

From the Editor's Desk

As with many aspects of life during the age of covid-19, the summer issue of the Grounded Theory Review has been delayed. We are pleased to publish, however late, this issue. The Grounded Theory Review is dedicated to supporting researchers who conduct classic grounded theory research. Classic grounded theory is a unique method of discovering never before recognized processes and patterns of human behavior, a method well-suited to studying current issues and processes.

These are troubling days of pandemic illness, cultural upheaval, racial animus, international disruption, and political turmoil. Although politicians and opinion journalists predict the future, the coming months are uncertain. We are in uncharted territory. In response, particularly to covid-19, structural and psychological social processes are changing. Education, family life, health care, work life, business, consumerism, sports, trade, entertainment, government institutions, and travel are all changing. People are assuming new roles or are adjusting their roles to fit new life circumstances. This is a time of great upheaval—a time particularly ripe for grounded theory research.

The beauty and value of classic grounded theory is the nature of honest, unbiased discovery of social processes. Proper classic grounded theories cannot be preconceived or conjectured. Unlike verification research, grounded theories provide insightful, enlightening, and often surprising revelations—discoveries. As data is gathered, conceptualized, and organized by the investigator, concepts and processes emerge.

Emergence is the key to the discovery of grounded theories. Researchers who use other, usually deductive, methods are sometimes confused by the idea of emergence, which is mostly inductive. We can compare the concept of emergence in grounded theory with how we have learned about covid-19. Since it was a newly discovered virus, there were no textbooks to guide health professionals as they tried to combat the virus early on. Facts have emerged from data as a cascade of covid-19 patients has appeared in hospital emergency rooms in the intervening months. Although it was thought at first that serious cases of covid-19 generally presented as pneumonia for a relatively short duration, we now know that the virus can affect many different parts of the body in unusual ways for an unknown duration. Months later, facts and patterns are still emerging. The process of learning about the disease can be compared to the use of grounded data to discover conceptual theories. In the same way that physicians with open minds collected, organized, and examined medical data to guide their diagnosis and treatment of covid-19, grounded theorists can gather, organize, and interpret data that will help us to understand and navigate the many social changes that are occurring.

Explaining grounded theory, Glaser tells us to ask “what is going on” in a substantive area. Today, we have few referents to help us understand what is going on. As a family member who suddenly took on the role of home schoolteacher, I know that traditional ideas about family and school have been turned on their heads and I wonder about other changing social processes. Thinking about grounded theory research projects in the age of covid-19, researchers whose curiosity is sparked might ask questions such as, “What is going on in a given population when suddenly:

- teachers who are accustomed to classroom teaching are thrust into distance learning modalities?
- breadwinners lose jobs due to covid?
- farmers cannot find a way to gather or move their produce to markets?
- parents work from home while caring for children?
- physicians must ration care because of high demand and a scarcity of equipment or supplies?
- business owners are forced to close businesses or lay off employees?
- social activists participate in protest activities they strongly support during a raging pandemic?
- political leaders face mutually exclusive pressures from different constituencies?
- nurses must care for patients even though they have insufficient personal protective equipment?
- judges or prosecutors face potential disease transmission in the courtroom and prisons while adjudicating cases?
- families at risk of domestic violence are quarantined at home for long periods?
- teens' are unable to socialize with peers in the usual ways?
- researchers must gather data and otherwise conduct research while social distancing?

These questions are among are hundreds of potential questions that might stimulate curiosity as our world changes. They are ripe for investigation. I urge experienced and novice grounded theorists and PhD students to turn aside from tired and over-studied phenomena and consider this wide-open opportunity to advance important knowledge. In the first paper in this issue, *Getting Started*, Glaser discusses how to get started with grounded theory research. He examines the unique manner in which research problems and research questions are approached in classic grounded theory. New grounded theories can open doors of understanding. As Glaser has suggested, grounded theories can explain what is happening, predict what will happen, and interpret what has happened. Therefore, the knowledge gained from examination of today's social processes will help others to understand and deal with similar ones as they occur in the future—no longer uncharted territory.

Alvita Nathaniel, PhD

Editor