and others refused to comply with orders that conflicted with their values (making a stand), and some eventually left the profession. The nurses then moved into the stage of reflection, during which time they repeatedly examined past beliefs, values, and actions. The stage of reflection sometimes lasted for many years with the nurses trying to make sense of their experiences through remembering, telling the story, examining conflicts, and living with the consequences.

The theory of moral reckoning was discovered during an arguably stable and predictable era of institutional health care. Then came the explosion of COVID-19 through which the entire worldwide healthcare system was stressed to the breaking point. The years 2020 and 2021, particularly, provide dramatic examples of moral reckoning, which worsened over time and led to moral exhaustion (Jetten & Allard, 2025). Serious moral and ethical problems were suddenly thrust upon nurses during the COVID-19 global pandemic–the consequences of which are not yet fully clear. Although other problems have been identified, published accounts of moral problems during the COVID-19 pandemic seem to cluster around three basic moral situational binds—1) circumstances that forced nurses to choose between their duty of care they owe to patients and the safety of themselves and their families, 2) constraints that made it impossible to meet professional and personal standards, and 3) heartbreaking distributive justice choices. These challenging circumstances were made more painful by nursing's ethical directives to practice with compassion, respect every person, honor a primary commitment to the patient, and promote, advocate for, and protect the rights, health and safety of the patient (American Nurses Association [ANA], 2015, 2025)—directives which were often impossible to follow during the pandemic because of the dire circumstances that nurses found themselves in. Additionally, subsequent quantitative research in the UK (and elsewhere) found that other professions were experiencing the same types of moral problems in the workplace (Bow et al., 2023).

I know from reading the literature and from talking with colleagues that healthcare professionals of all types juggled their moral/ethical professional duties in the face of COVID-19 against protecting their own health and the health of their families. We all remember that hospitals were overwhelmed with COVID-19 patients, and many were unable to provide adequate personal protection for their staff (Morley et al., 2020). Healthcare workers feared they

could become sick or expose their families, particularly if they were the sole support for children or dependent adult relatives. Evans (2020) reported that one nurse said, "It's killing us" (para. 9). Like many others, McKenna (2020) proposed that nurses' duty to care for patients is not absolute. In fact, the World Health Organization (International Council of Nurses [ICN], 2012, 2021) and the American Nurses Association (2015, 2025) both recognize that nurses and other healthcare workers should weigh their professional roles against obligations to their own health and safety and that of their families and friends. Nevertheless, the duty to care and a prohibition from abandoning patients has been ingrained in nurses. The conflict between the duty to care and personal safety placed many nurses in painful situational binds. One nurse wrote, "I faced whether or not to even continue to provide inpatient care with an immunosuppressed child at home" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 21, 2021). Another nurse worried because she was, herself, immunocompromised as a triple-negative breast cancer survivor (Antelo, 2020). One colleague moved out of her home in order to protect her family. Even when they continued to provide nursing care, many nurses experienced distress when they believed their care did not meet professional standards.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, nurses faced situational binds that forced them to violate their internalized self-concept of a "good nurse." Workplace deficiencies created circumstances in which nurses' professional values came into direct conflict with the realities of everyday nursing care. Hospitals were overwhelmed with droves of desperately ill patients. Nurses who were previously comfortable in their roles suddenly found themselves in intensive care settings for which they lacked experience. One study found that nurses in China believed they had neglected patient rights, insufficiently responded to urgency requirements of the situation, and failed to provide patients with necessary support and pain management (Jia et al.,

2021). Some Scandinavian nurses thought the social isolation forced upon them by COVID-19 policies decreased the quality of life and even shortened patients' lifespans, while others claimed that denying patients' rights to see their loved ones was morally indefensible (Ariander et al., 2024). These situational binds were created when the nurses were not able to practice at high standards because of external factors (Jia et al., 2021). Jia et al. interviewed one nurse who burst into tears on the job because "I was worried that I was not doing my job well." One nurse in the U.S. reported distress when families were forbidden to visit because caregivers did not receive proper instruction on care of drains, tubes, ostomies, medical equipment, and medication administration. Consequently, patients were unprepared for discharge, and some had to be readmitted. Another nurse attributed difficult end-of-life decisions to separation of patients and families. She wrote, "Without being present and seeing it for themselves, families seem to have a really hard time letting go, so do-not-resuscitate orders are not written." The nurse commented that when providing what seemed like futile care in these situations, nurses reach a point when "we feel as though we are doing things TO the patient, instead of FOR the patient" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 21, 2021)—not at all the ideal role of the nurse.

Triage decisions may present the most painful situational bind of all those experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Nurses experienced distress when resources such as intensive care beds, respirators, or oxygen were in short supply. Morley et al. (2020) correctly suggested that nurses and physicians found it extremely difficult to make decisions to deny treatment because of their own humanness, their professional socialization, and the professions' norms about saving lives, relieving suffering, and not abandoning patients. Distress was found to be most acute when life-sustaining resources were discontinued and reallocated to other patients who had better chances of survival. Withdrawing treatments such as ventilator support was

especially difficult when the nurse or physician believed that the treatment was keeping a patient alive (Morley et al., 2020). They believed that withdrawing or withholding treatment was not in what they considered to be in the patient's best interest (McKenna, 2020). Swazo et al. (2020) suggested that faced with extreme scarcity of resources, the theoretical risk of "sacrificing the most vulnerable patients" shook professionals' deep set ethical convictions.

Anecdotal stories suggest some ways that nurses reckoned with the situational binds in which they found themselves. Though they were working hard and struggling with organizational failures and personal pressures, some nurses felt their work was invisible and thankless work (Lewis et al., 2025), and some nurses quit their jobs because of the distress they experienced working with COVID-19 patients (Antelo, 2020; Bustan et al., 2020; Swazo et al., 2020). Two Italian nurses took their own lives—the ultimate expression of giving up (McKenna, 2020). Others made a stand through extraordinary measures to deliver care in the face of dire circumstances. One nurse supported a family member who had difficulty accepting her mother's impending death. According to another nurse who watched through a window in the hallway, the nurse "put on her PPE, entered the room, and dialed the daughter's number. She talked for a few minutes and then laid down on the floor and slid under the patient's bed so the woman could see her mother's face one last time" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 21, 2021). This nurse made a stand through her determination to give the best care possible. The literature seems to indicate that many nurses forge ahead in the face of moral and ethical problems. One nurse said, "Most of us are stuck, still trying to sift through that stage of resolution, or perhaps we are even intentionally avoiding reflection. It was like we were stuck in time, grieving for some sort of normal, but the world kept moving around us. This experience has changed us" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 21, 2021).

Stories of nurses during the COVID-19 pandemic include feelings of defeat, sorrow, guilt, regret, sleeplessness, anxiety, fear, irritability, outrage, and powerlessness (Anonymous, personal communication, March 20, 2021; Evans, 2020; Jia et al., 2021; Swazo et al., 2020). Some experienced frustrations that overflowed at home as well as problems with mental and physical health (Jia et al., 2021). Still engaged in the stage of reflection, the nurses have continued to thoughtfully examine beliefs, values, and actions through remembering, telling the story, examining conflicts, and living with the consequences. They continue to reflect on the moral problems they experienced and how they responded. Ruminate about what happened to them and what they should have done.

Classic grounded theories are supposed to explain and predict what is going on in people's lives. Experiences of nurses and other healthcare professionals during the pandemic align with theory of moral reckoning in nursing. The theory explains the process that occurs when external pressures require hard moral decisions. But the original theory does not take into account the extremes that nurses and other healthcare professionals experienced during the pandemic—it needs modification. I have committed to gathering more data, constantly comparing it, memoing, and seeing what emerges. I think it will be more conceptual and more explanatory for broader substantive areas.

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GROUNDED THEORY REVIEW
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Staying True to the Data: A Visual and Quantitative Approach to Showcase Coding Rigour and Theoretical Saturation

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Abstract

This paper describes a data-based and transparent approach that was followed during classic grounded theory data analysis to ensure rigor and theoretical saturation. Firstly, a visual approach was followed to ensure that the theory discovery stayed as close to the story told by the data set as possible, thus ensuring both rigor and accuracy. Secondly, process data in the form of a coding rate time study and theoretical contribution rate, were tracked to monitor theoretical saturation objectively. The presented approach offers a novel approach to showcasing classic grounded theory rigor during the data coding process, as well as a way to prove that theoretical saturation was reached. The approach presented in this paper thus provides grounded theory researchers with a way in which to both ensure and defend the rigor and accuracy of their research.

Keywords*:* Classic grounded theory, theoretical saturation, sample size, time study, data-based approach, data analysis

Grounded theory (GT), first pioneered by Glaser and Strauss in the 1960s is a systematic, qualitative method of inductive, iterative, comparative and interactive data collection and analysis with the aim of theory building (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2012). It's data based theory-building approach was developed in response to the 'armchair' theory-building that had become prevalent at that time (Urquhart et al., 2010). It is often used in a field of study where little is known about the field and approaches data collection and analysis with an open mind so that theory formation is 'grounded' in (as opposed to uninformed about) the realities of the target domain (Goulding, 2002). A major distinguishing trait of GT is the fact that no hypothesis is formulated upfront, and limited to no research is done on the topic so that the researcher has as few preconceptions as possible when embarking on the research (Vander Linden & Palmieri, 2021). To achieve this end, classic GT differs from the other GT schools in that it completely avoids literature reviews until the very end of the analysis process (Kenny & Fourie, 2015) .

Qualitative research, in general, is often criticized for its lack of scientific rigor (Welch & Piekkari, 2017). A common criticism levelled against GT is the extent to which the research can really claim to be objectively representing the data without too much interpretation or extrapolation by the researchers tasked with coding and categorizing this data (Kenny & Fourie, 2015, p. 1274). Especially in classic GT, where the researcher is expected to maintain an objective stance to the coding of the data and stay as close to the story told by the data itself as possible in order to discover, as opposed to creating (as in Straussian GT) or constructing (as in constructivist GT), the grounded theory (Kenny & Fourie, 2015), ensuring rigor and transparency during the coding process is imperative to the credibility of the classic GT research process. This paper presents a transparent and data-based approach that creates both

accountability and transparency during the data analysis phases and aims to enable classic GT researchers in proving and defending the rigor and accuracy of their research.

Interviews are the most common method of data collection in GT, providing a rich and nuanced data set from which to extract theory that is grounded in the data. In an analysis of 100 GT studies, Thomson (2011) found that the point of theoretical saturation can be affected by the scope of the research question, the sensitivity of the phenomena, and the ability of the researcher, but that a sample size of 30 interview participants is a good rule of thumb for GT theory building. Vander Linden and Palmieri (2021) state that the quality of the collected data, and the scope of the theory determine the sample size that will deliver theoretical saturation, and that principles should be adhered to rather than a rule of thumb but mention 9 – 30 participants to be generally accepted rule of thumb in GT research (Vander Linden & Palmieri, 2023). Thus, although sample size rules of thumb exist, scholars agree that the ultimate determinant is whether theoretical saturation has been reached, which depends on many different factors. Considering that the discernment of whether theoretical saturation has been reached lies in the hands of the researchers and reviewers, this important step may be susceptible to subjectivity, confirmation bias, and a lack of integrity or rigor.

This paper proposes and demonstrates how data can be used to monitor the theoretical saturation arch rather than depending on a rule of thumb for sample size that might not relate to the research scope or leaving the decision to the discernment of invested parties. This paper also demonstrates how visual transparency during theory building can keep researchers focused on staying true to the story told by the data and not take short cuts to theory building based on bias or superficial coding. The aim of the research is to make both an empirical and methodological contribution to the field of GT by presenting a GT case study that shows systematic and

transparent model development, as well as how data were used as a more objective, real-time approach ensuring saturation.

Background to the Research Design and Execution

The topic of the research centered around the selection of improvement projects in operations improvement, thus essentially a decision sciences topic, but in a specific setting. Little research has been done on the praxis of project selection, even though whole fields of study are dedicated to the development of mathematical models and computerized decision support systems. The research question explored in this case study was thus simply the open-ended: "How are operations improvement projects selected in practice?"

Ten unstructured interviews were held with seasoned operations improvement practitioners, each having more than 25 years of first-hand operations improvement experience. Together, the participants could report on 328 years of observing the selection of improvement projects in operations and provided a rich data set collected during the interviews that lasted between 60 and 120 minutes each.

Ethical clearance was sought from the affiliated research institution's ethical committee before data collection commenced and each informant submitted a signed informed consent letter before the interviews, which stated that participation was voluntary and that responses would be treated confidentially. Participants were numbered, and a single letter was used to help the researchers recall the context of the first-order code more easily. No company-specific information was noted.

The interviews were conducted online and recorded. The recordings were used to capture 322 lines of discrete statements that could be analyzed. Microsoft Excel was used throughout the

analysis for its transparency, meaning that the researcher is constantly able to scroll, move, copy, paste, and reference all fields of the data.

The data analysis was conducted twice, one year apart, which, in retrospect, enabled what Urquhart et al. (2010) described as "living with the data for a long time". The initial analysis, unfortunately not tracked as demonstrated in this paper for the second round of data analysis, revealed that the topic being studied, project selection, is not a discrete process step, but that it, in practice, often overlaps with other project phases such as project identification. During the interviews, interview participants, in spite of their significant experience and cognitive capabilities, kept deviating from pure project selection to describe other processes. This created confusion in the first-order analysis phase until a first "a-ha moment" allowed the researchers to recognize this a pattern within the data, which constituted a deviation between praxis and how the topic is taught in business schools and treated in literature. .

The second "a-ha moment" was that participants described how projects are selected just as much as they described what can go wrong during project selection. This meant that, staying true to the story told by the target domain, that project selection is as much about the methods employed as it is about the phenomena that influence the effectiveness of these methods. This led to the identification of the data categories of method, as well as decision-making impediments and enhancements (DMI/DMEs).

This initial round of data analysis followed many of the rigor principles promoted in GT literature but was not documented as rigorously as the second round, making the findings hard to publish in journals cynical about the weaknesses presented by superficial GT coding. Hence, it was decided to go through the data set once again to meticulously document the train of thought leading to the findings. This was both grueling and satisfying work as additional findings were

made and a deeper analysis was done that during the first round. The researchers speculate that the increased depth of insight had as much to do with the fact that the researchers had had time to process their initial exposure to the shape of the data, as with the systematic rigor applied for the documentation of the process, but that the rigor of meticulously working through each line of data to document what was done with it, had a significant and rewarding effect on the theory building process.

To truly do justice to the classic GT process, the second round of data analysis was approached with a determination to stay as true to the wording and meaning of the participants' statements as possible. This determination was rewarded with many new insights, as well as corrections to previous perceptions. The following seven categories were identified, iteratively, during the course of the first-order analysis of the first third of the 322 lines: Methods, criteria, circumstances, decision-making impediments (DMIs), decision-making enhancements (DMEs), process flow relationships, and researcher notes and questions, which were kept and tracked separately so as not to influence the classic GT process.

Once the first-order coding had stabilized around the listed categories, a basic process flow started to be constructed visually on a wall in the main author's office, eventually containing another 11 categories or process steps. This model developed significantly during iterative coding of the first three participants' statements, then slowed down during the coding of the next two participants' statements, and completely plateaued throughout the next five participants' coding, indicating that theoretical saturation had been reached as new data did not contribute any new theoretical insights (Hallberg, 2006; Urquhart, 2019).

Although the study by Thomson (2011) found that the average sample size in GT is 25, and recommended that 30 be regarded as a minimum for rigor, their study also found that

theoretical sampling was influenced by the scope of the research question, the sensitivity of the phenom3na, and the ability of the researcher. In the case of the research described in this paper, section 3 will show that theoretical saturation had, in fact, been reached after five participants. Although it is difficult to compare the scope of the research question, or the sensitivity of the phenomenon being studied to that of other studies, it can be noted that the main author has also spent 20+ years in the operations improvement sphere in practice, making it easier to understand the data and recognize the structure of the phenomenon. Additionally, the year that elapsed between the two rounds of data analysis also added to the rate at which the dots could be connected during the second round of analysis.

Although the pace of model development plateaued after five participants' data was coded, the last five participants contributed further examples in each of the categories. Theoretical sampling then guided the researchers to rather test the completeness of the categories with a structured online survey to reach a wider pool of operations improvement practitioners that could expand the lists already captured within each of the data categories. The survey was completed by 182 participants, and only five additions were made, indicating that the ten interviews had indeed collected a rich data set. Survey participants were also asked to indicate whether they had observed the examples provided by the interviewees, thereby testing the validity of the examples included in the model.

The meticulous documentation of the second round of data analysis stimulated a meta-analysis of the coding and theory building process itself. The results of this coding process analysis are discussed next to demonstrate the arch of the GT data analysis.

Visual and Transparent Model Development

Although not the most important contribution of this paper, this discussion will start with an introduction to the visual model to provide a point of reference for the rest of the section. This discussion will also show how the model visually shows an adherence to the principles of rigor and accuracy of classic GT to ensure that the model development stays true to the inputs of the target domain, while also allowing for researcher insight.

Figure 1 shows the theoretical model with the white elements showing the main phases of the process being studied, the red arrows indicating process flow, and the color-coded squares representing examples of each of the data categories, explained in the legend to the diagram. Most importantly, as can be seen in the legend, special provision was made to separate researcher contributions from the rest of the model, which is solely built from participant input unless indicated with major or minor pink squares, or small red squares where a term was borrowed from known theory to summarize a participant statement. By visually highlighting researcher interaction, the visual model lends transparency to the GT coding process, keeping the researchers accountable to staying as close to the respondents' terms as possible.

The theoretical model is not the focus of this paper and will thus not be discussed in detail. Rather, the focus is on how rigor and theoretical saturation were tracked and visually audited to assure quality in the theory-building.

Figure 1

Final Theoretical Visualised "Wall" Model with Pink Blocks Indicating Researcher Insights or Questions

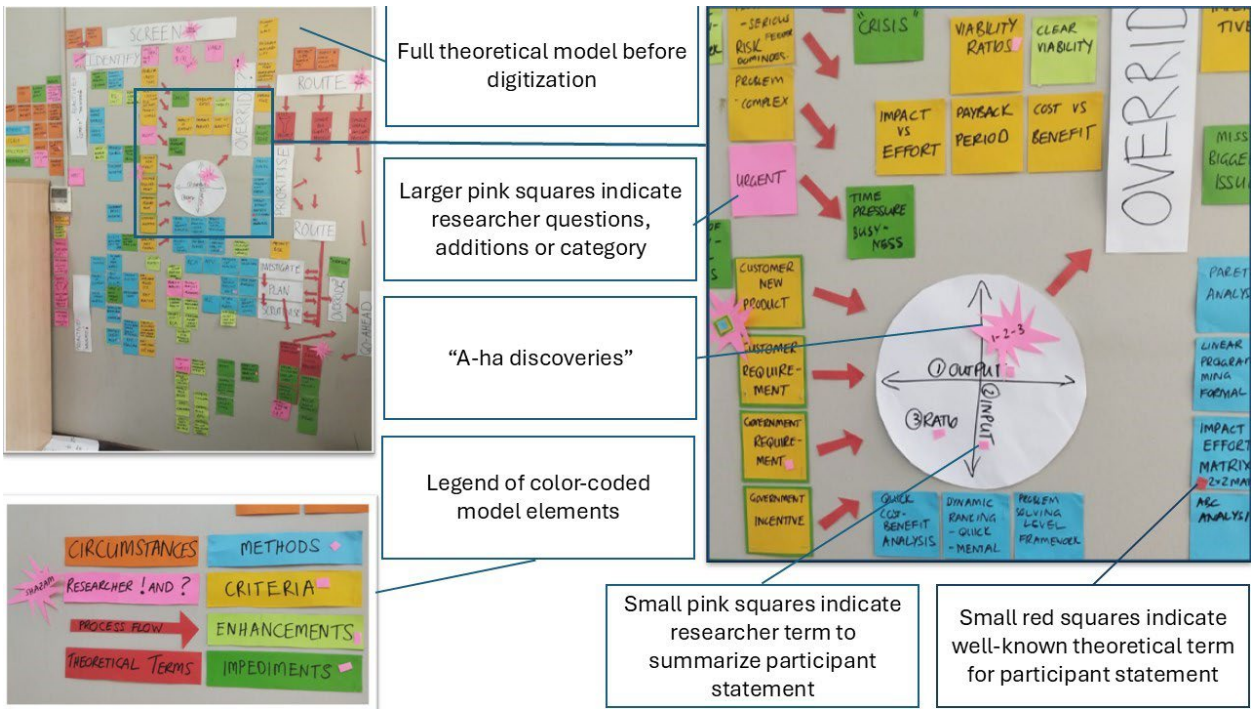


Figure 1 visualizes, and Table I analyses the level of objectivity of the analysis by indicating (Figure 1 pink elements) or counting (Table I) where researcher/literature contributions were made and where the model is built from interview or survey participation alone. The analysis in Table I shows that 82.9% of the model wording and concepts can be traced back to one or more participants' statements, meaning that the researchers contributed only 17.1% of the elements, with 16.9% being a theoretical/ structural contribution and only 0.7%, one single distinct element being added by the researchers, having been extrapolated from a list of criteria provided by the interview participants, which seemed to have one obvious omission. Although both the speed at which theoretical saturation was reached, and the seemingly low

proportion of researcher contribution, the theoretical contribution of articulating the "anatomy" and "physiology" (Gioia et al., 2013, p. 24) of project selection in practice is a major leap forward from the oversimplified interpretation currently given to project selection by the existing body of knowledge.

In classic GT, researcher notes are encouraged to keep track of emergent theory questions as the coding of the data progresses (Vander Linden & Palmieri, 2023, p. 9), indicated by the eight (4.8% of all visual elements) larger pink squares on the visual model. In 18 elements, the participants' statements would not contain a specific noun that could be used as an element and would thus be summarized or interpreted by the researchers. These elements were, however, the conceptual contributions by the participants.

The clear indication of where the researchers deviated from the pure data set contributed by the interview and survey participants, allows the researchers to remain critical or open-minded of their own contributions, flagging them for consistent theoretical investigation.

Table 1

Analysis of Participant and Researcher Contributions to Model

Counted Visual Element	#	%
Total visual elements incl. notes and small indicators	166	
MINUS researcher questions/notes (some larger pink squares)	8	4.8%
MINUS participant concept, researcher term (small pink squares)	13	7.8%
MINUS participant concept, literature term (small red squares)	5	3.0%
Total model elements (sans researcher notes and labels)	140	
MINUS researcher theory contribution (white headings and some larger pink squares)	23	16.4%
MINUS researcher extrapolated example (one larger pink square)	1	0.7%
Pure participant contribution	116	82.9%

The transparency of the analysis provided by the visual model (Figure 1) is echoed in the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet where the analysis process was meticulously documented. The main

analysis sheet contains the 322 lines of participant statements, which are then broken down into columns – one for each model category. Separate sheets were also created, one per model category, where, for example project selection method examples are listed and described by who, what, and how many questions, i.e. which participant(s) mentioned this method, how many participants mentioned this method and what did they say about it. The Microsoft Excel spreadsheet thus makes it possible to trace the model elements and structure to the original participant statements.

Monitoring Progress Towards Theoretical Saturation

As the researchers are Industrial Engineers, it naturally occurred to collect time study data as the analysis unfolded as there was a significant trend that reflected arch of theory development. The first order analysis saw several iterations to find order and patterns in the data. In fact, the first nine lines of data took 3.3 hours of iterative coding to find categories that could describe the data set. The next 35 lines of data took another 6 hours of iterative coding and prompted the visualizing process to help describe relationships between categories. As the model grew, the paper model moved to the wall, where it became increasingly modular and expansive (Figure 2). Although the initial, undocumented analysis of a year earlier assisted in a faster identification of the data categories, frequent adjustments were made to the model structure until the statements of Participant 5 were coded. After this, the model was able to house all further examples of project selection elements, and it seemed that theoretical saturation had been reached even though more practical examples of the different process phases were still being added. The subsequent structured online survey was used to identify more practical examples from a larger ($n=182$) participant group, but only five more examples were added, and no structural changes were required from the model.

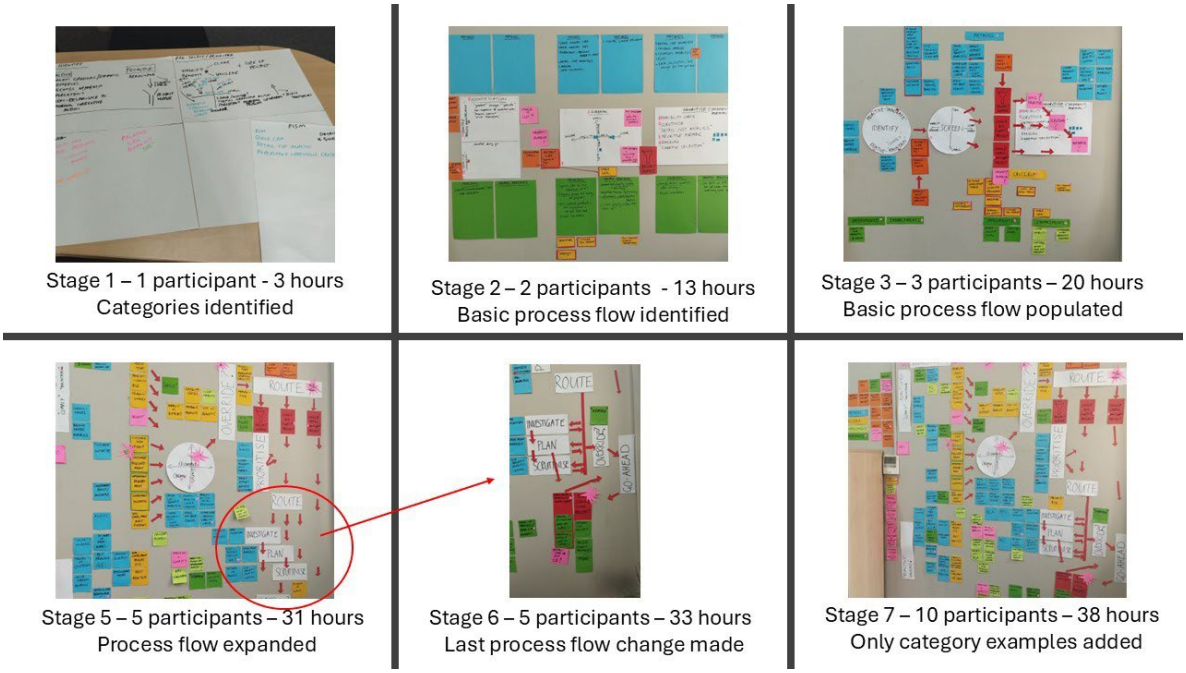
The final model thus displays both the first-order codes (most of the smaller coloured blocks), as well as the second-order codes (the white and red elements) and together create the "anatomy" or "photograph" (Gioia et al., 2013, p. 22), as well as some of the "physiology" or "movie" of the data set. Digitisation, which included streamlining and organising the model, as well as a comprehensive discussion of the model allowed for the presentation of the theoretical model to be described in full in a dedicated publication.

The time study data collected during the process shown in Figure 2 shows how the coding, measured in minutes per line of data, was slow at first, but became more efficient as the developing theoretical model was able to quickly absorb and process the data points toward the end of the analysis. The analysis started with the data of the most experienced practitioner (P2R) who had observed, executed, and lived with project selection decisions for nearly 40 years.

Starting with the richest and most diverse data set, which covered project selection at various levels and in various contexts, played a role in developing a basic and hypothetical model structure (second-order coding) in parallel with the first-order coding. The meticulous and transparent process ensured that first-order coding still stayed true to the original data set. Figure 3 shows how much time was spent on getting an initial grasp on the shape of the data (Participant 2R.1) before a basic structure (the model categories) was in place to be further refined as coding proceeded, still consuming a lot of analytical power (Participant 2R.2 and Participant1G).

Figure 2

Stages of Model Development

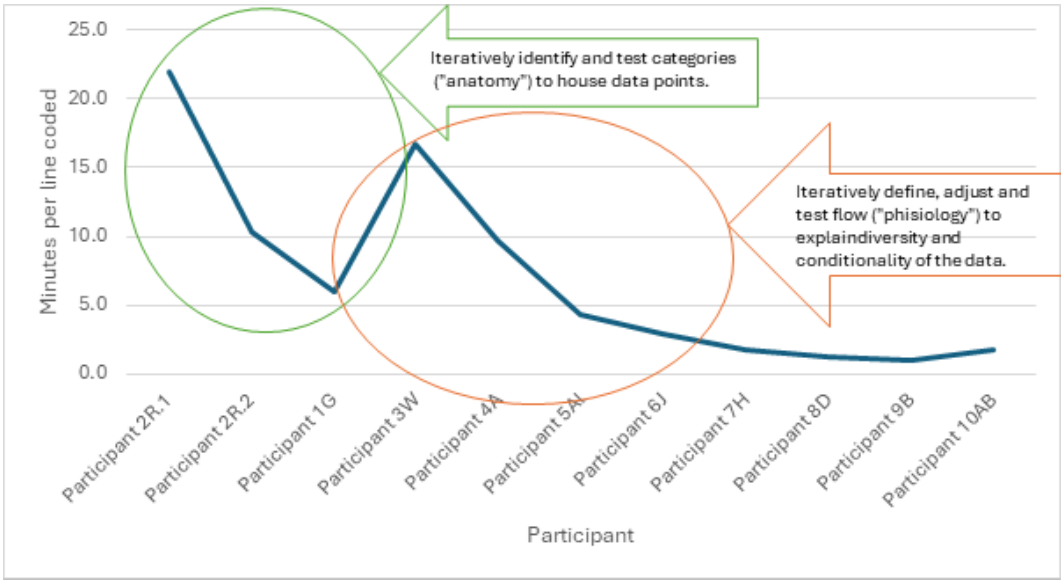


Although the expanding categories ("the photograph") were able to house the data points, a deeper, more complex sequence or flow or physiology ("the movie") needed to be created as the examples, although of the same data category, such as method or criteria, seemed to be used at different stages and under different circumstances. This meant that a more complex structure was needed to house the data points in the right stage and under the right conditions and could not simply be listed together under one category. This complexity was identified after coding around 80 lines of data, coming from the diverse situations observed over a cumulative 100 years of project selection observed by Participants 2R, 1G and 3W.

Further physiological adjustments were made during the analysis of the next 86 lines of data contributed by Participants 3W, 4A and 5Al as the deeper structure was iteratively tested and refined. After this, the remaining 156 lines of data could be slotted into the proposed model with relative ease, meaning that they served to test, confirm and enrich the model.

Figure 3

Time Study Data of the Coding Process



The rate at which coding takes place, in parallel with theory development, is thus proposed as a possible metric with which to track theoretical saturation. The definition of theoretical saturation is, however, the benchmark to determine whether theoretical saturation has been reached: when new data does not contribute any new insights (Hallberg, 2006; Urquhart, 2019). Although the rate at which the proposed theoretical model can absorb new data points can function as an indicator of theoretical saturation, it should be used in conjunction with a tracking measure that monitors the rate at which new contributions are added. Figure 4 shows how the number of novel contributions made by participants decreased as the analysis progressed with participants mostly confirming earlier contributions.

Figures 3 and 4 show how *theoretical* saturation was reached after the analysis of 186 data points contributed by Participants 1 to 5. However, the theoretical model was still being tested and enriched by novel examples of the different categories given. Although no further

adjustments were made to the theoretical structure of the model, the novel examples still contributed explanations and challenges to the theoretical model.

To cast a wider net with which to collect examples for, and thus theoretical challenges to, the theoretical model, an online structured survey was selected to be a more efficient tool. The survey tested the prevalence of the already identified model elements to screen for validity, and asked respondents to contribute more examples. The 182 survey respondents contributed another five examples and confirmed the prevalence of all the existing elements.

Figure 4

Number of Novel Contributions Made as the Analysis Progressed

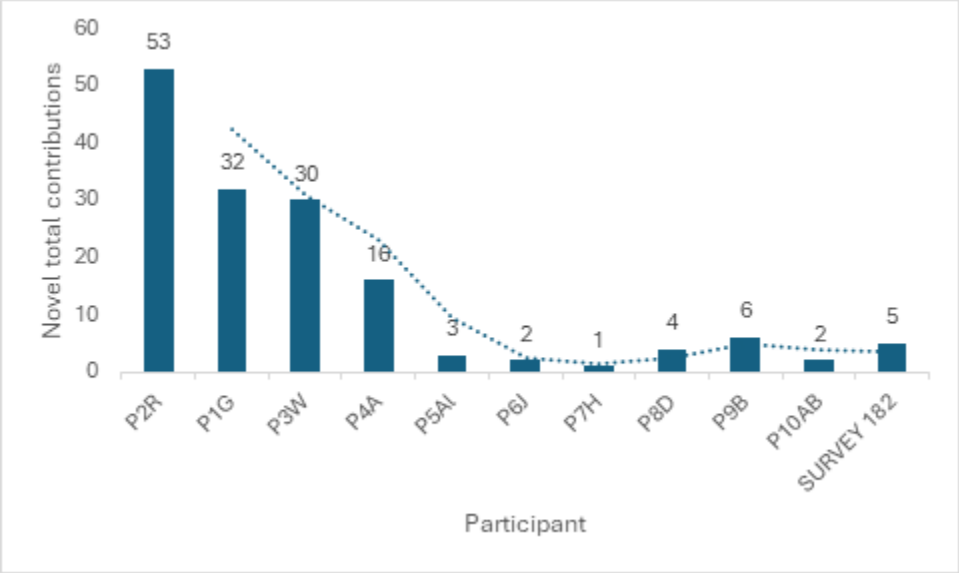
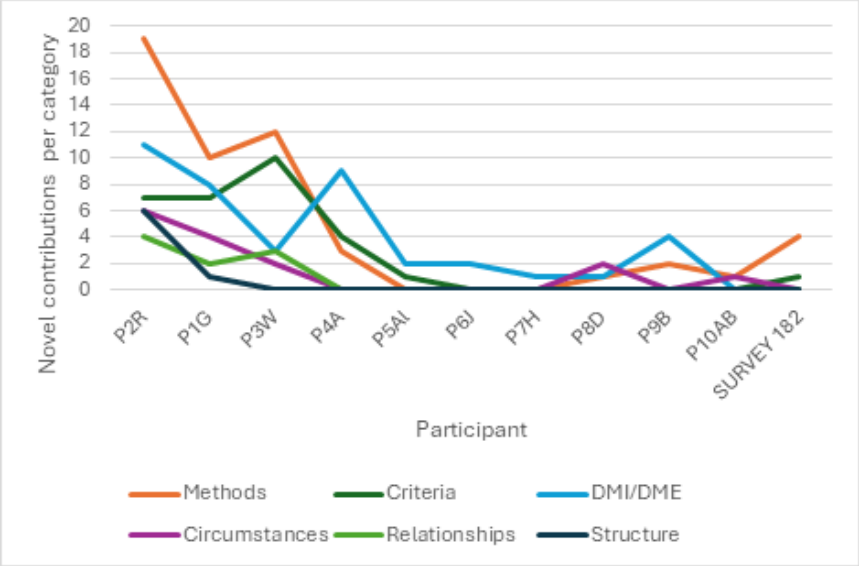


Figure 5 shows a breakdown of the individual contributions, confirming that *theoretical* saturation, measured by the structure ("anatomy") and relationships ("physiology") data sets, was indeed reached after Participant 5. The rest of the contributions were examples of the different categories within the model, e.g. different project selection criteria, or different project selection methods observed, etc. These were thus not theoretical contributions, but rather examples of the theoretical elements.

Figure 5

Breakdown of Novel Contributions Made During the Course of the Analysis



Conclusion

This paper thus proposes and demonstrates an alternative approach to ensuring theoretical saturation, deviating from the blanket rule of thumb sample size approach often adopted in qualitative and GT research. It endorses and encourages a systematic, rigorous data analysis phase, documented and tracked by the researchers for the sake of quality assurance of the data coding process to be rewarded by the gradual emergence of the theoretical contribution.

The paper proposes the following metrics with which to track theoretical saturation:

- Minutes per data point analyzed AND
- Number of novel contributions made per participant data set AND
- Number of theoretical vs non-theoretical contributions made per participant data set.

The ultimate test of theoretical saturation remains the definition of no new theoretical contributions are made.

As superficial or lazy coding could easily lead to a false deduction that theoretical saturation has been reached, this paper also proposes the meticulous and transparent documenting of the (data) point-by-point coding of the entire data set until theoretical saturation has been reached, tested and confirmed satisfactorily. The visual, color-coded approach demonstrated in Figures 1 and 2 makes this proposed rigorous process more accessible to both researchers and potential critics, but is not essential, as the software used to capture the data analysis trail should provide the lasting proof of the rigor of the process.

Classic GT is a powerful research methodology with which to explore real-life phenomena but is easily discredited by its critics due to its open-minded approach that depends on the rigor and objectivity of the researcher. The metrics proposed and demonstrated by this paper can assist GT researchers in ensuring rigor that can easily be proven. It is postulated here that the use of the proposed metrics and approaches demonstrated in this paper will do much to support the credibility of GT research in general.

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GROUNDED THEORY REVIEW
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Revisiting Grounded Therapy. Discussing the Idea of a Modified Application of Grounded Theory as a Tool for Self-Reflection in Therapeutic Processes

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Abstract

Grounded Therapy is a conceptual model that applies qualitative analysis methods from Grounded Theory Methodology to identify and understand unconscious patterns that may be useful in psychotherapy settings. The approach involves collecting data such as conversation transcripts and journal entries, which are then collaboratively coded with the client in the therapeutic context. This process aims to decipher emotional conflicts or behavioral patterns, fostering the client's self-reflection and uncovering unconscious dynamics that can inform therapeutic interventions.

The intervention method adopts a structured yet participatory approach, empowering clients to take an active role in their therapy. In the future, AI-powered tools could support this process by facilitating audio recording and transcription. Grounded Therapy offers new perspectives for understanding and addressing psychological conflicts while strengthening the therapeutic alliance between therapist and client.

Keywords: grounded therapy, grounded theory, self-reflection, qualitative methods, psychoanalysis, therapeutic processes, mental health

Background

In the conventional application of Grounded Theory Methodology for analyzing interviews, certain passages repeatedly emerged from the data that provided unexpected insights during the coding process. These passages suggested that the interviewees were likely unaware of underlying emotions, conflicts, or contradictions.

An exemplary case is an interview conducted in the context of reconstructing coping strategies following experiences of forced migration (Author, 2016, Interview 2; Author, 2019). In this interview, a 24-year-old man recounts his escape from persecution by the Taliban, describing both the decision to flee and the challenges faced during the journey, as well as his living conditions in Germany. The coding of the interview with Grounded Theory led to the discovery of concepts that were not explicitly addressed by the interviewee but could be relevant for psychotherapeutic conversations and interventions.

The coding process revealed several explicit and implicit insecurities and unconscious conflicts. A striking example is the interviewee's hesitation when describing 'special groups' (Taliban). He repeatedly clears his throat, pauses, and searches for the right words. These linguistic uncertainties indicate the interviewee may have difficulties speaking about these groups, suggesting a deeper insecurity or fear.

> *Ja, eh it is eh different reasons I come, because of insecurity and eh I had some special problems (clears his throat) with special groups (.) and because of that I come to Europe (...) special groups that are against the government eh against eh social activities that I had in society, I worked as a teacher ehh in eh private educational center and eh (.) eh there (clears his throat) are Taliban groups and (.) ehh some other local (.) different groups that they're upset of government and eh (.) eh upset of eh education, upset of*

foreign countries that they works in Afghanistan and they (clears his throat) works in eh, educational centers, like this (ibid.).

This aligns with his ambiguous stance on his expectations for life in Germany. When asked about his expectations, he states he 'made no decision' (but rather the smuggler did) and that he 'suddenly' chose Germany. These contradictory statements reflect an uncertainty regarding the escape and the decision-making processes involved.

And eh suddenly eh it was not optional for me, suddenly I decide to (.) eh go to Germany, it was eh (.) eh (clears his throat) like this that eh the eh gumbeler, I think the word is gumbeler, a person who transfer the people (.) ja. They take money and eh they transfer people to different countrys and suddenly I choose Germany (.) (clears his throat) (.) Mhh I mh didn't had any (.) idea (.) that eh I go to, for example, which country of Europe, but eh (clears his throat) at the end eh when suddenly I decide to Germany, I had some information before about the (clears his throat) history of Germany and rich culture of Germany and eh I had ehh (.) I decided before to (.) continue my education (ibid.).

Further unconscious concepts and conflicts became apparent in the interviewee's emotional detachment from his experiences. Although he speaks about life-threatening situations, such as the danger of being on the Taliban's list, he does not use direct emotional expressions or strong words. This detached representation could indicate unconscious repression or a coping strategy to deal with traumatic experiences. 'A bit of a problem' is quite an understatement when you're on the Taliban's blacklist.

Mh, they know where I work before and eh if I went to that province or district, maybe (.) eh I faced a problem and eh I was like eh they have a list, I was on their list that this

person helped governments, ja, it was like a black list, maybe they search for me or, ja (.) maybe I faced a bit (.) problem (ibid.).

Similarly, his repeated emphasis on 'helping the homeland' reveals an internal conflict between the desire to support his country and the real danger preventing his return. This suggests an unconscious tension between these two needs.

One final text example will illustrate how many concepts can be contained within a brief monologue. In the following passage, several psychological patterns are addressed, including loneliness, emotional support, stress management, and the impact of challenging living conditions. The speaker mentions feelings of sadness experienced at the beginning of their arrival in the new country due to loneliness, as well as the emotional support they receive from their faith and friends. At the same time, he describes the psychological strain caused by inadequate housing and noisy living environments. These concepts reflect the complex emotional and mental challenges often associated with the refugee experience. In a typical psychotherapy session, it would likely be possible to focus on just one central pattern, as the wide range of issues and the fleeting nature of verbal communication mean that many aspects are either lost or only superficially addressed.

Ja ehm (clears his throat) when something is problematic for me, according to psychology ja, we're muslim, that eh good help us that we have eh belief to a big power, that eh we eh we're (clears his throat) mh we have a desire for our future, and eh (.) eh praying help me, but according to material things ja, my friend help me that he lived, he is eh my roommate, and eh some other friends that if I need money, ja I can ask money for ehh (.) and also (.) eh (..) but eh (.) I didn't face eh to a special pr.. eh problem, jet in here, that eh, at the beginning that I coming here, I was alone, ja (.) I become (.) eh sad

sometimes (.) ja not any special problems that eh someone make for me a big problem, ja (.) it was eh like normal, that (…) it is normal that a person who come to a new country, new society, ja (.) eh maybe some things are (.) not good, for example the living (.) mh the apartment that we live ehm there're, a lot of eh refugees and peoples that they come from different countries,(.) ja, there is very noisy or (.) eh we didn… we don't have a lot of facilities, just we have a small room for two person, and eh ja it is very dark (.) ja (clears his throat) but eh this kind of thing is not eh too much important, the most important thing is the behavior of people or government about eh the refugees and (.) eh also (.) a future is very important that ehh how can we study or work is important for me, that eh (.) ja (clears his throat) (.) eh, I wish that eh (..) eh in the future I can study (ibid.)

The analysis of various interviews demonstrated that coding not only captures the explicit content of the interviews but also makes deeper, unconscious aspects of the interviewees visible. Emotional tensions, implicit contradictions, and unspoken conflicts emerge, which the interviewees may not have fully recognized or articulated during the conversation. These unconscious dimensions of the interviews become central through the coding process, highlighting how the methodology can contribute to uncovering latent meanings and dynamics within the data.

Uncovering such initially unconscious connections is precisely what makes the possibilities of a detailed analysis using Grounded Theory promising. While such connections may also be recognized in conversation, the detailed analysis enabled by Grounded Theory allows for a more in-depth examination.

This builds on the idea, originally introduced by Simmons (1994), of harnessing the coding process of Grounded Theory as a means to facilitate in-depth reflection within therapeutic

contexts. In this article, the focus lies on the application of Grounded Therapy (ibid.) as an approach for self-reflection in psychotherapeutic contexts. To this end, the foundations and principles of Grounded Theory Methodology were modified and adapted to support self-reflection in therapeutic processes, with the aim of discussing practice-oriented possibilities for its implementation.

Self-reflection refers to the process in which individuals critically examine and analyze their thoughts, emotions, behaviors, and values to develop a deeper understanding of themselves. This process supports the development of self-awareness and enables individuals to recognize personal strengths and weaknesses, reconsider decisions, and evaluate their actions in relation to their goals and values (Neenan & Dryden, 2006).

In psychotherapy, self-reflection plays a central role, particularly in approaches such as cognitive behavioral therapy, where it helps identify and modify dysfunctional thought patterns (Beck, 2011). In social science research, self-reflection is also employed as a method to critically analyze researchers' subjectivity and minimize potential biases in data interpretation (Finlay, 2002). It serves as a quality assurance tool, allowing for a conscious engagement with one's own positioning and the associated influences on the research process.

Building on a modified version of Grounded Theory Methodology, this work advances an interdisciplinary approach aimed at enhancing self-reflection within psychotherapeutic settings, with a focus on exploring practice-oriented applications.

Self-reflection in Qualitative Research

The subjectivity of researchers within the framework of qualitative studies is a central aspect in the process of data collection and analysis. Even before data collection begins, choices such as the formulation of the research question and the selection of a particular method can

already influence the outcomes. Self-reflection in the research process serves to make the perspective through which the data were interpreted transparent, thereby contributing to intersubjective verifiability (Steinke, 1999).

In qualitative methods, analysis is often carried out from the perspective of the interpretative paradigm, which assumes that each individual's truth is the result of his or her personal interpretations (Strauss & Corbin, 1996). This relative, pre-interpreted truth must then be deconstructed through further interpretations within the research process (Lamnek, 2005). While Glaser (1978) originally emphasized an epistemological stance distinct from interpretivism, within therapeutic contexts, an interpretative approach can remain valuable, as it emphasizes individual meaning-making, which is central to processes of self-reflection and personal insight.

Moreover, while one of the foundational tenets of Grounded Theory is to limit preconceptions in the research process, it is nonetheless important to acknowledge that the researcher's conceptualizations may still be shaped by subjective expectations. Therefore, especially during the evaluation of results, it is crucial to engage critically and reflexively with the issue of subjectivity (Breuer, 2005). This is where self-reflection comes into play. It is important for the researcher to become aware, through self-reflection, of how one's own perspective might influence the conceptualization of the data. Although it is impossible to approach the data completely openly and without prejudice, if a researcher becomes conscious, for instance, of his or her preconceptions regarding the study population and the potential impact of these on the findings, there is an opportunity to distance oneself, at least partially, from one's own perspective. This, in turn, allows for a more open approach to uncovering new insights within the material (ibid.).

Accordingly, it is recommended that researchers in the context of qualitative social research take the time, prior to commencing a study, to reflect on their own preconceptions and expectations. This reflection should also include an examination of one's own positionality in the field of research and the closeness to the subjects under investigation. Such reflection provides the researcher with the opportunity, during data analysis, to discern whether one is truly seeking new phenomena or merely confirmation of pre-existing opinions (ibid.). To document the background of one's conceptualizatios and ideas, it is also recommended to maintain a research diary and to regularly write memos (Strauss, 1987).

To free oneself from one's own preconceptions when conceptualizing material, it is also advisable to evaluate data in research groups. The introduction of alternative perspectives can challenge individual conceptualizations and opens up the horizon for other possible readings (Steinke, 1999).

Self-reflection facilitates the discovery of new elements within the collected material. The information gained through explorations of the individual case is subsequently compared with other cases (e.g., through theoretical sampling) to identify structures and patterns in the data that apply to more than just a single individual (Corbin, 2003).

In summary, self-reflection enables an adequate consideration of the attitudes of the participants. The insights gained from this reflexive analytical process, in turn, contain detailed information about the participants, even aspects that only emerge during the analysis and of which the participants themselves may not be aware.

Drawing on prior research experience, it has been observed that interested interviewees sometimes receive the overall results or a completed article via email after the conclusion of a project. However, a deeper engagement with the insights derived from the specific individual

case is not common practice within the research process. Once an interview or observation is completed, the person under study is typically excluded from the analysis process, despite the potential of this hermeneutic practice to help them gain a better understanding of themselves, reflect on their own attitudes and actions, and perhaps even critically question them. Could it be possible, then, to use the insights derived from the analysis of the individual case for the self-reflection and personal development of the participants themselves?

Self-reflection in Psychotherapy

Self-reflection plays a central role in psychotherapy, both for clients and therapists. It is particularly important during therapeutic training, and throughout clinical practice, that therapists critically examine their own methods, the therapeutic relationship, as well as their prejudices and limitations, in order to ensure professional and ethical conduct (Gale & Schröder, 2014; Prasko et al., 2023).

Depending on the individual's problems and level of distress, psychotherapy may pursue various objectives, however, the overarching aim in psychotherapeutic practice is generally to improve the quality of life for clients seeking help for a range of mental challenges (Lindhiem et al., 2016). Through diverse methods, each with distinct focal points yet often sharing similar procedures, the process of dialogue is employed to achieve a common goal: the alleviation of psychological symptoms and the enhancement of well-being.

To illustrate, consider several well-known psychotherapeutic approaches. In behavior therapy, the focus is on identifying and modifying dysfunctional cognitive and behavioral patterns. Psychoanalysis employs dialogue to uncover unconscious conflicts, motives, and emotions with the aim of transforming them. Systemic approaches concentrate on improving dynamics within social systems, most notably within families. Positive psychology, on the other

hand, deals with identifying strengths and resources to bolster clients' resilience (Carr et al., 2020).

In all these therapeutic modalities, self-reflection, alongside other processes (e.g., the therapeutic relationship), plays a decisive role. Under guided conditions, clients are encouraged to develop a better understanding of themselves, ideally leading to personal changes that enhance their well-being. For example, in addressing anxiety disorders, a client may, during therapy sessions, reflect on the origins of their anxiety, whether rooted in traumatic experiences or dysfunctional thought patterns and beliefs. Self-reflection further facilitates the identification of triggers and stressors and may even help uncover destructive behavioral patterns that exacerbate anxiety. The quest for effective strategies to manage anxiety and develop coping mechanisms begins with reflecting on potential pathways that might aid the individual.

Therapeutic processes utilize a variety of methods tailored to the individual needs of client s to promote self-reflection, with talk therapy often serving as the central approach in many psychotherapeutic methods. Through conversational techniques, clients are enabled to reflect upon their thoughts and feelings, thus facilitating the processing and resolution of problems (Davidsen, 2008). Written forms of self-exploration are also frequently used in therapy, for instance, keeping diaries or writing letters to record daily emotions, events, and reactions. Such methods serve to reveal recurring patterns through self-reflection, techniques that are similarly utilized by therapists in training to reflect upon their own work (Fahrrand, Perry, & Linsley, 2010).

Increasingly, creative methods are being incorporated to process emotions and foster self-reflection. Art therapy, for example, involves creative processes such as painting, modeling, or other artistic expressions that enable clients to explore their inner experiences on a non-verbal

level. Creative methods are particularly valuable when addressing complex topics and emotions that are difficult to articulate. Throughout the process, clients may reflect on how their internal states manifest, how decisions are made, and how challenges are managed. Moreover, a completed artwork can provide insight into unconscious emotions and conflicts, thereby supporting self-reflection and the healing process. Similar approaches are employed in music and drama therapies (Brooke, 2006).

Nature-based therapies and green care also provide clients with opportunities for self-reflection through interactions with nature, mindfulness techniques, or animal-assisted interventions (Petzold, Orth, & Sieper, 2015). For instance, working with horses can offer multiple avenues for self-reflection, as the challenges encountered with the animal may prompt reflections on one's everyday behaviors (Author, 2023). Group therapy constitutes another method that facilitates self-reflection. In a group setting, the diversity of perspectives and feedback can challenge clients to reexamine their own realities, while the group dynamics themselves may mirror internal processes and further stimulate self-reflection (Logren et al., 2017).

It is evident that self-reflection in the therapeutic process operates on multiple levels and unlocks the potential for significant change. Self-reflection represents the first step toward transformation and the improvement of one's situation. Consequently, it is worthwhile to consider approaches like Grounded Therapy that expand the repertoire of methods available to foster self-reflection.

The core idea: Grounded Therapy according to Simmons (1994)

Simmons (1994) criticizes how preconceived notions and the pathologization of individuals can burden the therapeutic relationship, often occupying too much space within the

client's self-concept. These preconceptions are further reinforced by gathering extensive information about the client before therapy begins, including diagnoses made according to standardized guidelines. Similarly, the creation of a treatment plan leads to an early fixation on specific ideas. This is considered problematic because it is often viewed uncritically as something that positively influences the process, even though it unilaterally shapes the therapeutic mindset.

These diagnoses influence how to think about the client in the long term, leading to a "pseudo-analytical process" (ibid., p. 11) in which the complexity of the client is confined to a predefined structure. However, Simmons notes that this process causes the client to begin incorporating the label into their own self-concept, ultimately identifying with it.

Grounded Theory offers a solution by encouraging therapists to move beyond preconceived ideas and engage with the client in a more individualized manner. Rather than imposing externally derived themes, Grounded Therapy allows for concepts to emerge from within, based on the client's relevant concerns. As Simmons states, the perspective of the therapist often takes precedence over that of the client. Grounded Therapy represents an attempt to organize the therapeutic process in a way that minimizes the influence of preconceptions. In an analytical process guided by the client's relevances, data are derived from conversations. This process leads to an inductive approach, in which the client becomes a "co-analyst" (ibid., p. 21). The therapist, in this process, learns what is relevant for the client and what works, fostering a much more individualized and open approach to therapy.

Grounded Therapy (Simmons, 1994) is inspired by the methodological principles of classic Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978). It follows an inductive and

emergent logic grounded in empirical data. The primary aim is to develop conceptual categories that explain patterns in a client's subjective experience.

A key tenet of classic Grounded Theory is conceptual abstraction. The therapist does not interpret the client's narratives in light of preformulated psychological theories but identifies recurring patterns of meaning by coding data and comparing them constantly (ebd.). These comparisons allow for the emergence of abstract categories, grounded in the data itself.

The method is structured by the constant comparative method, through which incidents in the data are compared with each other and with emerging codes and categories. This principle ensures that categories are not merely descriptive but increasingly abstract and theoretically meaningful (Glaser, 1978). Even when narratives contain metaphorical or emotional expressions, the goal is not to interpret them psychologically but to code them conceptually and comparatively, thereby generating theory grounded in data (Simmons, 1994).

Simmons (1994) identifies the coding process as a central element of Grounded Therapy. During the initial phase of open coding, all data perceived as relevant is coded without the intention of finding solutions at this stage. This is followed by constant comparative analysis, in which emerging concepts are systematically compared to identify recurring patterns. Over time, key issues or problems begin to take shape, allowing for the transition to selective coding. Theoretical codes can offer insights into the relationships between categories and support their integration into a Grounded Theory rooted in the client's narrative.

In terms of practical implementation, Simmons offers limited concrete guidance. He notes that "most coding will have to be conducted in process [...] much of the coding must occur solely in the therapist's mind" (ibid., p. 30). This simultaneity of data collection and analysis, referred to by Simmons as "coding from the hip" (ibid.), presents a particular challenge within

this approach. The following part seeks to explore conceptual and practical strategies to address this challenge and thus contribute to the development of another applicable form of Grounded Therapy.

Applied Grounded Therapy: Potentials of Grounded Theory in Psychoanalysis

The core idea behind Grounded Therapy (Simmons, 1994) is to collect data on issues that burden the client and to analyze this data using Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), thereby enabling a scientific reconstruction of unconscious patterns.

Grounded Theory is a comprehensive research methodology that includes specific analytical procedures, such as the constant comparative method, to identify underlying patterns in data through iterative, concept-driven processes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Reflexivity, although not emphasized in classic Grounded Theory as a formal criterion, plays a practical role in ensuring that the therapist remains aware of their own preconceptions and minimizes their influence on category development (Finlay, 2002). Similarly, the therapist remains theoretically sensitive to the contextual embeddedness of client narratives, not to interpret them culturally or sociologically in a constructivist sense, but to better understand under which conditions particular patterns emerge (Strauss & Corbin, 1996).

The outcomes of the Grounded Therapy process can be incorporated as an additional approach in therapeutic practice, for example, by providing a sound basis for defining individual therapeutic goals or by revealing precise topics for discussion and intervention. Consequently, the Grounded Therapy process promotes the discovery of unconscious dynamics and contributes to a deeper understanding of inner conflicts and their impact on behavior.

One possible form of implementation could involve conducting open, non-directive interviews, in which the therapist invites the client to speak freely about personally significant

experiences. To minimize direct influence on the client's narrative, open-ended questions, such as "Please tell me about a typical day in your life," should be asked, especially at the beginning of the process (Simmons, 2022, p. 259).

Through this process, concepts and issues may begin to emerge from the client's perspective, providing the initial basis for further analysis and meaning-making. This interview would be recorded and could then be transcribed using AI support, since manual transcription within a therapeutic session is often impractical due to the significant time commitment involved. The resulting transcript could subsequently be coded together with the client in a follow-up session, thereby enabling the client to actively contribute their own perspectives and highlight points of relevance to prevent potential misinterpretations.

In a group therapy setting, coding might be carried out collectively under appropriate guidance, similar to procedures in qualitative research projects, to facilitate multiple perspectives on the material and enrich its analysis. Grounded Therapy was applied in anger management groups by actively involving participants in shaping the program. This bottom-up approach, grounded in their expressed concerns, led to a respectful atmosphere, high levels of participation, and long-term commitment. When groups are formed around a shared thematic focus, the method also benefits from the possibility of applying constant comparison between cases, which can enhance theoretical development (Simmons, 2022).

An alternative method for data collection could involve having the client keep a diary. This approach is particularly well-suited to initially identifying and reflecting upon distressing patterns, everyday burdens, or belief systems. However, to capture the spoken and spontaneous expressions that are crucial for analysis, it would be advisable for the client to record a voice message each evening. For instance, AI models capable of converting speech to text in real time

could be utilized. This approach offers several advantages: it is significantly less time-consuming than maintaining a written diary, thereby reducing the client's burden, and it enables an immediate and authentic capture of the client's thoughts in their own words. It is important to note that AI-generated transcripts tend to be smoothed and may miss relevant non-verbal cues, unless manually reviewed and corrected.

The diary method, particularly the use of voice messages to capture spontaneous and authentic self-reflections, bears some resemblance to autoethnographic practices. Both approaches involve the systematic collection of personal data by the individual themselves. However, while autoethnography requires the researcher to engage in a formal analysis of their own experiences within broader cultural, social, or psychological contexts (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011), the use of diaries or voice recordings in therapeutic settings serves a different function. Rather than aiming for structured self-analysis, this practice emphasizes the value of unfiltered expression and personal introspection. Clients are encouraged to articulate their experiences in their own language and at their own pace, potentially surfacing implicit thoughts and feelings that may not arise in a structured interview. Another advantage is that spoken memos can be recorded ad hoc immediately after emotionally challenging situations, rather than being discussed retrospectively in a therapy setting days or even weeks later. In this way, although the analytical responsibility lies with the therapist rather than the client, the process still centers the client's lived experience as a meaningful source of insight. The analysis of material obtained from voice recordings and transcripts would follow the core coding procedures of classic Grounded Theory: open coding, selective coding, and theoretical coding (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

In the initial phase of open coding, the transcript is examined line by line to identify indicators of emerging concepts. These indicators are coded using conceptual labels that go beyond mere description and aim to capture the underlying meaning of the patient's expressions. For instance, if a client describes a lack of emotional exchange with a partner, this passage might be coded with a term such as ‘relational withdrawal’ or ‘distancing behavior’. These codes are not final concepts but serve as starting points for the constant comparison of data segments.

In the subsequent phase of selective coding, the process of constant comparison is applied, where the codes identified during open coding are compared across different parts of the data. This iterative comparison helps to refine and integrate the codes into categories that explain the patterns observed. For instance, a comparison might reveal that ‘emotional disengagement’ frequently co-occurs with ‘fear of rejection’ or ‘protective detachment’, leading to the development of more abstract categories such as ‘emotional self-protection’. This step allows for a deeper understanding of the interconnections and relationships between the concepts.

The final phase involves theoretical coding, where the goal is to develop a theoretical framework that explains the relationships between the categories and conceptualizes the core processes that underpin the client’s experience. In this stage, the therapist and the client systematically compare categories to determine how they relate to each other and the broader context. The focus is on identifying how the core concepts interact and what underlying mechanisms drive the observed patterns of behavior. For example, it may emerge that ‘fear of rejection’ drives ‘emotional self-protection’ behaviors, which in turn contribute to the patient’s difficulties with emotional intimacy. Theoretical coding allows for the development of an explanatory theory that brings coherence to the entire data set, integrating patterns, behaviors, and mechanisms into a unified understanding of the client’s experiences. This process may

culminate in a micro-substantive theory that is uniquely tailored to the individual client, offering an integrated understanding of how they make sense of their concerns and experiences. This individualized theory can enhance the client's self-reflection by making implicit patterns and meanings more visible, supporting deeper insight and personal growth.

The key categories and patterns emerging from this analysis process (Simmons, 1994) could help the client develop a deeper understanding of their own thought processes and behaviors. The therapist might present the identified categories to the client and encourage reflection on their origins and effects, thereby fostering self-reflection as the client recognizes how certain thought patterns influence their decisions and emotional reactions. For instance, if the category 'fear of disappointment in emotional closeness' plays a central role, the therapist could prompt the client to consider the moments when these negative evaluations are most prominent and how they impact behavior and overall well-being.

Furthermore, the categories and patterns derived from this process could serve as a basis for targeted therapeutic interventions. The therapist might work with the client to modify dysfunctional thought patterns or behaviors, assisting them in developing more realistic and positive self-images or in recognizing and correcting cognitive distortions. In this context, the client could also be encouraged to devise concrete strategies to overcome the problematic patterns identified, perhaps through the use of mindfulness techniques or cognitive restructuring.

Overall, the analytical process informed by Grounded Theory would not only serve to identify central concepts and patterns in the client's data but also provide a robust foundation for therapeutic work. This foundation would enable the client to actively participate in transforming their thought patterns and behaviors, using the insights gained to promote self-reflection and personal development.

To prevent potential re-traumatization, it should be ensured that clients are not confronted with distressing memories during the coding process without appropriate coping strategies being provided. To avoid misinterpretations or one-sided self-analyses, the guidance of the therapist remains essential.

Grounded Therapy differs from narrative therapy and journaling methods in that it employs a systematic coding process that actively involves clients in analyzing their thought and behavioral patterns. While narrative therapy focuses on reconstructing life stories, Grounded Therapy emphasizes the methodological analysis of verbal data to identify unconscious patterns.

Through structured coding, clients can gain deeper insights into recurring cognitive and emotional patterns, allowing for more targeted therapeutic interventions. In Table 1, key concepts of Grounded Theory are compared with their implementation in Grounded Therapy to highlight the distinctions and adaptations made in the therapeutic context.

Table 1
Comparison of Key Concepts in Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and Grounded Therapy (Simmons, 1994)

Grounded Theory Concepts	Grounded Therapy Application
Inductive Approach	• Preconceived ideas are avoided, fostering openness and flexibility. • The client's concerns guide the therapeutic process. • Listening without applying predefined psychological theories. • Therapy begins without standardized tests or diagnostic labels.
Theoretical Sampling	• Sampling within a case focuses on collecting data on different topics. • Sampling is client-driven, focusing on their concerns. • New data is iteratively selected to deepen understanding of emerging concepts.
Open Coding	• Identifying relevant concepts from the client's statements. • Comparison of statements to develop concepts based on the client's experiences.

	• Reflecting on codes in dialogue with the client, without immediate psychological interpretation. • The client acts as a co-analyst, actively determining the relevance and significance of the themes.
Selective Coding	• Focusing on recurring key issues that shape the therapeutic process. • Narrowing the analysis to central concerns most relevant to the client. • Core categories are refined to explain meaningful patterns in the client's experience. • Central concepts guide ongoing dialogue to support therapeutic insight.
Theoretical Coding	• Relates core categories to uncover how different aspects of the client's experience influence each other. • Synthesizing patterns to support therapeutic understanding. • Clarifies the structure of the client's narrative by explaining links between central concerns. • May result in a micro-substantive theory tailored to the individual, capturing their unique way of making sense of their issues.
Constant Comparison	• Constant comparison refines codes and relationships between concepts throughout the analysis. • Comparisons within the client's data help refine the therapeutic focus. • Cross-case comparisons can inform the therapist's understanding of emerging patterns.
Core Categories	• Emerging from the client's narrative, representing the most significant issues in their experience and guiding the therapeutic process.
Theoretical Saturation	• Achieved when no new concepts emerge, indicating that the client's core experiences are fully captured in a micro-substantive theory. • Ensuring the theory's relevance by focusing on concepts that directly contribute to understanding the client's narrative.

Advantages and Opportunities of Grounded Therapy

Grounded Therapy offers the potential for enhanced self-reflection that surpasses what traditional talk therapy can achieve by enabling clients to engage in a deeper and more detailed examination of their own thoughts, emotions, and unconscious patterns. Through the systematic

analysis inherent in Grounded Theory, unconscious processes and hard-to-access issues can be brought to awareness. The methodological coding of conversational and diary materials opens up new perspectives and helps to unravel complex internal conflicts. Actively involving clients in this process strengthens the integration of their personal experiences and promotes a more profound engagement with their emotional and psychological challenges.

The coding process can be gradually integrated into therapy to develop a sense of coding, enhance analytical skills, and identify non-obvious patterns.

Recording conversations and utilizing them as data material allows for the capture of thoughts and emotions in a less filtered or selective manner, thereby unveiling unconscious content. Unlike diary entries, where reflections are often tempered by time and deliberation, spontaneous speech under less structured conditions frequently provides unadulterated insights into the client's inner state.

The outcomes of Grounded Therapy can serve as a solid foundation for establishing more precise and individually tailored therapeutic goals. The structured analysis of interviews and diary recordings assists in identifying recurring patterns that can be further explored and addressed in therapy. This approach offers a well-grounded basis for designing therapeutic interventions that directly target the specific needs and challenges of the client.

In group therapy settings, Grounded Therapy can particularly benefit from the diversity of perspectives, as multiple participants contribute to the analysis of the data. This collective process enhances intersubjectivity and fosters a deeper understanding of shared patterns as well as individual differences. The joint exploration of codes and patterns provides additional viewpoints on each participant’s experiences and allows for a broader, more nuanced analysis of the material.

Another advantage is that, by engaging in a written coding process (for example, working through texts with pen and paper) a lasting written record is created, allowing clients to repeatedly refer back to the results. This written record also facilitates targeted evaluations, for example, by comparing how similar concepts are addressed over time and assessing progress in the coding process.

Limitations of Grounded Therapy

Despite its innovative approaches, Grounded Therapy presents several challenges and limitations that must be considered both in its methodological application and practical implementation. One of the central hurdles lies in the practical application within a therapeutic setting. The considerable time required for data collection, transcription, coding, and analysis can represent a significant burden that does not always correspond to the therapeutic benefits gained. This is especially relevant in environments constrained by limited resources, where the use of qualitative research approaches may prove challenging. Additionally, a critical issue concerns how to effectively involve clients, who typically lack methodological expertise, in the coding process. There is also a risk that clients may become too closely attached to the material, potentially hindering their opens to unexpected insights.

Another point of tension arises from the cognitive focus of the method. While this approach offers advantages, particularly for clients who are not yet prepared to engage deeply with their emotions, the relatively limited inclusion of emotional processes could be seen as a drawback. Emotions play a central role in the psychotherapeutic context, and it would be desirable to develop strategies that more strongly incorporate this dimension without compromising the method's integrity (Lane et al., 2020).

The application of Grounded Therapy in group settings introduces additional challenges. On the one hand, group coding offers the opportunity to integrate diverse perspectives and enrich the analysis, on the other hand, it may be difficult to foster a productive dialogue that balances group cohesion with attention to individual perspectives.

The methodological approach of Grounded Therapy allows for an in-depth exploration of central patterns in a client's life, facilitating focused and profound therapeutic work. However, a potential criticism is that the intensive time and resource demands may restrict the exploration of a broader range of issues. At the same time, this focus on core issues could be considered an advantage, as deep, central insights are often transferable to other areas, thereby contributing to the management of similar problems in varied contexts.

Because the method requires a systematic and cognitive approach, it would need to be adapted for children or individuals with cognitive challenges. In such cases, the focus could be on covering relevant topics and discussing them without the need for in-depth analysis of the material. For this target group, it may be worthwhile to explore the potential of applying the Grounded Therapy approach to the analysis of observational field notes.

Finally, the ethical dimension must also be taken into account. The use of technologies such as AI for transcription raises concerns regarding client data protection and privacy. Therapists must ensure these methods are employed responsibly, and client protection is maintained at all times. In summary, while Grounded Therapy offers innovative perspectives and methodologies, its application requires careful consideration of feasibility, ethics, and therapeutic benefit.

Methodological Considerations for Assessing the Effectiveness of Grounded Therapy

While Grounded Therapy is inherently a patient-centered approach, where each client's core concerns and experiences guide the therapeutic process, it is important to assess its effectiveness in a structured way. The goal is not to reduce Grounded Therapy to a single predefined technique but to evaluate its unique, adaptable nature. This allows for an exploration of how the flexible, client-driven approach of Grounded Therapy can lead to measurable improvements in psychological well-being, such as emotional clarity or self-reflection. A thorough investigation of its effectiveness ensures that the therapy's patient-centered flexibility is preserved, while also providing insight into its impact on clients' therapeutic outcomes. To evaluate the effectiveness of Grounded Therapy, a two-phase research design that combines qualitative and quantitative approaches could be implemented. This strategy allows for an in-depth exploration of clients' subjective experiences while simultaneously enabling generalizable statements regarding the method's effectiveness.

In the first phase, an exploratory, qualitative approach could be adopted, utilizing Grounded Theory to identify the central mechanisms of action within the therapy and to develop a theoretical model. For this purpose, semi-structured interviews could be conducted with approximately 15–20 clients undergoing Grounded Therapy, as well as 5–8 therapists. These interviews would aim to capture perceived changes, challenges, acceptance, and facilitating factors from the clients' perspectives. The data collected would then be analyzed using the principles of Grounded Theory (open, selective and theoretical coding) to extract specific dimensions of therapeutic impact, such as 'emotional clarity', 'self-reflection', or 'improvement in coping strategies.' Based on these insights, appropriate measurement instruments for the

quantitative phase can be developed or existing scales, for example, those used to assess depressive symptoms (e.g., the Beck Depression Inventory-II, BDI-II), can be adapted.

In the second phase, a randomized controlled trial could be conducted to compare the effectiveness of Grounded Therapy with that of an established method, such as cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). The sample would consist of approximately 200 clients with similar diagnostic profiles (e.g., anxiety disorders or depression), who would be randomly allocated to two groups. Both groups would participate in a structured therapy program over a period of twelve weeks with weekly sessions, with the intervention group receiving Grounded Therapy and the control group undergoing CBT.

The effectiveness of the therapies would be assessed using standardized questionnaires that measure both psychological symptoms and the capacity for self-reflection. For instance, the Beck Depression Inventory-II (BDI-II) could be employed to gauge the severity of depressive symptoms (Beck et al., 1996), and the Self-Reflection and Insight Scale (SRIS) could be used to assess self-reflection and insight (Grant et al., 2002). Measurements would be taken at baseline, immediately after the completion of therapy, and at follow-up intervals of six and twelve months to analyze the sustainability of effects. Statistical techniques such as ANCOVA could be applied to evaluate group differences and the influence of potential covariates (e.g., age, gender, symptom severity) (Kirchmann & Steyer, 2012).

To scientifically establish Grounded Therapy and ensure comparability, it is essential to define a clear framework for its practical implementation before the study begins. One possible approach would involve clients generating transcribed diary entries over a two-week period, which are then jointly analyzed with the therapist. During these sessions, patterns, emotional

triggers, and positive resources could be identified. A standardized protocol for administering the therapy would be necessary to ensure consistent conditions for all participants.

This research design provides a robust foundation for systematically investigating both the underlying mechanisms and the overall effectiveness of Grounded Therapy, thereby enabling scientifically substantiated conclusions regarding its applicability and efficacy.

However, it is important to note that quantifying the effectiveness of Grounded Therapy through traditional metrics may not fully capture its essence as a therapeutic stance that permeates the entire process. Grounded Therapy is not just a set of techniques, but an approach that encourages ongoing reflection, collaboration, and adaptation to each client's needs. While empirical studies are valuable in establishing its efficacy, the true benefit of Grounded Therapy may lie in its flexibility and client-centered approach, which cannot always be fully captured by standardized outcome measures alone. Therefore, further research might explore how Grounded Therapy can be integrated into clinical practice as a holistic therapeutic attitude, rather than being confined to a singular method.

Discussion

The further development of Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) within the context of psychotherapeutic practice (Simmons, 1994) offers a promising perspective, particularly when engaged in dialogue with established psychotherapeutic models. By addressing unconscious patterns through qualitative analysis, this method opens new dimensions for psychotherapy, carrying far-reaching implications for both theory and practice.

Classic Grounded Therapy and the Potential for Integrating Constructivist Approaches

In therapeutic settings, the application of classic Grounded Theory (Glaser, 2014) offers distinct advantages due to its structured approach to data analysis, which emphasizes abstraction

and the development of theoretical categories grounded in empirical data. By focusing on the relationships between key concepts and the processes underlying client experiences, classic Grounded Theory facilitates a theory-driven understanding of therapeutic dynamics. The abstraction inherent in classic Grounded Theory allows therapists to move beyond surface-level descriptions of emotional or behavioral patterns, instead identifying the deeper, often unspoken processes that shape a client's experiences.

Classic Grounded Theory's emphasis on constant comparison and theoretical sampling aligns well with the iterative nature of therapeutic work. As therapists collect and analyze client narratives, these evolving categories of understanding can be refined and expanded, helping both the client and therapist adapt the therapy process to address emerging needs. Theoretically, this approach encourages an exploration of client issues from a detached, analytical perspective, which contrasts with the more interpretative stance found in some other methods, where subjective engagement with the data may lead to different understandings of the same issue.

While the strengths of classic Grounded Theory in a therapeutic setting are clear, certain elements of the constructivist approach to Grounded Theory may also be relevant, particularly when considering the role of the therapist's interpretations in shaping the therapeutic relationship. Constructivist Grounded Theory, as proposed by Charmaz (2006), emphasizes the co-construction of meaning between the therapist and client, highlighting the subjective nature of data interpretation. This perspective may offer valuable insights into the way therapists influence and shape clients' narratives, making it a potential point of integration for future applications of Grounded Therapy. However, it remains crucial to maintain the foundational principles of classic Grounded Theory, ensuring that the primary focus remains on uncovering concepts grounded in

the client's own experiences, rather than blending these with the therapist's subjective interpretation too strongly.

Connection to Existing Psychotherapeutic Models

The method presented in this work is closely related to established psychotherapeutic approaches, most notably cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). CBT primarily focuses on addressing conscious cognitive patterns and behaviors to identify and modify dysfunctional thought processes (Beck, 2011). However, the extension provided by Grounded Therapy enables the identification and processing of unconscious patterns and deeply ingrained internal processes, which in classical CBT are only indirectly or tangentially addressed. In this sense, the method can be seen as a complement to CBT, as it supports the process of self-awareness and change through a more profound engagement with the unconscious layers of the psyche.

Comparable to this are humanistic approaches, particularly person-centered therapy as formulated by Rogers (1961), which emphasizes the enhancement of self-experience and the client's subjective perspective. While person-centered therapy focuses strongly on personal experience and self-perception, Grounded Therapy offers a more structured approach that systematically uncovers patterns. This additional layer of structure could lead to a more nuanced treatment of problem areas without undermining the client's autonomy in therapy. Thus, the method's structured and methodological approach can be regarded as a valuable extension to humanistic therapy, one that further refines the therapeutic process while still valuing the client's subjective experience.

Another theoretical reference point is psychoanalytic theory, which is concerned with unconscious processes and the revelation of repressed content (Mitchell & Black, 1995). The joint coding of conversations and diary entries employed in this method offers a modern and

participatory approach that implements the psychoanalytic goal of bringing unconscious content to light in a more collaborative and open manner. In contrast to traditional psychoanalytic practice, which is characterized by an asymmetrical relationship between therapist and client, this method has the potential to foster a more democratic relationship, in which the client is actively involved in the process.

Strengthening the Therapeutic Alliance

A central feature of the presented method is the joint coding of conversations and diary entries, which could significantly enhance the therapeutic alliance (Simmons, 1994), that is, the trust-based collaboration between therapist and client in psychotherapy (Howard, Berry, & Haddock, 2021). By introducing joint coding, the client is empowered to take an active role as a co-creator of the therapeutic process. This shift may not only elevate the therapeutic relationship to a more collaborative level but also promote the client's trust and self-efficacy. The client transitions from being a passive recipient to an active contributor, whose perspectives and perceptions are integrated on an equal footing into the therapy process. Nevertheless, careful guidance and support from the therapist remain essential to ensure that the client receives the necessary orientation and assistance throughout the coding process.

Practical Feasibility and Integration of AI

An innovative aspect of Grounded Therapy lies in the potential integration of AI-supported analytical tools. For instance, AI can facilitate the speech-to-text conversion of voice messages and interviews, enabling a more efficient and less time-consuming data collection process. At the current stage of development, AI tools can be pragmatically integrated into the Grounded Therapy process to support various practical aspects. For instance, AI can assist with the transcription of recorded conversations, the organization of large amounts of qualitative data,

and the identification of recurring descriptive elements within the material. While the conceptual steps of analysis remain a human task, these supportive functions can help facilitate the overall research process by saving time and enhancing data accessibility. Several practical considerations must be addressed for the successful implementation of Grounded Therapy in psychotherapeutic practice. A critical factor is the availability of technological resources. The method relies on modern technologies such as recording devices and AI-powered transcription tools, which may present challenges in terms of accessibility and cost. Additionally, the training of therapists is paramount. To apply the method effectively, therapists must not only be well-versed in Grounded Theory but also proficient in the use of the relevant technologies. Continuing education courses or workshops could play a crucial role in ensuring that therapists integrate the method correctly and effectively into their practice.

Conclusion and Outlook

Grounded Therapy presents significant potential for expanding psychotherapeutic practice, particularly through its systematic approach to reconstructing unconscious patterns. However, its practical implementation requires careful consideration of methodological requirements and therapeutic objectives. In this article, various approaches to data collection and analysis in the context of Grounded Theory have been explored. Future research could focus on optimizing the method, for example, by integrating emotional components, enhancing AI-supported analytical tools, or developing guidelines for its application in practice. Additionally, an empirical evaluation of the effectiveness of Grounded Therapy in various contexts would be necessary to further substantiate its therapeutic relevance. Overall, Grounded Therapy represents a promising intersection between qualitative research and psychotherapeutic practice, offering

the potential for deeper insights into the dynamics of human experience and thereby contributing to the further development of psychotherapeutic methodology.

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GROUNDED THEORY REVIEW
An international journal

A Review of the First Edition of the Book by Author Dr Helen Scott: *Using Grounded Theory. How to Develop Theory for Managed Change*

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Abstract

Using Grounded Theory is a valuable, fun, colourful, easy-to-follow and engaging learning tool. The target audience for this book is anyone interested in learning about Grounded Theory. Those include a novice student at any level who is engaging in research and considering using Grounded Theory methodology, supervisors who are mentoring students considering or engaging with Grounded Theory and any other academic researcher who has an interest and desire to engage conceptually with theory development. Scott describes her book as 'a conceptual tool, which can be used by anyone who wishes to generate *theory*, irrespective of their philosophical perspective'. It is a practical book that assists with learning how to generate a theory about people and how they behave in a given setting.

Keywords: grounded theory, classic grounded theory, constructivist grounded theory

Using Grounded Theory is a book that has been brewing in style and thriving in silence since 2003, when Dr Helen Scott started her relationship with Grounded Theory. The bond developed with Grounded Theory as she was mesmerised by the methodology during her PhD, and her training with one of the founders, Dr Barney Glaser. She travelled to numerous grounded theory seminars across Europe, the UK and the USA to soak in as much as she could about Grounded Theory. During this time, she continued the supportive, encouraging mentor relationship with Glaser, who continued to support her next exhilarating venture, 6 years later, with her mentoring and troubleshooting, education mentoring consultancy services, Grounded Theory Online. The book details her skill, knowledge and insights drawn from her mentoring experience working with novice grounded theory students and expert grounded theorists worldwide. The following review will offer an overview of the construction of the book, with a summary of the chapter and ways in which the reader will benefit from the book.

The book's intention is clear. It is a tool to support the development of theory, together with building the process and skills needed, while learning how to cultivate a different type of thinking. It is beautifully designed, with colourful pages and a good manageable size, which makes it appealing to use. It is presented in a manual reference-like resource, with instructions on how to use it and the practicalities of its use. The tone is professional, friendly, easy to follow, yet very academically written with clear intent. While the colours and tone soften the presentation of the book, it also supports the transition of the reader into the sturdy and credible information presented.

The contents of the book include an introductory section which outlines: Acknowledgements, Foreword and Preface. The body of the book is divided into nine sections, all of which are focused on the content and the heart of what the book offers. Each section ends

with a *Your Turn* pedagogical application to reinforce what was read and help the reader consider how it applies to the stage in their research. The book concludes with an Epilogue where the author offers a practical perspective, wrapping up the book's intent nicely in a warm message of encouragement, support and further contact details for feedback and networking. The book brings together a community of grounded theorists as they share their experiences with the author, and she, too, shares hers and theirs with the reader.

The preface has a section on *Using this book,* which offers various options on navigating through the book to suit the reader's journey, and *Important Background*, which offers exactly that, important background on grounded theory. The *Using this book* section offers navigation suggestions, including benefits of moving through the book to sections which are relevant to the stage of learning, concentrating on areas of interest, and investigating further in a self-paced learning style with guidance and advice by the author included in chapters as pedagogical scaffolds. The section on *Important background* offers an overview of Grounded Theory, the founders, variations of grounded theory and valuable resources for the reader to dive into when they are ready to learn more about its history and origins. In the practical sections, which are from 3 to 6, Scott includes a parallel view to how Charmaz would approach that stage within the methodology.

In sections 1, *What is grounded Theory?* and 2 *What does a grounded theory look like?* Scott illustrates at an introductory level what grounded theory is about and what it looks like. She presents colourful examples of imagery to complement holistic explanations of concepts and what is involved in grounded theory. She shares tips about considerations to be made regarding the research area, general universally standard university requirements to conduct research for PhDs, and how a grounded theory might fit into a proposal, and a self-evaluation of

characteristics of a successful grounded theory researcher, well before a study is conducted. Section 2 is visually engaging with QR codes and tiny URLs, inviting the reader to engage with various examples of media stories where the process of conceptualising is introduced. The articles offer an overview of social behaviours and considerations for what the main concern might be, whilst challenging the reader to begin to think like a grounded theorist. The section continues with insights into the power of grounded theory, its variations, differences in using one type of grounded theory over another and why. There are also statements from Scott's mentees sharing their experiences with using their nominated grounded theory approach and her advice on how issues were resolved.

In sections 3, *Collecting grounded theory data*, 4 *Data analysis: Part I,* 5 *Data analysis II,* 6. *Conceptual Integration*, Scott guides the reader through the phases involved in conducting grounded theory. These sections represent the heart and soul of the practical application and the premise of the book, with a focus on grounded theory. Once again, every section begins with colourful illustrations guiding the reader through examples of existing theories and how these were constructed, with activities demonstrated, applied, and reflected, then ending with an activity encouraging the reader to reflect, learn and prepare for the next step. These four sections cover looking at all forms of data and examples from mentee experiences with data challenges and approaches taken to rectify issues or make decisions depending on various scenarios during the methodology. All of these are also presented with complementary illustrations to assist with a broader conceptual understanding. Discussion on ethics and conduct in research is included and integrated within the detailed step-by-step guide on how and when to conduct each grounded theory methodology step. From the collection of data phase, how to begin to analyse the data, what is involved precisely and where to seek further information if needed, Scott has ensured

that most of what the reader needs to conduct a study using Grounded Theory is covered, with supplementary resources provided. All these sections offer Charmaz's approach as a point of comparison.

Sections 7, *The final stages*, 8 *Integrating grounded theory within a research degree*, and 9 *A very practical perspective*, bring the reader to the final stages of what is involved with completing and integrating the grounded theory. The final stages include advice and support relating to sampling the literature and situating the theory amongst other theories. In addition, comparing the literature with the theory developed and writing up the final draft with tips on illustrating the theory and ways to present how it contributes to knowledge. The final section on *A very practical perspective* offers a clever, light-hearted analogy of what is involved in developing a grounded theory. Scott uses an image of a Porsche in all its beauty of construction and glory to show that each part of the vehicle is built the same way a theory is built. She states that both represent the creation of synergy.

The author's acknowledgements of contributions to her experiences in learning grounded theory from Glaser and Strauss (1967), and Glaser's written works on Classic Grounded Theory (Glaser, 1965, 1978, 1992, 1998, 2002, 2005, 2014) also suggests to the reader that there is so much more to learn and read. Scott, in her book, offers insights into what is needed to be known to conduct grounded theory research, the tools involved, resources required and knowledge which is obtainable through the experiences shared by the author. The author integrates her expertise, knowledge, and training into a warm, welcoming community of learning through sharing experiences with others and reflections to help future grounded theory users. I highly recommend this book as a practical resource at any stage of the process involved in conducting a grounded theory methodology in research.

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GROUNDED THEORY REVIEW
An international journal

Grounded Therapy[1]

Odis E. Simmons

My introduction to grounded theory occurred in 1967, when Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss published *The Discovery of Grounded Theory,* the seminal statement on grounded theory. At the time, I was an undergraduate student in sociology. The book made a deep and lasting impression on me. I determined that I wanted to learn "how to do that." I was given this opportunity in 1970, upon my admission to the Graduate Program in Sociology at the University of California, San Francisco. In addition to other fine faculty members, this program was home to both Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss. Thus, I was able to learn grounded theory, from the ground up, so to speak, from its originators.

My introduction to therapy[2] occurred during the course of my dissertation research (Bigus, 1974)[3]. The topic of this research was what I came to refer to as "the alcoholic career." I used a qualitative, grounded theory approach, collecting my data through a combination of intensive interviews and participant observation field research. During this research I had the opportunity to observe therapy sessions between alcoholism counselors and their clients, in inpatient settings. At the end of many of these sessions I was able to interview both the client and the therapist, for their impressions and interpretations as to what occurred during the sessions. The disparity of views between the two parties impressed me. In general, the therapists tended to have a much more positive view of what occurred during the sessions than the clients did. The

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therapists tended to believe that some positive ground was made during the sessions, whereas the clients tended to express varying levels of disappointment and anger about the sessions. This was certainly not always the case, but it was often enough 'the case, at least in my mind, to point to problems in the therapeutic relationship and approach. Although these issues were not the primary subjects of my research, I couldn't help but take notice of them, out of strong personal curiosity.

In subsequent years, through teaching and consulting work, I had further opportunities to observe and reflect upon the therapeutic relationship and process. Eventually, I became a therapist, myself. Since then, I have had an abundance of opportunities to not only make such observations, but to participate in therapeutic relationships, and the therapeutic process.

From the beginning of my experience with therapy, I saw many areas in which it was evident to me that the therapeutic process and the therapeutic relationship could be improved. As I learned more about grounded theory, it also became evident to me that grounded theory might be very useful in this application. Some years later when I became a practicing therapist, I was able to empirically test this supposition. My original hunch has proven to be solidly correct. One of the original promises of grounded theory, "to be usable in practical applications" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967: p.3), has certainly been fulfilled, in this instance.

In fact, this promise has been fulfilled in a way which was evidently not originally perceived. The original thought appears to have been that with grounded theories, "prediction and explanation should be able to give the practitioner some understanding and control of situations" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967: p.3). What I have discovered is that the grounded theory process itself (not just grounded theories) is very useful as a model for guiding a grounded therapeutic process albeit in a modified form to fit the situation. Because of the inherent nature

of this relationship, I refer to this approach as "grounded therapy." Grounded therapy is a methodology by which to achieve therapy.

Because of the requirements and limitations of this format, i.e., a chapter in an anthology, I have limited the breadth and depth of my discussion.[4] My purpose here is not to present a detailed exposition of how to conduct grounded therapy, but merely to present enough of an outline to give the reader an idea as to what sorts of problems it addresses, how it addresses them, and how it proposes to solve them. And, in the course of these tasks, I hope to illustrate a practical application of grounded theory. The intended audience of this book is primarily sociologists interested in grounded theory, not therapists, so to avoid unnecessary digression, I shall assume readers have more than a passing familiarity with grounded theory.

Approaches to Therapy

Therapy consists of two general, interrelated components – the "explanatory" (to identify, understand, explain) and the "operative" (to solve, remedy, rectify, heal). In my experience, grounded theory, in modified form as grounded therapy, is useful in the service of both tasks.

A plethora of therapeutic theories, models and paradigms exist for therapists to use. Some are formulated for use in specific substantive areas, and some for more general application. Each consists of some configuration of explanations, concepts, understandings, assumptions, operational prescriptions, proscriptions, and so forth, which if followed promise results. Unfortunately, research on the effectiveness of therapy suggests that often it does not produce the desired results, at least as practiced.[5] It is this problem which I am attempting to address here.[6]

I might add that in this context, I am much more interested in what I have observed therapists actually saying and doing, in practice, rather than what is contained in the literature, as the literature becomes "real" only through its empirical use.

Many therapeutic models are configured as a set of precepts, which some practitioners, usually the novice and less creative ones, use essentially as "formulas." With this approach, the therapist attempts to "stay within the lines," of whatever procedural dictates are espoused by the particular therapeutic model(s) they are using. This general approach to therapy might be referred to as 'formula therapy." The essential problem with a formula therapy approach, is that it lacks the flexibility required by an applied enterprise. In therapy, each new situation requires a fresh, yet informed start. However, formula therapy proceeds in an essentially deductive, rather than inductive manner. And, if any enterprise cries out for an inductive, "discovery" approach, it is therapy.

Another, somewhat opposite approach to therapy is what might be referred to as "improvisational therapy." Some therapists attempt to free themselves from formulas by pulling what is useful in a given circumstance from their "menu" of known theories, concepts, approaches, and such, conducting therapy in an extemporaneous manner.[7] With this approach, therapists make up the rules as they go along, so to speak. They pick and choose whichever explanatory or operational construct appeals to them at the moment. This process may be somewhat more inductive and creative than a formula therapy approach, but it may also be uninformed and erratic. In using this procedure, therapists have to rely primarily on their own creative sensibilities. Furthermore, once they have selected a particular therapeutic mode, they may resort to applying it in a formula manner.

What is needed are systematic, yet flexible guidelines with which to avoid the inflexibility of formula therapy and the capriciousness of improvisational therapy. I believe grounded therapy can provide this, by giving "permission" to be creative and by providing a systematic and informed means by which to do it. To demonstrate this, I shall outline what I

think are the prominent problems of therapy, as I have seen it practiced, and how these problems may be minimized through the use of a grounded therapy approach.

Preconception

One of the primary problems with the way therapy is ordinarily conducted is that it is predicated on a number of a priori assumptions and preconceptions, most of which are unnecessary, and detrimental to the therapeutic process. These preconceptions are detrimental, not only because they have not "earned" their position of primacy, but because many of them are epistemologically and empirically questionable to begin with. This detriment occurs not only to the process of developing explanations for the issues under question, but for the curative process which therapy is presumably all about.

These a priori assumptions and preconceptions consist of concepts, frameworks, models, paradigms, procedures, and so forth, which are presumed to be relevant and useful, without question, nor without having systematically earned their way into relevance. From my observations, the following are the most damaging a priori assumptions routinely made by therapists:

1) One a priori assumption which appears to be almost universally held by therapists is a belief in the notion of "unconscious" (or subconscious") mind. In all the years I have been around the therapy professions, I have seldom heard practitioners (as distinguished from theorists) of therapy seriously question (or for that matter even discuss) this concept. This is made particularly problematic by the way in which I have seen the concept used. It is generally used in such a way as to indicate a belief that there resides somewhere in the human brain a *pro-active* unconscious mind, which is not only capable of, but frequently does "overrule" and even "trick" the conscious mind. The unconscious mind is often given primacy over the conscious

mind in explaining, particularly problematic behavior, thoughts, and emotions. However, the existence of a pro-active unconscious mind can only be "known" through inference. In my observations of therapists searching for explanations, this often results in remarkable inferential leaps, in which more obvious variables are ignored in favor of this "hidden" concept. To do this is to treat an empirically unprovable abstraction as more real than that which *is* real (i.e., conscious thought).[8]

The notion of (pro-active) unconscious mind is also often given primacy in the curative (as opposed to explanatory) side of therapy. This results in the use of "indirect" techniques, which are used to presumably "bypass" the conscious mind. This produces a form of "mysteriousness" which may alienate the client from the therapeutic process. The therapist presumably knows what is going on, but the client may not. If the client does "see through" what the therapist is attempting, they may be insulted, annoyed, or in some other way "put off" by the thinly veiled attempt to do something *to* them, rather than *with* them.

I see much less of a problem with the notion of unconscious if it is used as an adjective, to refer to "unconscious mental process" or "below the level of awareness," rather than as a noun, "with connotations of a definite region, a dark and forbidding territory to be apprehensively but courageously explored" (Thornton, p. 254). However, to assume that the unconscious can be conscious and unconscious simultaneously, is oxymoronic.

2) A second a priori assumption, very much related to the concept of unconscious mind, consists of a belief in the primacy of emotions in explaining thought and behavior. It is all too often assumed that the basis of the client's problem is to be found in some aberrant emotional state, usually stemming from problematic early childhood or "family of origin" experiences. Again, there is a tendency to "leap over" more obvious explanations in favor of the less obvious.

Psychotherapy may be more glamorous for the therapist, but it is not necessarily what the client needs. As with any other variable, emotional variables must "earn" their way into an explanation.

In the same vein, "systems theorists" sometimes give the same level of primacy to "the system," usually the "family system," as a casual variable. The problem lies not so much in the concept of system, as m the a priori assumption that "the system" is the determining variable. However, if the notion of system is regarded more as an "entity" (common with systems theorists) than as an abstraction which represents a set of dynamic relationships, this presents the problem of reification.

3) Another a priori assumption, also very much related to the concept of unconscious mind, is the notion of "pathology."[9] It is often, in fact in my observation, usually invoked in such a way that some aspect of the client is viewed as pathological. The most common version of this is found in the use of the medical model, wherein clients (referred to as "patients" are "diagnosed" from the DSM-III-R,[10] as having some sort of a "disorder," which is then "treated." Simply because a person's emotions, thoughts and/or behavior may be problematic for them or others, it does not necessarily follow that some feature of their person is pathological.

In my own practice, I have not once found it necessary, or even useful, to "pathologize" a client, although I have had numerous clients who had previously been pathologized by former therapists. One of the first things I have done with these clients is to "de-pathologize" them.

Even though I frequently have heard therapists condemn labeling and pathologizing, they nonetheless frequently do it. I have heard much mention of "wellness models," but in practice the same therapists often insidiously, and seemingly without awareness, use the notion of pathology. Furthermore, a wellness model presents most of the problems of a pathology model, because it is

still a formula full of inherent preconceptions and a priori assumptions. The problem is not just in pathologizing, it is in preconceiving. This is one of the problems that grounded therapy is designed to overcome.

However, regardless of awareness and intent, this concept can be very damaging to the therapeutic process, the therapeutic relationship, and to the client. Probably the most damaging aspect of a pathologizing label is what it can do to the client's own self-concept. The client may come to see themselves as "a co-dependent," "a manic-depressive," a "depressed person," "an enabler," ad nauseam. They may come to see themselves as being "possessed" of an "affliction," over which they may have little or no power (especially without the help of the therapist). This may become the dominant factor in their own self concept, and even the inundating focus of their lives. This can be a very "disempowering" experience.

On the other hand, if the client has reservations about being pathologized, they run the risk of being further pathologized through the therapist invoking such concepts as "resistance," "denial," or even "oppositional disorder." In my experience, however, if and when these phenomena exist, they are most often an artifact of the therapeutic approach, particularly as a response to the experience of being pathologized.

The pathology notion presents a myriad of other problems in the therapeutic process and relationship, which, because of space limitations, cannot be delved into here. Combined, the above three a priori assumptions (unconscious mind, primacy of emotions, and pathology) present a mountain of difficulties for therapy, as they are usually invoked in concert with one another. In the present venue I am able to only give a brief indication of the types of problems they present.

In addition to the above a priori assumptions, a number of other sources of preconception are endemic to therapy as it is practiced. The most common of these are as follows:

1) Preconception in the therapeutic process usually begins immediately, through the collection of "intake information." Agencies usually require that their therapists complete intake forms on each new client. These forms usually contain "face sheet" types of information, which is preconceived to be of use in the therapeutic process, such as gender, age, income, religious affiliation, race, ethnicity, marital status, parental status, number and ages of children, alcohol an drug use patterns, health status, previous therapy, family of origin material such as birth order, number and gender of siblings, family alcohol and drug use patterns, and so on. Many agencies provide additional forms, which cover more topics m more detail, to be used as a "tool," at the therapist's discretion. Many therapists in private practice also collect such intake information, often using forms identical or similar ·to those which they have been provided by current or former agency employers (many therapists combine agency with part-time private practice).

In therapy, preconception is simply not viewed as a problem. In effect, it is more often seen as a preference, the assumption apparently being that the more information you have to guide you from the outset, the better.

2) One of the most notable forms of preconception in therapy is what is usually, referred to as "the treatment plan." The treatment plan is comprised of preconceived ideas regarding what constitutes. "the problem" (or "issue"), as well a what approaches the therapist will take in addressing it. In agencies, the treatment plan is ordinarily part of the intake procedure. The therapist is required to preconceive both the explanatory and operative sides of the therapeutic. process, before they have information beyond that collected during the intake process, which

itself is preconceived. Although the therapist may alter or ignore this plan as therapy evolves, it may have already done its damage, having served as the foundation for the therapeutic process.

3) Another source of preconception in therapy is an outgrowth of the use of the medical model as it is applied to behavior, thoughts and emotions. Many agencies require their therapists to advance a DSM-III-R diagnosis, either as part of the intake procedure, or for the purpose of third party payment (as a virtually universal requirement of medical insurance companies). Although it is not uncommon for therapists to at least attempt to disregard the diagnosis, just the fact that so early on in the process they are required to frame whatever information about the client they have may present in insidious preconception. They are forced to think about the client and their situation, issues, problems, etc. within the medical model framework, to arrive at a diagnosis that has some semblance of fit. [11] Once this pseudo-analytical process has begun, it may be difficult to completely "erase" the diagnostic framework, particularly for therapists who have little training and experience in analysis (of which there are many). Because they are essential components of the medical model as it is used in therapy, therapists may begin to invoke the a priori assumptions discussed previously (the primacy of emotions, the unconscious mind and the notion of pathology), while consciously rejecting the specific diagnostic label. Although many therapists are inclined to invoke these assumptions regardless, advancing a diagnosis can only reinforce these a priori assumptions, and lend them a sense of legitimacy.

4) Another source of preconception in therapy occurs through the use of psychological tests. Such tests are sometimes given as part of the intake procedure, or early in the therapeutic process. The information derived from psychological tests is presumed to have value in identifying problems and/or providing a "psychological profile" of the client. This once again presents the problems of assuming unearned relevancy.

Most psychological tests classify test takers into "types" (which may or may not impute pathology),[12] provide diagnoses, or assign a score on a scale. With each of these alternatives, all of the problematic implications of a label are brought into play. The client may begin to incorporate the label into their own self-concept, coming to believe that they "are" the label. This presents the risk of the client permanentizing their problem or issue as an endemic part of their self, rather than a phase in their life, or a stage in a process. Moreover, the therapist (and the client) will likely see the test results as verified "fact." The illusion is created that the labeling process is removed from the realm of subjective judgment, and placed into the realm of objective science. Furthermore, the therapist may begin to essentially "treat" the label rather than the person.

5) Like most other cultures, the therapeutic culture experiences its share of fads. This gives rise to another source of preconception in therapy. Diagnostic categories, labels, concepts, models, and so forth (for the sake of brevity I shall refer to them as "explanatory/therapeutic constructs") tend to change over time, sometimes from new knowledge, but more often out of the cultural tendency towards fads. A once popular construct may be replaced by another somewhat analogous or overlapping construct. Some explanatory/therapeutic constructs remain rather stable (e.g., the medical model of alcoholism)'. but others change frequently. For example, at one time a client may be viewed as an enabler, at another time they may be viewed as a "co-dependent." This is not to say that these constructs are absolutely interchangeable. They are not. They are, however, similar enough that at onetime in the cultural history of the therapy professions there may be a tendency to see ~hents through "enabler (or whatever) colored glasses," and at another time a tendency to see them through "co-dependency colored glasses." One construct may have no more or less explanatory or therapeutic value than the other, but like

with all fads, its users eventually become bored and weary of its imagery, and seize another as it comes along, primarily because of _its freshness. This lends a certain capriciousness to the enterprise: And, hake all fads there is a tendency towards overuse when the fad is popular. With explanatory/therapeutic constructs, this exacerbates the tendency towards preconception.

If the conceptual and theoretical side of therapy were better ~rounded, this would be less likely to occur. Grounded concepts and theories can be moved over time and space. This is one of their strong features. However, because they are grounded, they are much less likely to employed with such arbitrariness. Ungrounded concepts can too easily become "free floating."

6) Therapists, like all persons, have a tendency to become comfortable with the familiar. This engenders another source of preconception in therapy. When contemplating new information, therapists tend to limit their search for explanatory/therapeutic constructs to those which are available, familiar and comfortable.

A particularly insidious source of preconception occurs in the way in which "the problem" itself is defined. Is a client s essential or core problem "low self-esteem," "depression, " " anger, " " grief," "sub stance abuse," or a "dysfunctional relationship?" Frequently, all of these (and more) are present in the lives of one particular client. How is the therapist to resolve which is the "real" problem? Is "anger" a property of "low self esteem," or is "low self esteem" a property of "anger?" Is "substance abuse" a property of "depression," or is "depression" a property of "substance abuse?" Each of these "problems" has overlapping indicators. So, what is an indicator of which? Should the therapist accept the client's definition of "their problem"? What if the client's definition has only tenuous fit with the circumstances? For example, it is not uncommon for clients to "discover" or define "their problem" through reading self-help literature or from talking with friends who have or are currently undergoing therapy.

Therapists are seldom trained at analyzing, generating and synthesizing theoretical constructs. Thus, they have only those with which they are already familiar to choose from. This familiarity usually comes with their training, in graduate school and from courses and workshops subsequent to graduate school. With experience, they may become so comfortable with particular ways of viewing and doing things that it becomes taken for granted. It no longer occurs to them that it may be productive to question their perspectives, assumptions, methods, and so forth. Once therapists routinely use and become familiar with a particular set of explanatory/ therapeutic constructs, it becomes easy for them to begin to force fit them, with no awareness that they are doing so. Their application becomes routine.

In its most extreme expression, this produces a fixation with a particular pet explanation or approach. This is most likely to occur if a therapist comes to identify closely with a particular explanation or approach from their own therapeutic experience, as a client (many therapists have themselves been in or are currently in therapy), or if they become enamored with a particular explanation, approach, or theorist/therapist, from graduate school, workshops, or readings. It is somewhat ironic that such a fixation may be regarded as a "specialty," because to "specialize" in this manner is tantamount to specializing in preconception.

The Therapeutic Culture

Part of the problem with therapy exists in the concepts, models and paradigms themselves, and part exists in the way in which they · are employed. Many of the concepts, models and paradigms are simply not well grounded in the meaningful experiences and subjective interpretations and understandings of the client. The perspective of the therapist is often given primacy over the perspective of the client. Indeed, if they are inconsistent, the client's

perspective may even be regarded as part and parcel of the problem, through such concepts as "resistance," "denial," "transference," or even "oppositional disorder."

In actuality, the perspectives and interpretations of therapists are grounded in the therapeutic subculture. They make sense to therapists because they are immersed in them during their training and in daily interactions with their colleagues. They take on a semblance of validity and legitimacy primarily through a general social consensus. Most therapy training programs include a requirement that initiates undergo some sort of psychotherapeutic experience themselves. The assumption appears to be that this experience will weed out those who do not possess the personal qualities conducive to being a therapist, and help prepare the remainder for their future role -- sort of an emotional/psychological "boot camp," as it were.

The training process in toto serves as a socialization experience, in which the initiates become members of the therapeutic "community" or "world."[13] Through this process they become familiar with the knowledge, ways of thinking, feeling, understanding, acting, interacting, and so forth of that culture. What was once generally foreign to them becomes comfortable and taken for granted, in the same manner that the knowledge, ways of thinking, feeling, etc. of any culture become taken for granted by its members. Many therapists lose touch with the_ fact that clients are not members of this culture, although some clients are somewhat familiar with it, through having read self-help literature, and through conversations with others who have been or are currently in therapy. Such clients are often familiar and comfortable enough with therapeutic jargon and such to in effect become "auxiliary members," so to speak. However, many other clients (in my experience men more so than women) find much of what they are subjected to when they enter the therapeutic milieu to be some combination of uncomfortable, insulting, confusing, intimidating, and sometimes even ridiculous and silly, and

generally foreign. They seldom express this to their therapist. Some simply leave. Some feel inadequate and blame themselves for their inability to understand and relate to it. Some learn to tolerate it. Some eventually become more comfortable with it, and are "converted."

However, many clients find that the meanings which they derived from their experience in the therapeutic milieu are of limited value in their real lives. When they are themselves active participants in the therapeutic milieu, its meanings possess an appealing veracity. However, when the leave the aura of this setting and the therapeutic relationship, what they have learned is often less useful than it first appeared. Outside this setting much of what they learned is simply not realistic. Without the weight of the therapist's countenance, these new meanings begin to lose their magic. Unfortunately, many clients see this as their own shortcoming, rather than the therapist's. Others lose faith in the idea of therapy.

This is not to suggest that what they have learned is of no value. It is to suggest that if what clients learned in therapy was more completely grounded in their own experience and meanings, they would benefit a great deal more. I would also point out that many clients are helped a great deal by their therapeutic experience, often more by the relationship itself than by the particular therapeutic mode. And, of course, sometimes there is a gainful fit between a particular therapeutic approach and a particular client.

The Therapeutic Relationship

A third problematic area in therapy occurs within the therapeutic relationship. It has often been stated, probably correctly, that therapy *is* the relationship. To the extent that this is true, it is extremely important that the formation of a therapeutic relationship be accomplished carefully and with consideration to its therapeutic consequences, risks and opportunities. The evolving

therapeutic relationship becomes the foundation for the therapeutic process. In fact, the relationship and therapy evolve in an interweaving manner.

In the more than twenty years since I was first introduced to them, I have seized many opportunities to conduct extemporaneous interviews with people who have been on the client side of therapeutic relationships. Never having been a client myself, I have always been most interested in understanding the phenomenological experience of being a client, so my questions have been primarily along these lines.

In terms of the effectiveness of the relationship (the outcome), responses have ranged widely from, "it saved my life," to "it was a complete waste of time and money," to "it made matters worse." In terms of overall satisfaction with the relationship itself, responses have ranged from "it was the best relationship I have ever had," to "it was awful." Although I made no attempts to construct a representative sample (understanding, not generalization, has been my goal), I have received a distressing number of negative responses to my queries about the experience and effectiveness of these relationships.

In the many extemporaneous interviews I conducted, the experience of being on the client side of a therapeutic relationship was often described in less than glowing terms. The following is a list (in no particular order) of the negative words and terms most often mentioned in these interviews (in some instances I have used my own summary terms): feeling disrespected; feeling deceived; being the object of suspicion; feeling mistrusted; feeling blamed; feeling "analyzed" (the feeling of "being under a microscope"); feeling judged, particularly feeling unfairly judged; feeling misunderstood; feeling confused; not knowing what's going on (i.e., feeling mystified); feeling alienated; feeling inferior; receiving no feedback; feeling or being treated passively; not feeling listened to; being treated as an "object"; being treated as if you were "sick" (i.e., feeling

pathologized); being treated with indifference; feeling patronized; being neutralized; being invalidated; being disapproved of; having no "boundary rights"; having no rights of grievance; being treated with impatience; being treated as stupid or unaware; not being talked to "directly" (i.e., "beating around the bush"); being asked or "forced" to act in unnatural or affected ways (e.g., talking to an empty chair).

Unfortunately, very few persons I interviewed informed or complained to their therapists regarding these matters. As a result, the therapists were probably left with the impression that "everything is okay." Once again, this was often the case in the instances in which I observed therapy sessions and subsequently interviewed the participants.

The reluctance of clients to complain to their therapists is probably related to the fact that therapeutic relationships are characterized by inherent status differential, to wit, that of "doctor/patient," "helper/ helped," "expert/layman," and the like. We all have experienced relationships, even intimate ones, which are characterized by status differential. Most of us are generally comfortable with this, particularly if the relationships are personally rewarding (e.g., parent/child, student/teacher, and coaching relationships). So, the status differential inherent in therapeutic relationships is not necessarily problematic. However, it can become so in at least two ways.

First of all, it may become problematic if the client accepts status asymmetry and gives over autonomy to the therapist. In such instances the client tends to defer to the therapist's "authority" and " expertise,"' and accepts. what the therapist says, does, or suggests, often blaming themselves if it is ineffective. Some clients initially give a valiant try at maintaining generally equal relationship, but eventually succumb to the might of the therapist´s authority. Others give over their autonomy from the beginning.

Secondly, it may become problematic for some clients if they feel uncomfortable with being on the "lower" side of status asymmetry. In therapy, this often takes the form of the client not wanting to feel as if the therapist has power over them (e.g., the power to ask personal questions, the power to make judgments about them, the power to degrade them or in the case of relationship therapy, the power to affect the balance of power the relationship).[14]

In the instances, the client may resist the perceived power asymmetry, which will likely present a myriad of problems in the relationship, such as lack of trust, lack of respect, uncooperativeness and so forth This may in turn result in the therapist seeing this resistance as in inherent, problematic feature of the client's personality, language of emotions and so on, and therefore a property of "the problem" or "the disorder." Such labels as "resistance", "denial" or " transference" may then be invoked. Of course, this will only compound the problem. It is ironic that although. The problems may be an artifact of the therapist's approach, the client is essentially held responsible. This may leave the client feeling, "blamed."

Grounded Therapy

I have sketched the problematic areas in therapy -- preconception the therapeutic culture, and the therapeutic relationship. The problems in these three areas cannot be understood in isolation from one another, as they are very much interrelated. The therapeutic culture effectively serves as global preconception. It provides the explanatory and operative frameworks within which therapists practice their profession. It also provides the everyday understanding, prescriptions and proscriptions -- ways of thinking, acting, interacting and so forth -- which are inherent to culture. It is these factors, any combined, which "drive" therapy and the therapeutic relationship. How then should one construct a satisfactory therapeutic relationship and process?

In my view, the best way to accomplish this is to take a grounded approach, by enlisting the following guidelines:

1) *Begin with as few preconceptions about the client and their situation and as few theoretical preconceptions (both explanatory and operative) as possible.*[15]

Glaser and Strauss (1967: p.5) assert that the adequacy of a theory cannot be divorced from the process by which it is generated. I believe the same logic holds true for therapy. Collecting information, defining "the problem," drawing conclusions, and preselecting concepts, theories, and models *before* the therapeutic process, rather than *through* the therapeutic process, may limit, misdirect, or derail therapy. With this approach, it becomes all too easy to slip into the use of "processing stereotypes," (Hawkins and Tiedemen, 1975: p.184) and to view the client, their situation, and problem as an instance of something which is already familiar, and then to take a premature "leap forward" in the process, similar to what Lofland (1970/1971) refers to as "analytic interruptus."

Furthermore, the *process* of collecting and analyzing "data" has great therapeutic potential. It should not, in fact cannot, be separated from the operative side of the therapeutic process. One of the most therapeutic of all experiences is to feel *listened to* and *understood.* If the abstract, conceptualized understandings which evolve out of the therapeutic process are grounded in the client's subjective experience, interpretations, understandings, and meaning system, and are achieved in *partnership* with the client, a large part of therapy will already have been achieved.

Questions asked on. intake forms and psychological tests are typically based' on preconceived notions about what sorts of explanatory variables are relevant. "Findings" are of course always shaped by questions. Therefore, in order for the therapeutic process to remain

grounded, not only the answers, but the *questions* must *earn* their way. Their relevancy should be *discovered* through the analytical process. This is not to say that factors which are commonly presumed to be relevant, such as family or origin experiences, cannot be relevant. They certainly can. But, the therapist should not assume their relevancy from the outset, but instead should *remain open to discovery.*

In using a grounded therapy approach, the therapist begins from a framework of presumed ignorance about explanations, solutions, the client, their situation, their problem, and so forth, then proceeds with a primarily *inductive* process, with the full participation of the client. In this manner the therapeutic process becomes one of *partnership* and *mutual discovery:* in which both therapist and client learn what is relevant and what works.

Another reason to proceed with an attitude of presumed ignorance, is that clients are usually very eager, even impatient, to "tell their story." If the therapist frustrates this urge by immediately administering psychological tests, asking long lists of questions which the client may at this point not see as relevant (even though they may be), and offering "explanations" right from the start, the client may become alienated from the process. This may encourage them to shut down, and become passive recipients of therapy, rather than active, mutual participants. Or, they may feel as if the therapist is not listening and not really concerned with what they think and feel. This may provoke them to seek another therapist, or cease therapy, altogether.

2) *Ground the frame the therapeutic process and relationship within the client's values, subjective understandings, interpretations, and meaning system.*

I once heard a psychiatrist assert, "if your client feels good when they leave a session, you have failed them." I have observed this sentiment to be fairly common in the therapeutic culture, although certainly not universal. In talking and listening to therapists who share this

sentiment, it is evident that their assertion is that change and growth are always uncomfortable, even painful, and thus if you are helping the client to feel better you are not tapping into the "real" issues, and therefore are not doing real therapy. The assumption here is that helping clients to consciously think and feel better about themselves and their lives is superficial, because the "real stuff" occurs in the *unconscious.* Another assumption often made here is that clients typically resist attempts to "break through their defenses," even though they may be unaware of it (evidently the unconscious is a "trickster"). Thus, when the therapist attempts to breach these defenses to get at the real pathology, it produces resistance and discomfort in the client.

This approach might aptly be termed "nutcracker therapy." The nutcracker approach focuses on the negative -- i.e., "breaking through" defenses so as to defeat the "pathology" rooted in the unconscious. In my experience, not only is this approach unnecessary, it is very limiting, and often even counter-therapeutic. I believe this approach, more than any other, is apt to generate the kinds of negative responses which I outlined earlier.

The nutcracker approach overlooks what I, and many other therapists who prefer a "cognitive" approach, believe is the most important asset in therapy, the resources of the conscious, subjective self. In my experience, it is most productive in therapy to work on the positive, by reinforcing and enhancing the efficacious resources of the conscious self. Furthermore, in my view, the nutcracker approach is disrespectful and insulting to clients, as it treats them as "objects" of therapy, whose subjective interpretations, and so forth must be regarded with suspicion (one must beware of "the trickster"), rather than as trustworthy, fully participating, equal partners.

In using a grounded therapy approach, from the outset the therapist seeks "verstehen," or what Rogers (1959 and elsewhere) refers to as "empathetic understanding," by attending closely

to the client's *own* subjective view of themselves, their situation, and their problem. In effect, the grounded therapist attempts to "become the other," to the extent this is possible. To have any real, lasting power for the client, the knowledge derived from the therapeutic process must be relevant to the client's everyday life, values and meaning framework.

With a grounded therapy approach, the client's values, knowledge, interpretations, understandings, and meaning system are viewed as central to therapy, and *more* important than the therapist's, as they are what guides both the explanatory and operative components of therapy. This is not to say that the client will necessarily have a fully informed and well articulated view. If they did, they probably wouldn't be seeking the services of a therapist. However, the client will always know the conditions of their life, their values, their experiences, thoughts, feelings, etc. in more immaculate detail than the therapist. The therapist's knowledge, which is more abstract, is initially secondary. As suggested above, to start, therapists should attempt to "suspend" their knowledge, so as to minimize the risk of preconception.

However, the therapist enters the situation with unique and valuable *skills* not possessed by the client. The therapeutic process involves combining the client's knowledge with primarily the therapist's skills, and only secondarily their knowledge, from whence evolves new, hopefully better conceptualized and organized, knowledge (and skills). Knowledge should be abstracted *from* the therapeutic process, not imposed upon it. To be sure, the therapist brings useful knowledge to the process. The therapist enters with abstractions, awareness, and understanding of broader patterns, processes, conditions, and so forth. But, this pre-existing knowledge should be used merely to sensitize the process, not determine it.

3) *Model the therapeutic relationship after the positive features of functional, healthy, native relationships.*

In my efforts to understand the differences between a productive versus unproductive therapeutic relationship, I have come to the clear conclusion that the contrast lies in where the relationship is grounded. Satisfactory therapeutic relationships resemble satisfactory, "native" (i.e., "real world") relationships. It is important to model therapeutic relationships after relationships in the native culture, not the therapeutic culture.

Clearly, therapeutic relationships cannot, nor should they, be exactly of the same nature as native relationships. They are artificially contrived for a specific purpose, so they should include only those components of native relationships which are productive for this purpose. Native relationships, even the best of them, are sometimes characterized by conflict, judgmentalness, impatience, and so forth. Insofar as it is possible, these features of native relationships should not be duplicated.

Therapeutic relationships are, probably more often than not, modeled after "doctor/patient," or "expert/layman," and such, relationships. The therapist is viewed as already possessing the special knowledge which the client needs. The client's knowledge is typically viewed as being secondary, even irrelevant or counter-productive. The therapist is viewed as the "authority," or "expert," the client as the "layman," The therapist is viewed as "the helper," the client as "the helped." Although these things may be essentially true, they do not need to comprise the framework within which the relationship is conducted. Like doctor/patient relationships, such relationships may (or may not) feel relatively comfortable and friendly, but they are limited by their asymmetry. More useful frameworks, such as "partnership," or "co-analyst" are available. Such frameworks encourage the active participation of the client.

In my experience, the most effective therapeutic relationships are those which feel "natural" and generally "equal." Experiencing a relationship which feels natural, healthy,

accepting, and nurturing can be therapeutic, in and of itself. Many, if not most, clients have a paucity of healthy relationships in their lives. Like many other therapists, I have had numerous clients mention to me that their relationship with me was the first comfortable, healthy relationship they had experienced, wherein they felt understood, accepted, listened to, respected, and such, and that it was very healing. I believe this is largely what is being referred to with the notion that "therapy *is* the relationship."

What then comprises a natural, healthy relationship? Certainly, it consists of the counterpoints to the previously enumerated list of dissatisfactions. The respondents who expressed satisfaction with their therapeutic relationships, identified essentially the same factors as those who expressed dissatisfaction, but inversely. That is, participants prefer being respected over being disrespected, being trusted over being mistrusted, being listened to over not being listened to, being understood over being misunderstood, ad infinitum. In short, they prefer pretty much the same thing in therapeutic relationships as they do m natural relationships.

It makes sense, then, to nurture and encourage the positive versions of these factors when developing a therapeutic relationship. This is best achieved by grounding the relationship in the client's interpretations and meaning system, rather than the therapeutic culture. In other words, to the extent possible, it is achieved by making the relationship feel natural. This is of course done in pretty much the same manner that one achieves it in healthy native relationships, by attending to the other persons needs, feelings, interpretations,. rights, comfort and discomfort, by being respectful, by listening, ad infinitum. It is certainly not achieved by acting in ways which feel to the client as if they are being objectified, patronized, viewed with suspicion, disrespected, and so on. If the therapist grounds the relationship, as suggested, these feelings will likely be avoided.

4) *Attend carefully to the client's ongoing experience of the therapeutic relationship and process.*

It is generally regarded as a given in therapy that the relationship extremely important. As mentioned previously, many therapists mantain that therapy is the relationship. This is a sentiment with which I largely agree. If this is the case, creating a sound therapeutic relationship should take initial priority, as it will serve as a foundation for everything which follows. It is important for the therapist to pace the process on the client's terms. If, as discussed above, the therapist begins by thwarting the client's needs as they perceive them, the therapeutic relationship and process may itself be thwarted. If the therapist proceeds too quickly, the client may be "scared off." If the therapist proceeds too slowly, the client may begin to believe that "therapy doesn't work," and come to view it as "a waste of time and money."

This does not mean, however, that the therapist should always let the client assert complete control over the process and content of therapy. If it becomes evident that a client is trying to control the process for "illegitimate" reasons, the therapist should introduce this as a "therapeutic issue." For example, it is not uncommon in relationship therapy for one person to attempt to control the process and content of therapy, so as to keep or increase power in the relationship. However, if there are not apparent reasons to the contrary, and if such control and power issues are not present, I believe it is best for the therapist to give deference to the client's needs and preferences in this regard.

l have heard many therapists assert that the client should never be allowed to "take charge" of the process. In my experience, if the relationship is on solid ground, very few clients attempt to do this. Most are quite satisfied to be involved in a relationship in which power is

shared. It is probably more common for clients to voluntarily lend too much of their power and autonomy over to the therapist, than the reverse.

In using a grounded therapy approach it is important to be constantly aware of the client's phenomenological experience of the therapeutic process, not just to ensure that it "feels good," but because to do otherwise is hazardous. Given that grounded therapy can only be achieved through a generally equal partnership between client and therapist, it is critical that the therapist stay in harmony with the client. Furthermore, if the therapist neglects to attend to the client's ongoing experience of therapy, the therapeutic relationship may be irreparably damaged.[16]

5) Although to some extent therapeutic relationships possess inherent satus differential, *develop the relationship mutually so that it feels generally "equal,"* keeping in mind that "equal" does not mean "identical."

It is important for therapists to remember they are being enlisted primarily for their skills, not their knowledge. The client's knowledge and the therapist's skills are equally important to the process. Therefore, therapy must be a *mutual* process, which requires a general *equality* in the relationship. Each party must feel equally invited to contribute to the process, and each party must feel equally entitled to rights of grievance.

An effective therapeutic relationship must be an intimate one. Clients must feel free to discuss subjects, experiences, thoughts, emotions, and so forth with their therapist which they may never before have discussed with anyone.

Relationships are more apt to achieve intimacy within a framework of general equality. This includes therapists sharing something of themselves, rather than remaining aloof. One way for therapist to achieve this, is to use anecdotes from their personal lives, as one would use comparative data in generating a grounded theory, for the purposes of constant comparative

analysis, and theoretical sampling. This approach gives analytical value to personal disclosure, as well as enhancing intimacy in the relationship. It also minimizes the likelihood that, although they are incorporating material from their personal life into the process, they will begin to work on their own personal issues, rather than the client's issues.

One of the keys to establishing an effective therapeutic relationship is to achieve intimacy, and all of the positive things that go with it, while minimizing the negative and capitalizing on the positive aspects of status differential. It is important that clients feel as if they are full, equal participants in the process. Yet, it is also important that the client attribute a certain amount of "charisma" to the therapist's role, such that they believe in the process. This is a balancing act which can be mor. thoughtfully and thoroughly managed with a grounded therapy approach, because such an approach keeps the therapist constantly "in tune" with the client.

6) To the extent possible, *ground the operative side of therapy in the client's everyday life, values, interpretations, understandings a meaning systems.*

Many therapeutic solutions are grounded primarily in the theories/ concepts, understandings, meanings, and so forth of the therapeutic culture. For example, if a client's problem is judged to be a function of some pathology of the unconscious, stemming from childhood trauma the attempted solution(s} will be designed to penetrate the client's defenses, so as to access and affect the unconscious. It is often assumed that, because of defenses, it is difficult to directly access the unconscious. Thus, "indirect" techniques are used, to supposedly circumvent these defenses. For example, some techniques involve the use of symbols, or metaphors, which are presumed to bypass the conscious and work directly on the unconscious. Such approaches are rather mystical. For the uninitiated (usually the layman or client), it appears that some sort of unseen, "magical" variable is at work. Somewhat over-simplistically, the client

comes in, the therapist performs "magical incantations," so to speak, and the client leaves "cured," not knowing quite what did the trick – sort of a "hocus pocus therapy." Only the therapist presumably knows what is occurring. The client is left in the dark, so as to prevent their defenses from coming into play. The client's understandings and interpretations are relegated to a secondary status.

A critical assumption being made here appears to be that not only are the resources of the conscious, interpretive mind essentially irrelevant, they are impotent, and even a potential obstruction to therapy. This appears to be much a universal assumption of theories and approaches which are noted in the notion of the unconscious.

With a grounded therapy approach, as with cognitive and insight therapies in general, the conscious, interpretive mind is given primacy. The conscious mind is directly accessible. The client and therapist can discover, analyze, discuss, interpret, reinterpret, and so forth, directly and dynamically. Through analyzing patterns of emotion, thought, and behavior, factors which have existed "below the level of awareness" (the unconscious" as an adjective, rather than a noun) may be brought into the realm of awareness, where change can be consciously and willfully attempted. The client assumes a position of power, as the active author of their own life, rather than a victim of mystical, unconscious forces. The client´s interpretations, understandings, beliefs, values, lifestyle, everyday life, and so forth become the context within which solutions are processed. The conscious, interpretive mind is open to new ways of viewing things, through the discovery or introduction of new knowledge and concepts, through appeals to rationality, through "reframing," and so forth. In partnership with the therapist, the client can discover, strengthen, and build on the innate resources of their conscious mind.

The conscious mind is capable of *will.* New awareness combined with will can serve as a catalyst for change. And, such change will be "owned" by the client, as they will have played a primary role in producing it. This is not to say that solutions, healing and change always come easily, or that this approach or any other cognitive or insight approach can solve all problems. But, solutions and change are certainly more likely to occur if the client is an active player, rather than a passive recipient. Whenever it is possible and appropriate, it is useful to incorporate the client's values, beliefs, and meaning systems into the operative side of therapy. Sometimes, through the therapeutic process, it becomes evident that a client's beliefs, etc., might be problematic. For ethical as well as procedural reasons, in such instances, it is best for the therapist to provide opportunities for the client to discover this (presumably) on their own, whereupon it can then be discussed. From what I have observed, therapists tend too often, and inappropriately, to view client's beliefs, meaning systems, and values as themselves part of the problem, as "defense mechanisms," for example. This is particularly the case if they are seen as being substantially out of the ordinary. This eliminates their potential as resources for therapy.

However, in my experience, if a client has a strong, clear set of beliefs they may be useful as a resource, to formulate a "reframe," for instance. It is not necessary or important that the therapist agree with these beliefs only that they respect and understand them well enough to incorporate them into the therapeutic process. In general, if solutions are frame within a meaning system which the client already understands and values they are more likely to be useful, durable, relevant, and to work.

A client's association with the therapeutic milieu is temporary. And, the therapeutic milieu is artificial. As I mentioned previously, what makes sense to the client during their time in the therapeutic milieu may make less sense when they 'leave its influence. For this reason, it is

important for the client's 'new skills and knowledge to be grounded in the real world, not the therapeutic world.

Therapeutic solutions must also realistically fit the limitations and resources of the client's everyday life. If they don't, they will likely drift into disuse. What may be appropriate or possible for one client maybe impossible for another. For example, a therapist's suggestion that a client do mid-day relaxation exercises to relieve stress may be unrealistic because of workplace conditions. The client's workplace may have no private, quiet location in which to do them. Or, a male client's co-workers may tease and laugh at him when he “attempts” to do them.
The danger in not fitting solutions to the client's everyday life is not only that the value of therapy will be diminished or lost, but that the client may view themselves as being responsible. They may interpret the outcome as merely one more instance of personal failure.

7) To the extent possible, *model therapeutic solutions after natural, indigenous ones.*

Although their personal experience of it may be unique, most problems for which clients seek therapy are common in society. And, they are commonly solved, indigenously, without enlisting the services of a therapist. It is useful to know something about natural healing and problem solving processes, as they occur in the real world, rather than the artificial milieu of therapy. Whenever possible, I believe it is important to model therapeutic problem solving and healing process after natural, indigenous ones. The closer a therapeutic course of action approximates a natural process, the more relevant, effective and enduring it will be. After all natural, indigenous solutions have already been shown to *work.*

However, our knowledge of natural, indigenous healing and problem solving processes is inadequate. It would be ideal for practicing therapists if large numbers of well-grounded studies of the kinds of problems which they address were available: Although a fair number of

reasonably well-grounded studies are available, they tend to focus on the substantive rather than the generic, and they tend to be somewhat limited in scope, density, and integration. Through no fault of the researchers, they also tend to be read and used by therapists as formulas to be applied, rather than as abstractions to enhance theoretical sensitivity.

Procedures

As I maintained above, in using a grounded therapy approach, one should begin with as few preconceptions as possible. The reigning guideline in gathering information is to proceed from the general to the specific. One should always ask questions in the least leading manner possible. Each new subject area should be introduced with a "grand tour" type of question, which does not guide the client's response. For example, my favorite opening question with a new client is, "to what do I owe the honor of this visit?"[17]. My next question is always informed by the client's response to this initial question. And, the following question is then informed by the response to this question, and so forth, with questions always being posed in the least leading way, until the topic feels momentarily saturated. A topic which has already been covered can of course be brought up again, if the ongoing analysis suggests it (for the purposes of constant comparative analysis, theoretical sampling, elaboration, exploring new dimensions, etc.). What is important here is that at this point the process be guided, not by preconceptions or capricious, unguided probing, but the *evolving analysis.*

As with grounded theory, analysis begins immediately, and always guides how and where you do next. As I mentioned at the outset, I am assuming the reader has a general familiarity with grounded theory procedures, so I shall not review them in detail.[18]

The coding process itself is conducted in pretty much the same manner as it is in generating a grounded theory, albeit in truncated form:

1) Start with *open coding,* by coding for anything and everything that seems potentially relevant, without preconceiving problems, solutions, etc.

2) Begin *constant comparative analysis:* (a) Compare each coded incident to similar coded incidents. For example, if you are working with a couple experiencing frequent conflict, you would want to compare each episode of conflict with each other episode. From this you may discover particular properties of the conflict, such as relative power, resentment, fear, anger, or particular substantive issues, such as money, sex, parenting, and so forth. (b) Compare new concepts with new incidents. To continue the above example, upon comparing episodes of conflict, you may discover an underlying common theme, such as misunderstanding. (c) Compare concept to concept. In your coding you may have developed the concept of gender misunderstanding. In comparing the two codes, misunderstanding and gender misunderstanding, it will be apparent that gender misunderstanding is merely one type of misunderstanding. This will cue you to look for other specific types of misunderstanding. In doing this, you may discover patterns of interpretation from previous relationships (often referred to as "old baggage") to be another source of misunderstanding. In any event, constant comparative analysis will increase the breadth of your understanding, while simultaneously allowing you to narrow your focus down to core issues and problems.

At first compare incidents from within the particular case with which you are working, then, if useful, incorporate incidents from other similar cases. An additional technique which I have found particularly useful in therapy is to search your own experience for incidents which are as similar as possible to the client's, for purposes of comparison. This is particularly useful in a therapeutic context because the client's experience of their issues and/or problems is often very deep and intense. Because of the more personal nature of therapy, it is important for the therapist

to achieve close "verstehen," or empathetic understanding with each client, at a deeper level than is normally required by research.

3) Once a reasonably clear picture of the relevant issues or problems emerges, then begin *selective coding,* around these matters. If your open coding points to misunderstanding as a consistent theme, as illustrated above, begin coding for different properties and types of misunderstanding.

4) When it feels appropriate, begin exploring how the in vivo and substantive codes relate to each other, through the use of *theoretical codes.* [19]

5) Look for the emergence of a *core variable* or variables.[20] In the above example, through selective coding and constant comparison, you may arrive at "misunderstanding" as a core variable. Although in many instances one core variable will cover matters sufficiently, you must remain open to multiple core variables. The number of relevant core variables will he determined by the particular issues in each particular case. Unlike the theorist, the therapist cannot arbitrarily decide to eliminate a particular core variable and focus exclusively on another. This decision must be made according to the therapeutic needs of the particular client. In some instances this may produce a need to focus on multiple core variables. However, with further analysis, one often finds a relationship between these various core variables, which produces a transcending core variable, which can then become the focus of therapy. This is not a particularly unusual occurrence in therapy. Once clients' immediate issues or problems begin to subside, they often choose to tackle "deeper" personal issues. For example, a client who originally seeks help in processing a divorce may begin to perceive patterns in how they conduct relationships in general, whereupon they will want to shift from the more pragmatic concerns of the divorce to

deeper issues of self, relationships, and so forth. Upon delving into these issues, the client may then go full circle, seeing how they contributed to the divorce.

Like the theorist, the therapist must remain open to discovery, throughout the process. Because the aim is different than in generating a theory for publication, and the conditions under which the therapist works are different than those under which the researcher works, modifications to the process must be made, as each situation dictates. As a rule, whenever and to the extent possible, it is best to follow the procedures of grounded theory as closely as one can. This will maximize grounding. However, the extent to which this is possible will vary from one therapeutic situation to another. For example, opportunities for constant comparison and theoretical sampling would vary from individual, to couple, to family or group therapy. The more individuals involved in a particular case, the more one can find such opportunities with that particular case. When conducting individual therapy, such opportunities within the case are limited, as you have only one "respondent." In this instance, one must use other sources, such as the situations of other clients, including the clients of other therapists, through consultation, conversation and routine "case staffings," or as I discussed previously, even one's own personal life. In any event, the therapist must remain creative and flexible.

One clear difference between generating a theory and conducting therapy is that, because of the practicalities of doing therapy, most coding will have to be conducted *in process,* often openly, with the participation of the client.[21] Furthermore, much of the coding must occur solely in the therapist's mind. It is possible to jot down codes in the case notes, or on a separate piece of paper, as they occur in one's mind. But, because of the fluid immediacy of the therapeutic process and the number of matters which the therapist must juggle simultaneously, coding simply cannot be achieved in as thorough ·a manner as with research, nor for that matter can case notes

be as thorough as field notes. Furthermore, given typical client loads, it is simply not practical to spend separate time at the end of each 'day conducting lengthy analyses.

This mode of "coding from the hip," so to speak, requires a dexterity which can only be achieved through experience. Although in doing ordinary grounded theory research, data collection and analysis are said to occur simultaneously, they do not ordinarily occur *at the same exact time,* as most coding for therapy does.

Furthermore, although it is important to attend to the respondent's ongoing phenomenological experience of an interview, it is no: critical, because one is merely gathering information, not intervening in a person's life. In addition, the therapeutic relationship is an ongoing one, whereas the interviewer/respondent relationship seldom is (except in the case of long-term participant observation research). Plus, it is not particularly common for researchers to do group interviews, as therapists commonly do. To complicate matters even further, the therapist also has the ongoing responsibility of arriving at remedies for the client's problem(s) and finding ways in which to introduce them, either covertly or overtly into the process. And, for reasons discussed above, all of this must he accomplished with the active participation of the client, and it must be accomplished with subtlety so as to feel natural. In fact, much of what the therapist does is not visible to the client. The more the client feels the insights, knowledge, ideas for solutions, and so forth are "owned" by them, the more apt they are to be relevant, to fit, and to work. With so many matters to attend to, the grounded therapist must be ever vigilant, balancing numerous levels of thought and action, simultaneously.

Although in some ways the therapist's task is more complex than the theorist's, insofar as elaboration and integration of concepts are concerned, it is also more limited. Because it is not the task of a therapist to generate a theory for write-up and publication, the therapist need only

generate a "working theory," for a particular case. A good working understanding and explanation are all that is needed.

Another clear difference between generating a theory and conducting therapy is that therapy has an operative component. In therapy, the point of analysis is not to arrive at a generalizable theory (although with a little extra work that could be accomplished), but to arrive at solutions to the identified issues or problems, in a particular case. Although, while adding another dimension with which to be concerned, it also provides an opportunity that potential solutions can be rolled back into the process. Likely solutions can be tried, examined, refined, modified and retried, in process. Although solutions sometimes have a delayed reaction effect, their potential usually begins to evidence itself during the therapeutic process.

With any particular case, solutions can be either devised, or inherent to the process, or as is usually the case, both. Devised solutions could include anything from strategic "reframing," to "behavior modification," to teaching "communication skills," ad infinitum, depending upon what the situation suggests.

Inherent solutions are an outgrowth of simply participating in the process. For example, as I discussed previously, merely feeling listened to and understood can be very therapeutic. And, careful listening and empathetic understanding are necessary components of the grounded therapy approach. Additionally, the grounded therapy process is inherently "educational." Clients gain both conceptualized, organized knowledge and skills with which to identify and solve problems. Furthermore, whatever is achieved is "owned" by the client, as it is achieved in full partnership. All of this can be very "empowering" for the client. In fact, most often, it is best to covertly "lead" the client, such that they experience the power of ownership in the process.

Conclusions

As I mentioned at the outset, the grounded therapy approach was devised in response to what I observed practicing therapists doing, not what is found in the literature. Therapy as it is routinely practiced is replete with a priori assumptions and preconceptions, coming from explanatory/operative constructs, the therapeutic culture and the therapeutic relationship. Less imaginative and novice therapists tend to practice what I characterize as "formula" therapy, by adhering to particular therapeutic modes in a doctrinaire fashion. Imaginative, experienced therapists tend to practice what I characterize as improvisational therapy," which may be somewhat more creative, but which may also be somewhat erratic. As I hope to have shown here, both approaches have some serious problems and limitations. Over the years, I have integrated the techniques of grounded theory with the best of what I observed other therapists doing, as well as what has worked in my own practice. The result is what I am referring to as " grounded therapy." Although grounded therapy shares a great deal with other models of therapy, in that it incorporates whatever is useful and fits, it is uniquely formulated to provide therapists with a methodology, a specific set of operational guidelines, by which to conduct both the explanatory and operative sides of therapy with creativity and without orthodoxy. And, in my experience, it is an example of the power of grounded theory.

Endnotes

1. I wish to thank my colleagues and clients for providing the arena and experiences from which much of what is contained here was drawn. I also wish to thank my friends and colleagues Kelly Hadley and Gary Sandwick for many informative and enjoyable hours spent discussing therapy. I especially wish to thank Jo Simmons for many informative and enjoyable years spent

discussing about every imaginable facet of therapy, and for contributing to many of the ideas contained herein.

2. When I use the term "therapy," I am referring to psychiatry, clinical psychology, counseling (in its many forms), and the like. My observations, conversations, discussions and interviews have mostly been with practicing counselors, although a fair number have been with psychiatrists and clinical psychologists.

3. To avoid confusion, I might point out that since I completed my Ph.D. I have resumed the use of my birth surname, Simmons.

4. However, a book-length piece on this topic is currently in progress.

5. See Gross (1978), Masson (1988), as well as the many works of Thomas Szasz, amongst others, for discussions and reviews of the research literature concerning the failures of therapy.

6. Some critics, most notably Masson (1988) argue that therapy is useless or impossible in any form. Although I consider myself a critic of therapy as it is practiced, I believe simply eradicating therapy would be tantamount to "throwing out the baby with the bath water." As a practicing therapist, I have seen many instances in which therapy has been undeniably and profoundly helpful to clients. I am not yet ready to give up the idea that one person can help another, even if such help involves a fee.

7. Many therapists, in fact about half of psychologists who practice therapy, call themselves "eclectic" (Masson, 1988).

8. The notion of "unconscious" or "subconscious" mind, although not originated by Freud, was initially central to Freudian psychoanalysis. However, later in his career, it came to play a lesser role, much of what was attributed to it being replaced by the "id." The distinction

between the conscious and unconscious was replaced with the three part organization of the "id," "ego," and "superego." The unconscious was "demoted" to the status of merely "a quality of mental phenomena" (Hall, 1954).

9. See Thornton (1986) for a discussion of this connection.

10. The DSM-III-R is the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, of the American Psychiatric Association (revised edition).

11. Such diagnoses are sometimes influenced by considerations other than fit, such as minimizing the potential stigma for the client.

12. Therapists would do well to follow Glaser's (1978, p.69) advice for theorists to " ... type behavior, not people ... This allows the actors in grounded theory to walk in and out of many behavior patterns without being typed as one of them. Our actors can rome unlabeled and unclassified. They can succeed here and fail there and not be failures or successes, deviate here and conform there and not be deviants or conformists, and so forth. This does not offend people, since the emphasis is on behavioral patterns, not personal patterns."

13. See Strauss (1977 and 1984) for discussions of the notion of "social worlds."

14. In my experience, this is more often the case with men than with women, because of cultural expectations regarding the male role.

15. This does not mean each case needs to be re-invented. Knowledge and concepts derived from well-grounded studies and experience at doing therapy can be used to sensitize, but not determine where a given analysis will go. The line between "preconception" and "sensitivity" is somewhat imprecise, but becomes intuitive with experience. The idea is to remain open and flexible, to avoid "pet" and "fad" concepts and explanations, and to refrain from becoming doctrinaire in one's approach.

16. Of the many "horror stories" I have heard from persons who have been on the receiving end of nutcracker therapy, one stands out. This person (a woman in her early sixties) reported that her therapist fell asleep during a session, while she was talking. When she realized he had fallen asleep, she remained in stunned silence for some time. When he finally woke up, he told· her he had fallen asleep intentionally, because she was "boring." He explained that if he merely told her she was boring, the experience. would not have sufficient impact to break through her defenses, so as to reach her unconscious. She terminated therapy. This experience was so distressing the insulting to her that she didn't seek another therapist, assuming incorrectly, that this approach was universal.

One noteworthy thing about this and many other therapeutic "horror stories" which have been related to me is that in each instance the therapist denied the insult, frequently offering a "therapeutic" justification for thoughtless, disrespectful behavior. To be sure, this problem is not confined to nutcracker therapy. The practitioners of more "humanistic," "client centered" therapies exercise their own forms of insulting insensitivity, usually by mistaking a patronizing, gratuitously sincere attitude and demeanor and a "sing songy" tone of voice for "concern," "caring," "sincerity," and the like.

17. To give a clearer idea of what I mean by "grand tour questions" consider the following (note that each of these examples is more specific, a topical than the one I posed in the text):

A. "Please tell me about a typical day in your life."

B. "Tell me about your family, growing up."

C. "What was life like when you were a child?"

D. "What do you think the future holds for you?"

E. "Tell me about your relationship."

F. Etc.

18. Therapists who want to learn and use a grounded therapy approach would do well to learn how to do "pure" grounded theory first. This will allow them to approximate grounded theory procedures to the extent that their particular therapeutic situation allows. For a detailed illumination of the techniques of doing grounded theory research upon which the procedures of grounded therapy are based, see Glaser (1978).

19. For a discussion of theoretical coding "families," see Glaser (1978 pp. 72-82).

20. In therapy, the core variable can be a core problem or issue, or it can be the central variable which "drives" a problem or issue . In either instance it is the (or one of the) variable(s) which is central to the individual´s life. Some core variables will be exhibited as strong patterns, which are not necessarily conscious to the client(s). Chronic misunderstanding between parties to a relationship is an example of such a core variable. Other core variables, such as chronic resentment, chronic anger, or chronic feelings of worthlessness, may be closer to a client's consciousness. To discover this second type of variable, while coding, it is useful to address the question "what is the client working on?)' (such that they are engaging in a particular pattern of emotion, thought and/or action).

21. For this reason, it is particularly important that concepts have imagery, as well as analytical ability, so they will be understandable appealing and memorable to clients. As Glaser (1978, p.70) points out, in vivo codes usually have vivid imagery. Concepts with vivid imagery will have more power in the therapeutic process.

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GROUNDED THEORY REVIEW
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Book Review: Using Grounded Theory: How to Develop Theory for Managed Change by Helen Scott

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Helen Scott's *Using Grounded Theory: How to Develop Theory for Managed Change* (Grounded Solutions Ltd.) is a welcome and timely contribution to the Classic Grounded Theory (CGT) literature. Having taught qualitative research methods in general and classic grounded theory in particular for many years, I've been waiting for a book like this. Written in a friendly, practical, and accessible voice, this book serves as an invaluable resource for novice grounded theorists and applied researchers looking for a clear guide to doing theory-building research in the classic "Glaserian" tradition (Scott, 2025). The book's orientation, tone, and layout make it especially helpful for graduate students, practitioner-scholars, and organizational researchers interested in developing substantive theory that can inform and support systemic change.

Scott is not only an experienced grounded theory methodologist but also a co-founder of Grounded Solutions Ltd., a UK-based consultancy that offers training and support in Classic Grounded Theory (CGT). I first met her in the early 2000s in New York City at a grounded theory seminar conducted by the co-creator of grounded theory, Barney Glaser. Even then, her intellectual clarity and commitment to preserving the core values of CGT were evident. In this book, she draws from two decades of experience teaching CGT across disciplines and professional settings, and the result is a clear, example-rich, and actionable guide for conducting grounded theory research that stays true to its origins while attending to contemporary concerns, applications, and nomenclature.

The book contains nine chapters, plus front matter, an epilogue, and references. Each chapter systematically leads the reader roughly through the stages of CGT. The preface is a primer on using the book with some important background information and history. Chapter 1 answers the question "What is Grounded Theory?" providing helpful analogies and advice for beginners as well as a short list of the grounded theory urtexts. The second chapter provides readers with a sense of where we are going when we dive into the practice of grounded theory. We are, again, offered specific examples with links and QR codes that point readers to extra-textual material. By taking advantage of new technological affordances, Scott guides contemporary readers in a friendly and accessible way. It is notable that the examples offered are related to prosocial global concerns connecting the methodology of classic grounded theory to tangible and relatable issues we all struggle with. The third chapter focuses on collecting data. This is a particularly rich chapter that maps out the grounded theory process. Again, we are treated with many helpful examples, this time from the world of art and art history. There is also a clear and concise section on conducting interviews and writing field notes and/or producing transcripts. Chapters four and five dive into the thorny problem of analysis. This is where I have found that my students struggle the most. I'm delighted to see that complex material is illuminated with diligence and compassion for the novice researcher. Coding and memoing are defined and explained with examples and clarity that are a hallmark of Scotts warm and accessible approach. Chapter six explores the notion of "conceptual integration." It helps to answer the question of how concepts are related to other concepts in grounded theory. Related to this are the use of theoretical coding and sorting memos. The seventh chapter sheds light on the final stages of grounded theory work which involves situating and illustrating a grounded theory and evaluating grounded theory in terms of its workability, relevance, and modifiability. Chapter

eight is on integrating grounded theory within a research degree. I wish I had this chapter 20 years ago! Scott provides invaluable advice for researchers who need to communicate their work to broader communities of other researchers, academics and other professionals. Chapter nine gives us parsimonious advice and guidance for moving forward with our research work using the notions of synergy and dissonance as lenses for looking upon grounded theory methodology as a conceptual tool that may be used by anyone.

There is an appendix to the book that contains a reprint of Scott's earlier article that appeared in the grounded theory review (Scott, 2009). This is a helpful elucidation of coding, memoing, finding participants' main concern, and how they continually seek to resolve the main concern. This is a distilling of Glaser's advice for grounded theory researchers learning to step into the field with a high degree of theoretical sensitivity while using tools that aid in conceptualization over description.

In short, this book is exciting. Each chapter is enriched with diagrams, tables, examples from the author's consulting practice, and reflective prompts to help readers deepen their understanding of the method. The book contrasts meaningfully with Kathy Charmaz's Constructing Grounded Theory (2nd ed., 2014), a well-respected text grounded in a constructivist adaptation of the methodology. While both books offer strong guidance for beginning researchers, their philosophical and methodological orientations are quite different.

Charmaz's version of grounded theory is influenced by social constructivism and emphasizes the co-construction of meaning between researcher and participant. Her work situates grounded theory within the interpretive tradition, and her writing includes careful attention to issues of reflexivity, positionality, and social justice. Her second edition builds on

these themes and invites readers to think critically about power and representation in the research process.

By contrast, Scott's book follows the Classic Grounded Theory approach articulated by Barney Glaser. In CGT, the emphasis is on discovery—on allowing theory to emerge from data through constant comparison, theoretical sampling, and memoing, without the overt imposition of the researcher's worldview. Scott's prose is notably pragmatic and non-theoretical in tone. She avoids philosophical tangents and keeps the reader grounded—pun intended—in action: how to code, how to memo, when to sample, and how to write up findings as theory.

Where Charmaz's book reads as a rich engagement with constructivist epistemology and qualitative methodology, Scott's reads like a training manual for building theory in action-oriented contexts. The contrast is not one of quality, but of purpose and orientation. Charmaz is deeply embedded in academic discourse and qualitative traditions. Scott, while equally rigorous, is more practitioner-facing, with a keen eye toward organizational relevance and change.

Both authors, importantly, advance the legacy of Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, co-founders of grounded theory. Their collaboration in The Discovery of Grounded Theory (1967) introduced the method to the social sciences, but they later diverged in approach. Glaser championed emergence, theoretical sensitivity, and neutrality; Strauss—along with Juliet Corbin—moved toward more structured coding frameworks. Charmaz further evolved the method through constructivist epistemology. Scott's work, however, is firmly anchored in Glaserian CGT, offering a much-needed resource for those who want to practice grounded theory as Glaser envisioned it.

Helen Scott's contributions are not limited to this volume. She has authored and co-authored grounded theory studies in leadership, change management, and organizational

development. Her firm, Grounded Solutions Ltd., provides training that reflects this book's structure and values. Through workshops and coaching, she has helped thousands of professionals—many outside academia—develop and apply grounded theories to real-world challenges.

As a faculty member who has taught qualitative research at the doctoral level since 2003, and whose own scholarship focuses on culture, identity, technology, and learning, I find Scott's book highly compatible with practitioner-oriented dissertations and applied education research. My own published work often intersects with themes of educational equity, cultural psychology, and narrative methods—areas where CGT offers a powerful framework for discovery and interpretation. I regularly work with doctoral students navigating complex educational systems, and this book will now be at the top of my recommended reading list for those using CGT.

Finally, it is worth noting Scott's tone and approach. The book is personable, accessible, and grounded in practical wisdom. It feels like being coached by someone who knows the terrain intimately and genuinely wants you to succeed. That tone—combined with methodological clarity, visual aids, and a strong alignment with CGT values—makes this book not only a methodological guide but also a pedagogical companion.

In summary, Using Grounded Theory is a vital resource that fills a gap in the CGT literature. For beginning researchers, it offers a guided path. For experienced scholars, it provides a helpful tool for mentoring others. And for the grounded theory community more broadly, it affirms the enduring value of the Glaserian tradition while responding to contemporary demands for usable, credible, and theory-driven change. Using Grounded Theory: How to Develop Theory for Managed Change is an invaluable resource for novice grounded theorists, applied researchers, and anyone seeking a clear, example-rich introduction to Classic Grounded Theory.

It is not a substitute for Glaser's original works, nor does it attempt to be. Instead, it is a bridge: from theory to practice, from data to insight, from novice to practitioner. Helen Scott has given the CGT community a workhorse of a book. It is at once accessible, pragmatic, and true to its roots.

I want to emphasize that this book is not a replacement for the classic grounded theory urtexts such as The Discovery of Grounded Theory (1967), Theoretical Sensitivity (1978), Doing Grounded Theory (1998) and several others. It is, however, an excellent complement for both novice and more advanced researchers alike. This book truly cuts through the noise around GT to bring clarity to the process of doing GT. Scott takes the position that GT is neutral conceptual tool that can be used with any theoretical/philosophical perspective. She focuses on the practical matters of how to generate relevant and useful theory whatever the perspective the researcher takes. I expect to use this book with my students for many years to come.

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Using Grounded Theory: A Review

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Abstract

Helen Scott's (2025) *Using Grounded Theory: How to Develop Theory for Managed Change* provides a clear and engaging guide to classic grounded theory, especially valuable for novices, graduate students, and early-career researchers. Drawing on her extensive experience mentoring grounded theory students and participating in Barney Glaser's seminars, Scott offers practical guidance in a collegial, conversational tone. The book covers core processes such as open and selective coding, constant comparison, theoretical sampling, and memoing, with recurring attention to conceptualization throughout the entire research project. To support continued learning, Scott recommends specific chapters from Glaser's foundational texts to help readers expand their understanding. The book includes diagrams, examples of grounded theory projects, and an optional mini-project that encourages active engagement. Overall, Scott's work serves as an accessible and supportive resource for those beginning grounded theory research while pointing them toward deeper study.

Keywords: classic grounded theory, introductory text

Helen Scott's (2025) book, *Using Grounded Theory: How to Develop Theory for Managed Change* (237 pages), offers an accessible and comprehensive introduction to classic grounded theory, especially valuable for novices, graduate students, and early-career researchers. Early responses from readers have indicated its particular usefulness for students new to the method. While the book is written with beginners in mind, its usefulness is not limited to them. I am reviewing the book as a novice, supported by insights and guidance from others.

The author Helen Scott draws on her personal experience mentoring more than 300 students in grounded theory and her participation in Barney Glaser's seminars from 2003 to 2017—first as a participant and later in helping to arrange them. Scott's approachable style and practical guidance foster a collegial and conversational tone, evident in phrases such as "Whichever way you choose to manage your constant comparison" (p. 105, page numbers from Kindle desktop app), and "The way that I think about properties is that they specify a concept" (p. 107), and "So for me, dimensions shape a concept and degrees size it." (p. 111)

Scott shares that when she was struggling with the notion that tolerating confusion can be necessary:

> during a down time in a seminar, Glaser told me to 'rest in the confusion as it's a really good indicator that something is happening.' That is, that one's preconscious is working away on the problem. You just need the tenacity to stick with the process and see it through. (p. 28)

She provides practical insights, advising readers during open coding to "read each line carefully but understand that you are not required to code each line" (p. 97). She says that grounded theorists are often "motivated to make things better for people" (p. 14). Furthermore,

she says, “I think I am fairly typical as a grounded theorist in that I care deeply about the research areas and/or research populations that I work with” (p. 14).

The book describes the key processes and procedures of classic grounded theory. Chapter content includes: 1. an overview of classic grounded theory; 2. why one might choose to use the grounded theory method; 3. data selection for a grounded theory study; 4. open coding, constant comparison, and the identification of core concept(s) or dependent variable(s); 5. theoretical sampling, selective coding, and memoing to conceptualize; 6. theoretical codes; 7. use of existing literature and guidance for writing; and 8. considerations for using grounded theory for master’s or doctoral degree research. There is additional discussion of conceptualization in the Appendix, and the author often mentions conceptualization throughout the book.

The author invites readers to do a mini-project and to communicate their answers to her through email. Her responses to me have been insightful and helpful.

Scott's book serves admirably as a foundational text for readers approaching the more complex core writings of grounded theory. Scott includes many recommendations of specific chapters from Barney Glaser’s books *Theoretical Sensitivity* (1978) and *Doing Grounded Theory: Issues and Discussions* (1998) for “studying the method” (Scott, 2025, p. 30) and deepening the reader’s “knowledge of grounded theory” (Scott, 2025, p. 121). She recognizes these early works as “the starting point or stem of the grounded theory methodology” (p. 17), considering *Theoretical Sensitivity* to be the central text in classic grounded theory. These reading recommendations, situated within thematically related material, help strengthen and deepen the reader’s grasp of grounded theory. Scott thoughtfully highlights specific chapters from Glaser’s foundational texts to further enhance readers' understanding.

Clear successes of the book include the comprehensive survey of the grounded theory method and a guide for doing grounded theory research. The book has diagrams that show the phases of the grounded theory process, with highlighting showing the current phase being described. Scott includes illustrative grounded theory project examples beneficial for many researchers. She provides many insights into conceptualization, a summation being, "eventually I have realized the benefit of using the conceptual dance approach. It is the method of allowing our emergent concepts to dance freely around until forming a theory" (p. 159). Helen Scott's *Using Grounded Theory: How to Develop Theory for Managed Change* is a well-written and clearly organized introduction, highly suitable for novices and beneficial as a foundational resource for anyone embarking on grounded theory research.

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GROUNDED THEORY REVIEW
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Memoing for Conceptual Emergence: A Key Process in Developing Grounded Theory

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Abstract

When doing grounded theory, writing starts in the moment you begin the study. Daily writing is integrated into the method itself, and the key concepts are memos and memo writing, and, in grounded theory terminology, memoing. Memos form the textual fundament for theory building and are sorted and refined as the project moves along. In this article, I will explore how memoing in classic grounded theory provides space for reflexivity that is crucial to a researcher´s personal growth. The discussion is based on the original literature written by Barney G. Glaser and on memos and field notes from participant observation in Glaser´s troubleshooting seminars over the first two decades of the 21st century.

Keywords: Memo, theoretical ideas, classic grounded theory, research flexibility, grounded theory, reflection, theory development, reflexivity, constant comparison, theory building, preconception.

In recent years, several researchers have discussed memoing in grounded theory development at length (see, for instance, Chametzky, 2023; Holton & Walsh, 2017; Simmons, 2022). In many papers, however, memoing as a methodological concept is referenced only in passing in the method´s section, without going into any depth on the phenomenon. The main aim with this article is thus to broaden the understanding of memos as flexible, but fundamental building blocks in grounded theorizing. In a time when hand-written notes tend to be considered superfluous, classic grounded theory still offers innovative perspectives on the value of reflective idea development in research.

Memos constitute a key feature when making a grounded theory manifest (Glaser 1978, 2014), even if the memoing process might not be very amplified in the finished study. When reading a GT study, it is therefore wise to look for the paragraph(s) on how the memoing has been carried out. In this way, you will nevertheless get close to the "little logic" of the study. Since memos and memoing are, by nature, private texts to begin with; a form of self-dialoguing going on backstage while collecting and analyzing data, it makes sense that the process itself is not much focused in the written-up texts. The outcome of memos is simply a well-integrated part of the theory building. Memos comprise a safe place in which the individual researcher, or potentially collaborating teams, can put their most focused and questioned ideas and thoughts while working in parallel with the other sub-processes of developing theory. In their most basic form, memos are a researcher´s brief notes to oneself pondering emerging ideas when collecting and analyzing data during a GT study.

Memos are vital tools to strengthen the individual researcher´s skills in going from descriptive to abstract levels of theory development. Learning to memo may constitute a backbone in a researcher´s academic growth over a career. Based on these preliminary

reflections, it appears a bit strange to experience that the competitive advantage of doing memos is often de-attributed to its origins – in favor of other strands that also claim grounded theory to be their theoretical code. This tendency makes it extra pertinent to first seek to understand what memoing is – to be able to make it understandable to others. In the following discussion of these issues, I will regularly return to key aspects of memoing as points of attachment.

Background

In this article, I will first sensitize the reader to memoing as a mind-opening reflection process within grounded theory methodology. Next, I will provide a brief overview of memo writing in the original literature on grounded theory, its historical background, and method-specific terminology. I will then situate the memo approach to conceptual writing in a wider research context and argue that memoing concerns more than identifying patterns of behavior in a grounded theory study in progress; memos are closely related to widely used tools in qualitative research, for instance research diaries, albeit in GT, memos are further developed to serve a special academic purpose, namely building theories from ground up.

The overview in this article is grounded in readings of the original literature on the method, especially selected books by Glaser (1978, 2012, 2014), as his theorizing lay the foundation for later application across the different versions of the method. The readings of Glaser´s original theorizing were supplied by digital searches, hunting for texts that could further amplify memoing issues. The article is also based on field notes and participatory observations in more than a dozen troubleshooting seminars with Glaser from 2004 to 2017 (Gynnild, 2012).

Memoing Should Be a Top Priority

I still remember the first time I participated in one of Glaser´s troubleshooting seminars in the early 2000s, in London. During the first roundtable session, when participants were encouraged to ask questions, Glaser (2004) would suddenly interrupt with what he called a teachable moment, and modulate with a teasing grin, "Did you do a memo on it?", "What? Then do it now!" "Memoing should be your top priority, every day. No matter what you are doing, be ready!" "As soon as you get ideas about your project, do a memo!" "Ideas must be picked up immediately – if not, they are gone." "Remember – you are constantly building your memo bank, work towards memo maturity, later you are going to sort these memos into an integrated theory!" (author field notes).

Glaser (2004) repeatedly pointed out that the memoing should start in parallel with collecting the first data, and continue throughout the stages of coding, theoretical sampling, sorting, and reading of literature until the paper was ready for write-up. His comments were served humorously and with much encouragement and inspirational comments. To some participants, however, it sometimes was a bit shocking that he so directly addressed their writing habits. His straightforwardness often brought about intensive discussions during breaks and frequently prompted unexpected eureka moments among the students.

Most people were not prepared to start writing right away, not even when doing grounded theory work. For beginners, memoing is most often a surprisingly new approach that awaits to be systematically implemented in one´s daily work regimen. In his seminars, Glaser repeatedly emphasized that with the memo procedures, one does not have to be a writer to begin with. Memoing simply concerns getting the ideas into writing and keeping up the good work

throughout the study, independent of what else goes on in everyday life. The aim was simply to get the participants going and to avoid writing blocks.

The memo procedures in grounded theory methodology split up the writing into fragments. This built-in flexibility takes momentary care of new ideas and prompts the researcher to stay open to new ways to make sense of the data during the whole theory building process (Glaser, 1978, 2002, 2011, 2012, 2014). Memoing supports the development of codes for the best fit as well as systematic ways of coming up with good definitions for new concepts. The process also helps researchers to continuously reconsider personal presuppositions, tacit knowledge, and established facts on the subject they work on. In the end, the constant comparison and sorting procedures will ensure that the main patterns of behavior under study will earn their place in the theory. Memos might be written and collected in numerous ways, but the basic idea is that by treating them as physical bits and pieces, the noted ideas are easy to sort further out in the theory building process.

Put Into Text the Ideas, Reflections, and Questions

When I was taught to do memos at the first troubleshooting seminar I attended, in London, I got confused. It was like being in a place where the showering of advanced research terminology made me feel like a total stranger. But for some reason, just like other participating beginners, I started to listen intensively and abruptly found myself taking new kinds of notes. At first, the notes dealt with descriptions of what happened at the seminar, and my own confusion and reactions to what was going on. I later realized that I was simply a novice grounded theorist on my way from a descriptive to a conceptual level of thinking, and the many options to write short texts on the spot helped me in that process.

It did take a while before I realized that when doing grounded theory, writing memos was not so much about *describing* what was going on, as it was a way to highlight and put into text the ideas, reflections, questions, and other issues that I was constantly pondering in my own research project. I also got to understand that memos are not field notes; the function of these two text genres is fundamentally different, and they should not be mixed neither physically nor psychologically. You take field notes when you are out in the field, or substantive area, collecting data. Then you do memos on the field notes, and you often do memos on memos as well, when the ideas start flowing. But you keep them separate.

Writing on the Go, a Moving-on Solution

The new habit of memoing challenged me to constantly relate to my own thoughts and reflections concerning the substantive theory I was working on. I started to experiment with writing-on-the-go, taking notes on whatever I had at hand, whether the cell phone, a notebook, a piece of paper, or even a napkin – instead of waiting until later. At one point, I wrote memos in ten-minute sessions to get it incorporated as a daily routine. This feeling of being very productive and quite confused at the same time was exciting and scary. Where would all these snippets of ideas and thoughts lead me in the end? And yet the ideas would continue to surface. It was nice to know, whatever ideas came to mind, there was space for them in the memo bank.

Freestyle Memoing

Glaser´s concept of freestyle memoing (Glaser, 2014) made clear that memos in grounded theory can take on any form. There is no right or wrong, as the memos are simply ideas and reflections that the researcher jots down for his or her personal use on the way. They are not to be shown to anybody else before write-up, and so one is free to develop any individualized style that might serve both the research project and one´s own personality well. No worries about

grammar, punctuation, or other stylistic aspects; Glaser (2014) insisted that getting ideas are paramount to write-up with good English – "don´t talk, memo!" (108).

Behind the experimentation with memo freedom lay the anecdotally proven presumption that when there is no sharing of a written piece of text; no evaluation or expectations of certain writing standards, the researcher will be more relaxed. In a relaxed state, ideas tend to flow more easily, and so freestyle memoing is a fruitful way of taking good care of oneself while simultaneously processing the bits and pieces that comprise the building bricks of the theory under development. Anecdotal evidence further suggests that the best ideas tend to emerge when researchers do anything but doing research, such as going for a walk, having a shower, or watching TV while lying on the couch. Memoing is there to help novice GT-ers smoothly overcome writing blocks.

No matter whether people complain about lack of time or issues of self-doubt, memoing stands out as a moving-on solution against which one cannot possibly argue. Memoing in grounded theory is eventually a smart pedagogical tool, a daily mini action for researchers to ensure that they stay on top of their own research process. Ideas are fetched on the fly and constant comparison helps systematize the ideas into sustainable theorizing. The memos are the bedrock of grounded theory. Without memos, there would be no theory to write-up in the end.

The value of keeping field notes and memos as separately treated entities was illustrated by a study of remote female fixation, a grounded theory on the illegal sharing of nude images of young women online (Otteren & Gynnild, 2021). In this study, to comply with the European privacy regulations GDPR, it was not allowed to carry out either interviews nor collect any personal data or identifying information on the users of the illegal forum under scrutiny. Data could only be collected through field notes that were kept separate to satisfy ethical rules and

data protection requirements. The same requirements precluded any research design involving rich description. Thus, keeping focused on memoing in parallel with taking field notes was decisive to be able to move on with the study, and the field notes were kept strictly separate from the memos.

Yet another issue that became evident when sorting the memos, was that of researcher preconceptions. The memos were helpful to handle personal prejudice and speculations with sufficient theoretical distance during the data collection process. Later, the sorting ensured that the researchers´ initial preconceptions were identified and were taken into consideration through constant comparison.

Critical Juncture

In the moment a researcher enters the conceptual realm of classic grounded theory, he or she is introduced to a bundle of interrelated concepts. Memoing serves as a critical juncture between the descriptive and abstract levels of thought. The basic memo terminology is mostly quite self-explanatory in its outline of the steps and purposes of the activity. Some concepts that might be helpful to understand memoing, in a nutshell, are exemplified through terms such as moment capturing, sequencing ideas, constant idea refining, comparative reasoning, memo maturity, memo sorting, theoretical completeness, and write-up of sorted memos, just to mention a few.

Most of grounded theory´s terminology on memoing was developed by the method´s co-founder Barney G. Glaser over more than five decades. The rich well of new concepts on memoing stems from a perpetual flow of PhD student feedback, which Glaser systematically collected and analyzed. His sources of data included questions posed by novice theorists at his international trouble-shooting seminars as well as in email conversations. In addition, he

constantly handwrote memos on memos analyzing GT PhD theses. In this way, the co-founder´s own theoretical understanding of the memo process expanded over the years. This process, in turn, created a need to refine the theorizing on memos as a basic procedure in GT. Glaser was constantly advancing his own learning curve as a grounded theorist, as he might have conceptualized it. That does not mean that he modified the process much, but the explanations expanded and were made more easily accessible to new users.

Even if the literature on grounded theory methodology has recently received increasing attention, people new to the method still tend to be a bit confused as to what memos and memoing entail. Such reactions could in themselves have been interesting to investigate further. But in this article, I have chosen to discuss the applicability of the grounded theory memoing process based on the rich, original literature that is readily available. In this section, I will therefore provide a somewhat broader overview of memoing and its implications for developing a grounded theory. I will begin the exploration by checking in on the meanings of memos in everyday communication. I do so, well aware that to English natives the term memo is part of kindergarten glossary, whereas to many non-English natives the same term is a new acquaintance. Already at this point, it is demonstrated that GT beginners´ first encounter with this methodological key concept may take place along a preconception continuum.

Memo is short for the Latin *memorandum est*, "that must be remembered," which seems to be in perfect alignment with the grounded theory perception of the term. In everyday life, memos manifest in many formats, as lists, notes, briefs, records, and other short pieces of handwritten or digitized information. In law, memos typically refer to the records of terms for agreements, and in business management, for instance, recipes are provided on how to write business memos line by line.

The term memo is widely used within professional communication. In the Oxford English Dictionary (Stevenson, 2010), *a* memo is defined as "a written message used for communication within an organization», while *to* memo means "to send a written message to someone within a company or organization." In sum, it appears that in their general everyday use, memos are typically associated with professional ways of structuring important information; memos are apparently supposed to be short, structured, routinized, and formalized information to be broadly shared in professional contexts.

The Beginning of Memoing

But what exactly is a memo in grounded theory methodology? How is it academically defined and applied? Let us, for a moment, go more than half a century back in the history of sociology, back to the moments when Glaser and Strauss were working on their seminal work, Awareness of Dying (1965), at the University of California in San Francisco. In the process of conceptualizing their empirical data, the two co-researchers would typically "become overloaded with conceptual ideas and possibilities of conceptual focus" (Glaser, 2014, p.4).

Glaser later explained how this overload of ideas made him start taking notes on index cards. His initial aim was to further categorize and sort the ideas that they had been discussing orally, but he soon found that such indexing was too structured at the early stages of the analytical process. Instead, he noted, "I started jotting memos to myself that varied from a jot or scratch to four pages" (ibid.). This was the very beginning of memoing as an actionable premise for grounded theory development. The memo discovery resembles what in contemporary business research might be referred to as a disruptive innovation; new knowledge or insights that change established ways of carrying out processes or providing new products.

Glaser (2014) explained memoing as a conscious act that he systematically engaged in to develop the awareness-of-dying theory. In his first single authored, seminal work, Glaser (1978) defined memos as "*the theorizing write-up of ideas about codes and their relationships as they strike the analyst while coding*" (p. 83). He stated that theoretical memos were "the bedrock, the core stage of grounded theory generation" (ibid.). He also called them the first draft of the theory (ibid, p. 80) and claimed that doing memos "lead naturally to abstraction or ideation" (ibid, p. 83). In this book, Glaser devoted a ten-page chapter to the topic of "theoretical memoing" (ibid.) The process was emphasized to be paramount to the steps of theoretical sorting and theoretical writing of the memos, which were discussed at length in the subsequent chapters.

Glaser (1978) listed four basic goals of memoing; to develop *theoretical ideas*, that is, *codes,* with what he called *complete freedom* into a *memo fund* which should be easily *sortable.* The now further developed and conceptualized sub-theory of theoretical memoing was, for the first time, explained at length on the pages that followed. Included were details on how and why memoing might best be carried out. Initially, Glaser stressed that the constant comparison of ideas when coding the data was of high priority. Personally, I experienced that I literally had to start *doing* memos before I fully realized that by memo fund was meant a *physical memo bank*. The memo bank concept made it easier to visualize the collection of memos as a concrete physical box or folder in which the memo snippets were gathered. The rule on sortability was another reminder that, in grounded theory, memos are physically existing entities.

Further Refining

In his later books, (see for instance Glaser 2014), Glaser frequently referred to *Theoretical Sensitivity* (1978) as the best source to understand the memoing process. The memo guidelines and reflections in *Theoretical Sensitivity* have since been considered the gold standard

of memoing. In a short article there is too little space to provide the full lines of arguments and explanations that were put forward; instead, readers are recommended to experience the conceptual richness in Glaser´s original literature on grounded theory.

In 2014, Glaser suggested the memo rules provided in *Theoretical Sensitivity* (1978) 36 years earlier, might have appeared a bit too formal to some users. These reflections were based on his subsequent analyses of responses he got from novices, often minus-mentored PhD students. Some students reported they had strived to follow the guidelines on how to memo and what the memoing was for. Instead of getting inspired and feeling on top of their project, they had experienced the rules to be confusing and even burdening. Glaser thus identified issues of potential strictures and forcing that, to some researchers, could be counterproductive to getting into a good workflow.

The feedback led him to further refine and explicate the sub-theory´s basic principles. He found that there was a need to make memoing more accessible to readers by providing more examples. At the same time, the feedback abducted that GT novices were typically quite unfamiliar with putting their ideas and reflections into paper while in the middle of doing research. They appeared to be trapped in a double bind; they wanted clear guidelines while simultaneously being afraid of not "doing it right" if they were going to adhere to some rules. And they were perplexed by the "total freedom" imperative.

A clearly perceived dilemma was that in grounded theory, researchers are nurtured to develop their personal way of making the memo process work. Glaser identified theoretical sensitivity to be a crucial challenge for researchers while switching between the stages of open, selective, and theoretical coding. And memoing was frequently explained as the researcher´s best companion, not to get overwhelmed, but to "get out of the data" (Glaser, 2011, p. 2.). Within

contemporary terminology, memoing has been conceptualized as a crucial activity that frees up space from the human hardware (Glaser, 2014); it acts as a digital hard drive that stores valuable information so it does not get lost during the period of cognitive progress and potential breakthroughs. The updated and refined sub-theory of freestyle memoing was launched by Glaser in 2014. The theorizing was rigorously supplied with memoing examples provided by former PhD students, and the theoretical outlay of the memoing process now filled a whole book.

Modifying Memos

It is indeed interesting that Glaser, more than fifty years after his first experiments with memos in grounded theory, was still focusing on further improving the memoing approach. The example demonstrates that he followed up on the previously stated principles for assessing the value of any new grounded theory; it should fit, work, and be relevant, especially to the people in the substantive area. The reflexivity issues highlighted in the memoing book made manifest that researchers should "not be afraid of modifying memos as growth and realizations occur" (Glaser, 2014, p. 90).

Creativity is yet another aspect of memoing, which helps explain the ongoing work of comparing and refining codes and concepts for the best possible fit. The creative issues of memoing are closely related to the researcher´s ability to reflect on what is going on in the data and come up with solutions to the problems he or she grapples with (Holton, 2011). Holton further pointed out that creativity is particularly helpful when it comes to choosing a variety of sources and types of data. Even if the most widespread data collection method in grounded theory is qualitative interviews, the "all is data" dictum amplifies that any relevant data could be collected and be a source of memoing. Specifically, researcher creativity is helpful when

choosing a variety of sources and types of data, for instance, texts, documents, artifacts, and secondary data.

When pondering on how the different slices of data hang together, grounded theorists are often advised to take a step back and reflect from a distance. That is, to take the time it takes to find out what "emerges" from the data and get it into memos. To better understand the background for Glaser´s constantly ongoing refinements of classic GT, exemplified by the process of memoing, I will follow this advice. Instead of analyzing more empirical data, I will now discuss in what ways memo writing, as put forth in the original GT literature, fulfils needs for researcher reflexivity. Implicitly, I will also reflect on the perceived double bind dilemma mentioned above; while some students perceived the memo procedures suggested in *Discovery* too strict and too formal, other students perceived the freestyle memoing suggested in the *Memoing* book too loose and open. How can such reactions best be understood?

The memoing procedures in grounded theory challenge researchers to focus intensively on what is in the data, and where the data leads next. Through focused reflection, the memoing process helps to tease out and incorporate all kinds of data that emerge to be of relevance to the study; vague data, interpreted data, properline data, and baseline data. The freestyle note taking gives the researcher the opportunity to conduct long conversations with oneself: "What is in the data, and what is this a study of?" as well as questions such as "Why am I so curious about these issues?" "What do they remind me of?" "What more do I need to solve this puzzle?"

At the beginning of a study, the potential list of questions does not seem to have any clear-cut end. What is relevant and important to memo depends, at any point in the process, on the data material as well as the researcher´s reflexive, creative and conceptual skill levels, until what Glaser termed memo completeness is reached. Thus, memoing is a way both to include, and

to minimize, one´s own presuppositions and prejudices about the data. The relevance of the reflections is constantly tested through the constant comparative method. The main paths in the data will soon start to "pattern out," as Glaser would say, referring to the transitions from open to selective and theoretical coding. In GT studies, issues along the continuum from reflection to reflexivity are, additionally, further addressed in the "Limitations of the study" section. Glaser often advised, however, to write about ideas, not people, to remind researchers to keep focused on theory development through conceptualization and abstract thinking (Glaser, 2014).

Reflection and Reflexivity

To better understand the ongoing refinements for which Glaser was a spokesman through his constantly expansive theorizing, I will now turn to the issue of reflective practice, which has been much discussed in academic circles in general, and especially within qualitative research. By scholars adhering to other strands of grounded theory methods (Charmaz, 2006; Charmaz & Bryant, 2019; Mruck & Mey, 2019), however, reflection and reflexivity issues have frequently been posed as "shortcomings" of classic grounded theory. The literally infinite options for researcher reflexivity embedded in the memo process are often overlooked, or not quite acknowledged, by people who are not familiar with the original literature by Glaser.

Finlay and Gough (2003) are among many authors, across disciplines, who have pointed out that in general, the terms reflection, critical reflection, and reflexivity have caused much confusion among scholars. Rather than discussing their interchangeability, the authors suggest that the terms are found along a continuum. While reflection is defined as "thinking about" something after an event, reflexivity is a more dynamic process that involves constant self-awareness, and critical reflection is found somewhere in the middle.

Finlay (2008) further states that reflection and reflexivity are the "process of learning through and from experience towards gaining new insights of self and/or practice" (p. 1). She argues that reflective practice is complex and situated to the extent that it doesn´t work if it is applied in simplistic or mechanical ways, that it becomes more of a ritual. She points out that reflective practice is a professional imperative and sees it as the bedrock of professional identity. Finlay´s postulate appears to be in perfect alignment with the memoing process of the grounded theory method.

Mruck and Mey (2019) suggested that for grounded theory to demonstrate a reflexive process, two activities should have a central role. The first concerns reflective writing in the first person, which, as pointed out by the authors, would help to express the author´s own involvement and to develop understanding of what he or she is studying. They further claimed that reflexive methods would include writing research diaries and self-reflexive memos, as well as time-out techniques that could also serve as self-care strategies. The second concerns communicative exchange, which the authors argue should take place with colleagues, in research teams, and with external supervisors.

Mruck and Mey (2019) differentiated between research diary and "memo-writing," but without clarifying what makes the *content* of memo-writing potentially different from that of a research diary. With reference to constructivist GT researchers, they have rhetorically left the impression that reflections and reflexivity in GT memo-writing is dependent upon a constructivist approach, implicitly that "lack of reflexivity" excludes the original literature from the good party (Charmaz, 2014). Mruck and Mey (2019) also highlighted that a research diary "should be an intimate refuge" that is not for anyone else to see without permission, and that

> Sometimes it will only be possible to retrospectively understand the importance of astonishing episodes, communicative flops, disorientation, and breakthroughs for theory development. Especially in the beginning, entries could be fragmentary and unsystematic, with the intention of coming back to them later on to elaborate and explicate characteristics of the field under research. (para. 46, online source)

The rhetorical power of the above arguments lies in the pretending-as-if grounded theorists normally do not engage in reflective writing or communicative exchange with research colleagues and supervisors. While in fact, the first argument is in support of the process of freelance memoing. The second argument is a reminder that more data collection and orientation in the field of classic grounded theory is often to be recommended. The many online networks and interdisciplinary grounded theory events indicate that research discussions, methodological exchange, and supervision are of great importance when building grounded theories. Dr. Glaser´s many books on classic grounded theory during the last two decades are all grounded in data from researchers practicing the method.

Problem-solving Through Reflection

Originally, memoing was by itself a response to the researchers´ need for creative problem-solving through reflection. Freestyle memoing provides a physical flexibility for later sorting that an ordinary research diary would not normally offer. In that perspective, building a memo bank could simply be seen as a specific property of research diaries, developed for the specific purpose of developing a full theory.

The suggestions by Mruck and Mey (2019) are helpful contributions to better understand the reflexive aspects of doing grounded theory. Their reflections provide valuable data on

perceptions of memoing distant from the original literature. Cathy Charmaz also acknowledged the reflective practice integrated in grounded theory when she pointed out, in an interview, that

> …the basic guidelines, the type of coding, the type of memo-writing, and trying to make your memos more analytic, more theoretical, and then checking through theoretical sampling still hold. Those are very useful techniques, and they can be used from a variety of theoretical frames, or types of data. (Charmaz & Keller, 2019, p. 9)

Charmaz and Keller is clearly talking about reflective practice here, the process of building theory from collecting data on practice and reflecting on these data.

Freestyle Works With Any Style

Originally, Glaser´s (2014) concept of freestyle memoing was meant to amplify that the process could be applied in a variety of ways, depending on individual needs and ways of working. While one theorist might prefer a digital index card system, another researcher might fancy a notebook or a mobile app for note-taking. Some like to jot down keywords, others prefer to write full paragraphs. The point is that the individual researcher should find ways to memo that would work well for him or her; the memoing process provides opportunities to further develop their own independency and what Holton conceptualized as autonomous creativity (Holton, 2011).

Depending on the individual researcher´s specific needs, research project, and learning curve, the ways of doing memos may well change over time. For instance, during a study, many researchers come to a point where complex ideas show up, not as text, but as maps and tables in their memos. These are visualizations of abstract models that await to be written up in text later – when the conceptual codes have emerged.

Glaser repeatedly pointed out, in seminars as well as in writing, that a grounded theory is good only as far as it goes. Implicitly, the fit, relevance, and catch of a grounded theory, at any stage, depends on the theorizing readiness of the researcher who produced the theory. The concept of theorizing readiness came to mind while I was reflecting on the suggested continuum from reflection via critical reflection to reflexivity (Finlay & Gough, 2003). When ending this article on memoing, then, it strikes me that readers of grounded theories, as well as theory builders and academic colleagues critiquing the method, are all found somewhere along the above continuum. That also holds true when it comes to interest and insights into the value of conceptual emergence through memoing.

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