Celebrating 50 years of grounded theory: onward and forward Editorial

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Welcome to this very special issue of the Grounded Theory Review. In this issue we celebrate 50 amazing years of grounded theory during which it has become one of the fastest growing methods in the global research world. Five decades after *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* was first published, the seminal work of founders Barney G. Glaser and Anselm Strauss is cited more than 94,000 times on Google Scholar alone.

We celebrate that after 50 years of researching, teaching, defending, explicating and clarifying grounded theory as a principally inductive approach to theorizing, co-founder Barney G. Glaser still produces books on grounded theory at an incredible pace. In the last three years alone, from 2014 to 2017, Dr. Glaser has produced six new books that discuss vital aspects of doing grounded theory.

We also celebrate that the Grounded Theory Review, after two years of scholarly assessment, is now accepted into the Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI) within the Web of Science. This index is a new database within Clarivate Analytics. The basis for acceptance is impact, influence, peer reviews and recommendations by scholarly users of the Web of Science. It is a valued endorsement of the quality of the Grounded Theory Review and will improve its visibility within the academic world.

We further celebrate that grounded theorists from all continents have the opportunity to participate in a growing number of troubleshooting seminars. The seminar is a productive arena for bringing emerging theories another step towards publication. While writing this editorial, I find myself once again immersed in the exciting learning space of a troubleshooting seminar led by Dr Glaser, this time in Mill Valley, California. At the chronological age of 87 Glaser still runs the seminar with methodological authority and reversal humor. And he keeps arguing that the discovery of theory from data is a major task confronting researchers today.

Interestingly, when Glaser and Strauss wrote *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* back in 1967, they opened the first chapter in this way:

> Most writing on sociological method has been concerned with how accurate facts can be obtained and how theory can thereby be more rigorously tested. In this book we address ourselves to the equally important enterprise of "how the discovery of theory from data—systematically obtained and analyzed in social research—can be furthered. We believe that the discovery of theory from the data—which we call grounded theory—is a major task confronting sociology today, for, as we shall try to show, such a theory fits empirical situations, and is understandable to sociologists and layman alike. Most important it works—provides us with relevant predictions, explanations, interpretations and applications.

The multitude of theories produced over the last 50 years confirm that Glaser and Strauss were right—GTs provides us with relevant predictions, explanations, interpretations and applications.

We celebrate these events by publishing an extended issue of the Grounded Theory Review. In this issue scholars from many disciplines contribute with their ongoing research and reflections on doing grounded theory. These articles demonstrate the breadth of approaches within the global grounded theory community by providing a glimpse into some of the multifaceted theorizing using the procedures of classic grounded theory.

Since grounded theory is a method aimed at conceptualizing patterns of human behavior, examples help us to understand the various steps in doing a grounded theory study. Thus, in this celebratory edition of the journal we follow Glaser's predications on the necessity of exampling, and provide more than 20 papers, short and long, from a great variety of disciplines.

In his latest book, *Grounded Theory: Its origins and growth,* Dr Glaser invites us to share in his matured ideas on the very productive teaching and learning space of grounded theory development. We are happy to publish chapter six of this book, in which he discusses the value of exampling and growth of the grounded theory troubleshooting seminars since the first, held in Paris 15 years ago. Glaser declares that the current grounded theory perspective is well founded (Glaser, 2016) and thus by glorious implication, is not ossified. The productive power of the seminars is exemplified by the fact that nearly all of the contributors to this special issue participated in one or more of his troubleshooting seminars during the course of their PhDs. Each of the papers in this section exemplifies or contributes to the grounded theory perspective.

When I asked Dr. Glaser what kind of articles he would like to see in this issue, he quickly replied "I would like to see more grounded theories!" The two full theories that were selected for publication in this issue stem from the health disciplines, and Dr. Glaser was actively involved as a reviewer of both papers. Authors **Lene Bastrup Jorgensen**, **Stine Leegaard Jepsen**, **Bengt Fridlund** and **Judith Holton** have developed what is termed a general substantive theory (GST) on the multidimensional behavioral process of coping with health issues. This theory explains how people who face health issues seek to safeguard and keep intact their integrity as individuals and as members of groups or systems. The theory of intacting integrity thus identifies how this intacting process is executed.

Milka Satinovic has developed a substantive grounded theory on how to live a life as good as possible with multiple sclerosis (MS). The main concern of the participants is resolved through a process of remodelling the life course through postponing, adjusting, restructuring, and transforming, where transforming means preventing illness from controlling life.

When planning for this issue, I asked Dr Glaser one more question: What paper would he like to see reprinted, if any? Was there any particular article he had written that he wanted to focus on now after 50 years of exploring and applying the grounded theory method? As a response he sent a copy of the article "The failure of science", which was published in *Science* in 1964. At the time, Dr Glaser was a young research sociologist of 34 years at the University of California Medical Center in San Francisco. In this article he stated that "Career decisions are perhaps among the most important determinants of a man's fate, and anything which contributes to an understanding of the career in science may help people make these decisions more wisely".

Half a century later, this statement takes on a new meaning. In the paper, Dr Glaser discussed what he called the feeling of comparative failure among scientists. His proposition was that scientist communities are filled with ”great men” who serve as acknowledged guiding lights, and

> to take these honored men as models is important for training as well as for a life of research. During training, one learns to think creatively. Emulation of these models results in the internalization of values, beliefs, and norms of the highest standard. This emulation of the great continues and guides the scientist in his research work, however individual in style his work may be.

There might be early signals then, that exampling has had a pedagogical grip on Dr Glaser’s mind from early on. Thus, a main focus of his latest book *The Grounded Theory Perspective: Its Origin and Growth* is, not surprisingly, the role of exampling in the grounded theory learning process. Through his reflections on the fifty years that have passed, Dr Glaser still inspires his readers to the extent that book reviewer, **Olavur Christiansen**, suggests the book replace *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* as an early read for novice grounded theorists*.* **Helen Scott,** in her review, explains that this new book has given her a “a conceptual tool with which to differentiate more concisely the grounded theory method”.

Helen Scott also evaluates and introduces the section of short papers sharing her current understandings of the growth of the grounded theory perspective. She also uses this understanding to organise the papers therein.

Judith Holton’s short paper "The discovery power of staying open” exemplifies the grounded theory perspective of emergence. Holton explains how she noticed an emergent main concern while conducting a study of a different methodological design, exposing a tension between participants’ properline data and their burgeoning awareness of their own baseline data. **Barry Chametsky’s** paper also appeals to emergence as he seeks emergent fit for the concept ”affective filter” in his theory, which focuses on a main concern of coping with the anxiety of navigating a stressful and/or unfamiliar situation.

Andy Lowe’s contribution speaks to the perspective of “autonomy”. Lowe shows how autonomy can be fostered and encourages grounded theory novices to develop a robustness to allow them to successfully complete their PhD.

Olavur Christiansen, **Gary L. Evans**, and **Tom Andrews** speak in shared ways to the procedural perspective. Christiansen discusses the opportunity for the grounded theory method in the field of applied economics and elegantly explains the main concern of sustaining employment. He invites collaboration from interested parties to develop a theory of its resolution. Gary L. Evans and Tom Andrews both exemplify the flexibility of the grounded theory method in its use by a team of researchers. Evans discusses how the challenges of collaboration are overcome in the early stages of a new study, while Andrews’ presents a successful international collaboration which produced a grounded theory of “negotiated reorienting”.

Kara Vander Linden, **Anna Sandgren**, and **Vivian Martin** speak to the procedural perspective and are all working towards producing formal grounded theories. Their formal theories speak to the perspective of generality. Vander Linden’s paper “Patterns of theoretical similarity” reviews patterns across two grounded theories and offers ways of moving towards a formal grounded theory. Sandgren meanwhile looks at integrating four

of her grounded theories and finds complexity is common to each—a concept which in turn is shared with Vander Linden. Martin's reflective paper "Formal Grounded Theory: Knowing When to Come Out of the Rain" describes her path to knowing when to commit to her formal theory of "defensive disattending".

Grounded theory assumes patterns of behavior. The patterns are abstracted from the data, rarely neatly and often one concept at a time. The grounded theory perspective of conceptualisation is exampled by **Hans Thulesius** as he continues his work in the field of dying taboos. In this paper he explores recent memos and introduces the concept of "time framing taboos" as a means of transcending taboos in medical ethics, while **Erica Delaney** and **Evelyn Gordon** offer concepts of imageric power in their paper on "Grappling with the suicidal monster". Theoretical codes organise concepts into a theory of parsimony, which is what **Alvita K. Nathaniel** and **Lisa Hardman** offer in the theory of "Caring with honor".

The section is completed by three papers from Penny Hart & Helen Scott, Odis Simmons and Naomi Elliott, relating to the "neglected option" of applying grounded theory (Glaser, 2014). Hart and Scott present a work in progress in their paper on "Mark maximising in a context of uncertain contribution", whilst in his paper "Grounding anger management" Simmons describes the highly successful application of his theory to a therapeutic program of 25 years standing. In the final paper "Becoming comfortable with MY epilepsy: The How*2*tell study", Elliott explains how her theory is used to inform the design of self-management supports for people with epilepsy.

Last but not least, I want to thank all the grounded theorists who volunteer to ensure the quality and the regular publication of the Grounded Theory Review as a non-profit journal, twice a year. In particular I want to thank our editorial assistant **Lee Yarwood-Ross** and our copyeditor **Barry Chametzky** for their consistently patient and helpful attitude and their great capacity for work which enables us to get the journal out in time. I would also like to thank **Helen Scott** for her valued support with finalising the short papers, and a huge thank you to all the grounded theorists who volunteer as reviewers and always provide constructive feedback to submitters. Finally, I offer my grateful thanks to **Jillian Rhine**, who as administrator of the Grounded Theory Review oversees the continued, successful development of the journal and the worldwide dissemination of classic grounded theory.