

Book Review: Grounded Theory in Perspective: A Lifetime's Work

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Glaser, B.G., (2016). *The Grounded Theory Perspective: Its Origin and Growth*. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.

The grounded theory general method of research was Glaser and Strauss' response to the problem of "superthink": the generation of hypotheses in the field of sociology without recourse to data. Glaser and Strauss observed that since such hypotheses were of little relevance, pursuing them wasted resources and had fateful impact on young researchers' careers. Glaser and Strauss preferred to ground their hypotheses in data that was from the field and was of relevance to their participants. The resultant development of the grounded theory method to maturity has taken decades of dedicated, scholarly endeavour. Glaser explains and examples how this has been achieved in his new book: *The grounded theory perspective: Its origins and growth*.

Glaser writes that in the early years, the young method was particularly vulnerable to friendly (and not so friendly) appropriation by researchers eager to conduct qualitative research at a time when "qualitative data analysis" (QDA) (p. 117) was also in its infancy; its perspectives and language undefined. His publication list shows us that the assault of QDA on grounded theory has been prolonged and continuous.

Establishing and maintaining the integrity of the grounded theory general research method as conceptual and scientific has therefore been a key concern of Glaser over this period. He has addressed this concern by:

- realising, explicating, and disseminating the grounded theory perspectives; and,
- clarifying, elaborating, and differentiating the grounded theory perspectives from other methodological perspectives.

Glaser's tools are his books and papers, his seminars and the growing library of his students' theories through which he explains and examples the grounded theory method. As he has conducted this effort, the use of the grounded theory method has expanded into many disciplines in many more countries.

This book's proposition is that understanding the GT perspective and its development is needed when doing and explaining GT (p. 1); its aim is to bring "most of the GT perspectives under one cover" (p. 2).

In the first chapter, Glaser gives us a fascinating overview of the growth of the grounded theory method organised by idea rather than chronologically. The second chapter intends to show the growth of grounded theory over 40 years citing theories from the field of medicine. It is intended that students read the theories for examples of the conceptual ideas used as well as how the ideas are structured and presented. The theories themselves are not

published here but can be obtained directly from Glaser. Chapter 3 introduces the technique of exemplifying and its usefulness as a way of supporting students' learning. The chapter also explains some of Glaser's realisations about the method, which he then codifies as perspectives. The papers referred to but not listed in this chapter exemplify the growth of grounded theory from 1984 to 1994. Chapter 4 lists theories that show successful conceptualisations and demonstrate the use of grounded theory procedures. It also explains further realisations and developments to the grounded theory perspective, some of which are noticed as implications of the selected theories. Chapter 5 lists theories to refocus the grounded theory perspective following the challenges to the grounded method caused by Strauss and Corbin's 1988 publication and Glaser's response in 1992. Chapter 6 lists examples of theories of good quality, produced by seminar alumni.

Readers are collections of papers brought together for a specific purpose for the convenience of the person reading. This book is the 7th reader in the grounded theory reader series (p. 25). The first six were designed to exemplify current use of the grounded theory method. Chapters 3 to 6 of this book use four earlier readers (1995, 1996, 1994, 2007) as the source material to show the origins and growth of grounded theory: the *examples of the then current state* of grounded theory are used here to *exemplify the growth* of grounded theory. Repurposing materials in this way requires careful integration. Chapter 3 confused me utterly. I needed a clearer indication that pages 34-60 formed the introduction to the 1984-1994 reader; a list of the 48 papers referred to as "the following papers" (p. 25); and since some references were amended and others were not (e.g. p. 52), I needed consistent terminology that either repurposed all of the references to the reader or none of them. Since you are forewarned, my hope is that you will be able to see past this and engage more directly with the ideas.

This book is deceptive. It is very thin but it has captured my attention for far longer than I had scheduled: it has triggered new ideas such that I have found myself referring to the original publications, stared for long periods at the sky, and subsequently updated and rearranged my ideas. It has given me a framework for understanding the publications and, with its overview of the grounded theory perspectives, has given me a conceptual tool with which to differentiate more concisely the grounded theory method. I can't wait to give it a go.