

## Editorial

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Ideas are precious. They may come to mind when you least expect to them to, and many times before you are consciously aware of them. The grounded theory solution to capturing valuable ideas from preconscious thought is writing memos. In this issue of the Grounded Theory Review, we are delighted to publish the first chapter of Barney G. Glaser's coming book on memoing, which truly opens up new perspectives on the potentially complex but productive process of collecting ideas that is such an important part of doing grounded theory.

A memo might be anything from a couple of words to several paragraphs or pages, and there are no rules as for how they should be written. Possibly for that reason, however, memoing is potentially one of the least focused aspects of doing grounded theory; yet anyone who has been struggling with categorization and handsorting, knows that memos are what ties concepts together when generating new theory. The article challenges preconceived thinking of what a memo actually is and prompts autonomous memo productivity.

The next focus in this issue is on short format publishing. When the Grounded Theory Review switched to digital open access publishing one and a half years ago, we introduced short format articles as an alternative way of publishing papers. Since grounded theories are conceptual and not descriptive, the presentation of a theory might be scaled up or down as time and place allows. We believe that the shorter format might inspire grounded theorists to present theoretical discussions on aspects of grounded theory even before they have any full-fledged theory that is ready for publishing. Therefore, this format allows authors the opportunity to focus on one issue at a time, and to test ideas at an earlier stage of a study.

Authors Olavur Christiansen, Svend Erik Sorensen, and Helen Scott have tested out a partial application of the grounded theory method on a study of poverty in Greenland. Due to strict time frames, the authors did not have the opportunity to generate a full theory, but even in a partial state, they found that grounded theory might be a very helpful research approach. With the partially developed theory, the researchers identified proactively steering behavior as a main concern of public employees in their attempt to resolve poverty problems in the population. The researchers managed to develop a suggested strategy to improve the self-reliance of socially dependent clients, and the study is still in progress.

Authors Roland Nino Agoncillo and Roberto Borromeo have developed the theory of becoming selfless, that derived from a study of educational partners in their home country. Educational partners are young volunteers who assist religious organizations in education, and being committed to service through becoming selfless is particularly important after a natural disaster like the super typhoon that hit the Philippines last fall. The article speaks to the broader field of management research on the issues of organizational commitment.

In a world of data overflow, there is a growing focus on secondary data analysis. As early as 1962, Barney G. Glaser wrote a short format article entitled 'Secondary Analysis: A Strategy for the Use of Knowledge from Research.' The article discusses comparability of existing data material and suggests that secondary analysis of data might help resolve challenges related to economy, client readiness, application testing and application variables. Dr. Glaser's PhD study on scientists and their organizational careers was generated from secondary data analysis, and the arguments for secondary analysis provided in this piece are just as relevant today. We hope the article might inspire GT researchers to consider the use of existing data before they start their next study.

The last short format article highlights generalizability dilemmas of grounded theories. Author Barry Chametzky discusses to what extent his substantive theory of offsetting the affective filter might be generalizable to other fields than that of online foreign language learners. The question of generalizability, or expanding from a substantive to a formal theory, is often raised during the PhD phase of a research career. Chametzky uses the five pillars for a satisfactory developed grounded theory as a spring board to discuss aspects of generalizability and transferability under the grounded theory umbrella.

## **Introduction: Free Style Memoing**

Barney G. Glaser, PhD, Hon. PhD

This neglect is partly my fault to be corrected in this book, which will deal with the vital aspect of memoing. Memos are a very important GT procedure that is fundamental to the GT generation analysis of grounded theory. This book emphasizes the importance of memos from the very start of the GT research to the working paper. It highlights and focuses on memoing in the hopes of aiding researchers, especially novice beginning researchers, with the management of the plethora of ideas that emerge with no loss thereof as GT research progresses.

It is normative for no one to read another persons memos. I have never known someone to ask another person to read his memos or someone to ask another person to read his memos. Thus memos can take any form. They are normatively and automatically private. Their style is free. Memos can take any form, shape or whatever without being critiqued or evaluated. They have no perfection. They give autonomy freedom to the researcher. They are a precursor to writing a working paper on the emerging theory. They grow from jots to growth in lengths that capture style and integrative complexity as the GT research progresses.

Memos are neglected as a GT procedure. Memos are where the emergent concepts and theoretical ideas are generated and stored when doing GT analysis. They are a neglected procedure mostly in writing about doing GT, yet they are vital to GT analysis for recording ideas, saving and tracing growth of analysis and integrating GT concepts as they emerge from constant comparative analysis during open coding and selective coding when theoretically sampling. Memos track the generation of a substantive GT from start to working paper.

### **Memos tie together the concepts**

This book is redundant to much of my writing in *Theoretical Sensitivity*, *Doing GT* and *Stop Write*. But it brings it all together in one book ideas on memoing and underscores the importance and use of memos. The goal and value of this book is to have all four previous chapters in other books in one volume and add to them my many subsequent thoughts on memoing and the thoughts of my colleagues and students about memos as a vital grounded theory method procedure. Memos are the media which tie together the concepts for a grounded theory for a paper or book. This book clarifies the use of memos which have been lauded for doing GT research, but often distorted in some way by formalization and natural academic tendencies of guidance. And further by relating them to other QDA methods of research which require aspects of doing memoing inimical to doing GT. This book is ideal for teaching and discussing the use and value of memos.

Books on doing GT, especially the books that remodel GT, give only brief discussions of writing memos in a page or two and then return to their main discussion of a GT method procedure. The vitalness, vitality, and significance of memos is slighted by an implicitly ordinary assumption that they will be done.

Memoing to accumulate memos can be described as building an intellectual capital memo bank of ideas and concepts from start of one's GT research to final sorting. Memos are the written records of the researcher's thinking, both conscious and preconscious realizations as the research and the researcher grow. Memos will vary in subject, coherence, interest, theoretical content, conceptual clarity, and future usefulness to a subsequent working paper or finished paper. There are no rules for writing them. They preserve what is easily forgotten over time as the researcher collects and codes data by constant comparison.

Putting ones ideas on paper is so they will not be forgotten and the mind is free to go on to other subsequent ideas. The ideas need only make sense to the writer/researcher when he/she goes back to review them. The ideas are preserved and easily recalled with analytic meaning. They are not lost.

Memoing, like all GT procedures, originated out of my collaboration with Anselm Strauss when doing the dying study. When we would discuss what we were finding in the dying data we would become overloaded with conceptual ideas and possibilities of conceptual focus. So I would try to write about them on index cards and further categorize them. But that became too structured and burdensome and too early in developing suitable concepts to formulate a theory about dying. So I started jotting memos to myself which varied from a jot or scratch to four pages. And thusly, I discovered what I have laid out in this book on memoing and how useful and important it is in generating grounded theory. The reader who memos will no doubt find his own useful aspects of memoing as he pursues his personal style. This will help his growth in trusting his own personal creativity.

Of course, memoing was just one of many procedures discovered when doing and writing *Awareness of Dying*. But memoing was least pronounced as a GT procedure within the popular discovered conceptual jargon of GT methodology. Procedures of which the reader knows many with grab. Hence the neglect of writing on memoing. This book will start researchers thinking of possibilities within and using the variability memoing. The reader will likely go beyond my discussions, examples and topics on memoing since I cannot cover everything. Memoing is not optional. It is a vital, important research procedure. So memo, memo, memo continuously memo. Memos ensure the quality of the emerging theory.

I turn now to discussions on memo free style writing and how memos track the growth of the generating of a theory. They also track the growth and development of the researcher's skill in generating a grounded theory's concepts and final integration by an emergent theoretical code emerging in the final sorting for a working paper (See *Stop Write*, Glaser 2008).

Anna Sandgren, a GT teacher, states the value of memoing for students. I paraphrase what she says: “Students sometimes worry about the value of memoing and worry about not seeing the value of memoing in the beginning of their researcher. They say it is not necessary when starting their research, but soon they understand its value and learn how important it is and that they cannot do a GT without memos. With a rich memo bank it is easy to write up a working paper on a theory and also to see which concepts are saturated or not. Also when sorting the memos it becomes easy enough to see gaps in the emerging theory.”

Thus memos have much value for generating a substantive theory. As the reader will see, memoing is not a simple normal task. It becomes more like a “lifestyle,” since the researcher has to be “on” all the time, ready to write a memo when ever an idea occurs, EVEN if it is in the middle of the night or during other activities, so ideas are not lost.

### **Free style**

Memoing on schedule may be OK, but memoing at any moment the idea occurs is important so the idea is not lost. No matter what your activity stop and memo if an idea occurs. Stop sleep, work, leisure, sex, driving a car etc., and memo your ideas before they are lost. At minimum, memo jot to ask oneself to do a full memo on a concept later. Jot a reminder memo so the idea is not lost. If you do not have enough time or are tied up in a situation, memo jot to memo later. A memo jot can be on any piece or scratch of paper. Grammar is irrelevant as one never shows the memo to anyone. The cliché is “stop, jot” at any moment, anywhere.

As I have written in other books, a memo has no prescribed structure or format. They can vary from a memo jot or grow to an almost full length paper based on mature memos later during the grounded analysis. As memos mature, they can end up pages on conceptually integrated grounded thought. Memos and sorting them assist researchers’ thinking through the labyrinth of emergent meanings and conceptualizations and their configurations while simultaneously recording a progression toward an emergent substantive GT.

Many teachers structure up memos as a requirement for GT research. They want them titled and subtitled by categories etc. They ruin the stop-jot, and they move away from the flexible expression of memoing or coding no matter what length. A memo can be written any way as they grow in maturity as the researcher codes, selectively codes, and theoretically samples etc. Memos track and grow in formulation with the experientialist’s increased growth of the GT analysis and the growth of the researcher.

The overwhelming pattern in graduate school PhD training is the training of the candidates to do procedures correctly so the student can be certified. Memos are included. Thus it is not surprising that PhD students want to know if they are doing memoing correctly. They want to show them to their supervisors to be guided and ok’d. And many

supervisors want to guide their students' memo writing and some write memo guiding in their books on doing GT.

Thus the quest to be guided and corrected is normative for PhD candidates. This quest must be given up when it comes to memoing for analysis for a GT. The candidate can and should use his autonomy to develop his own style and should not show his memos to anyone, colleagues or supervisors. They are private, which allows and fosters his autonomy and creativity to let emerge, unadvised, the GT generative analysis as the research goes on. Personal privacy stimulates preconscious processing of the data as the research constantly compares and generates ideas and sees patterns. There will be plenty of time to show others the analysis is a working paper written from sorted memos. Thus the training of the PhD candidate to memo is simple. It is to be personal and private as memos go every which way as they grow in formulating a theory from grounded clarity, as his memos mature.

Tom Andrews, an experienced grounded theorist and teacher, writes to me about the quest for guidance in memoing by students and the difficulty of giving up the normal quest. Tom writes: "Those new to GT, but particularly PhD students, want to be told in a very prescriptive way how to write memos. I am constantly being asked about this. They want to be told what a memo should contain and how it should be written. They need constant reassurance that they are doing them "right". Am I doing it right? is the question I frequently hear. Students constantly want me to look at their memos to give them some support or legitimacy but they learn quickly not to ask. It is almost as if they want detailed guidance on how to write memos. And indeed, some supervisors and authors approve such guidance in an attempt to provide more direction. However, this only serves to complicate what should be an open and free thinking process. Some students are unsure as the purpose of memoing and default to their reflexivity of QDA. I tell students that all they need to do is sort their memos into a theory. I do not think that many students truly grasp that it is through the memos that their theory *is* developed. Sorting memos is one of the least understood procedures of GT."

Tom is clear and correct. Hopefully this book will guide students to private, free style memoing and then eventually in the end to theoretical sorting for a theoretical code and a working paper. Formal training to memo can easily kill the autonomy and creativity of grounded memoing as the trained researcher tries to formalize up his memos when trying to conceptualize emergent patterns. Forming up memos fosters preconceptualization to meet format requirements.

A PhD candidate wrote me: "My other joy with the GT method is that it gives me permission to free write to develop memos. You have freed me from doing the impossible, constantly quoting and trying to describe quotes under QDA methods." For sure, the freedom to do private memos knows no bounds among PhD candidates, especially those stuck in intensively supervisory required conformity departments.

The student continues, "I often think that doing a PhD was the wrong career for me. I should have gone into creative writing. But with my finding classic GT, my creativity is taxed doing memos which is a better form of creativity for me." The creativity tapped in

writing memos is important as long as it is grounded. Grounded creativity will flow through to good writing for the substantive emergent theory.

### **No critique**

Do NOT critique your own memo style or your efforts at writing them. They are private and capture both your grounded and preconceptive thinking. And you never know when your ideas might fit with relevance in your emerging theory. A memo can suddenly become very important as the comparative analysis proceeds. There is little or no anticipating a memo's eventual relevance and fit to an emerging theory. Even with final sorting for a working paper a demoted memo can become relevant for a subsequent paper/theory from a different sorting. Writing memos copiously will over time build a significant memo bank and can become a significant intellectual asset all your own for generating more than one grounded theory from the collected data. But for sure, focus only on one theory at a time.

Novice GT researchers should not be shy of memoing. There are no rules for them, and memos are private and grow in clarity and precision and relevance as the novice develops skill in writing them and develops conceptual knowledge of his research data. Memos are vital in tracking and keeping track of the emergent main concern of the participants and how they continually resolve it. This discovered conceptualization will be new to the researcher and will be easy to lose without memoing by forgetting the unfamiliar new concepts. They are vital to tracking the collection of data and the conceptual changes that may result as new data surprise the researcher as he constantly compares the data for analysis.

Andy Lowe, an experienced GT researcher, wrote me: "Many pseudo and novice GT researchers fail to fully understand that intellectual creativity only flows freely when we externalize our thoughts by memo writing. Theoretical memos are a vital device to unlock the connections between the conscious, unconscious, and preconscious mind. Memo writing is a liberating process because it encourages the GT researcher to acknowledge and develop his latent ability as an author autonomist of his theoretical capitalist supervisors and committee members. Memo writing grows in skill and soon enough the GT researcher becomes disciplined and rigorous so his intellectual development can evolve. Once the memo writing process becomes a daily practice, the GT researcher's confidence increases dramatically because he begins to understand that concepts will emerge and there is no need to worry or be tempted to forcing the data into a preconceived pattern. The main issue for the PhD candidate supervisors is not to allow the GT researcher to do any talking BEFORE memo writing has saturated and has run its course." So much so true.

Asking me questions about memoing is not an "ignorance display" as one student put it. The variability that occurs in private memos is so great that there is no perfect sure answer to describing a perfect memo. I never know which was "I will take answers to email questions of how to" or what is a memo. I will, however, not reveal to others who asked what questions as they are private. I preserve the researcher's autonomy.

Memos can facilitate research teams or collaborative research, IF, and be careful, the collaborator understands the data and memoing. But be careful, when collaborating, of giving up the autonomy and personal strength of the right to privacy of your memos. The power of privacy is not to be given easily. Having memos read or reviewed by others always tends to make one sure of their formulation and their level of perfection. Judith Holton emailed me: "Sharing memos with others whether supervisors, collaborators or colleagues runs the risk that the research will shift focus from conceptual ideas to writing style, grammatical perfection. This premature perfection can undermine the researcher's openness in favor of getting 'right'. It also will tend the researcher toward preconceptions." Judith is quite correct. Yet dangerously so, sometimes premature circulating private reflections in memo form can be quite inspiring when shown to team members who are supportively excited by the memo. But do not do this at the risk of autonomy and privacy.

When a finished paper is submitted to a committee, showing memos, if need be or required, can provide a history of the generation and emergence of the conceptual substance of the emergent theory. Later, after a paper is showable, memos can show how a substantive theory was arrived at. This situation seldom occurs as substantive theories are not proven. They are grounded and general and modifiable. Some authors give examples of their memos as extensive formulations, sometimes with diagrams or charts as if all memos should be like that. The answer is NOT SO. Memos are just ideas, any form, free style and pushing formulation misses this point. Extensive and mature memos that border on being a part of a paper, can be shown as just that – part of a paper, not as memos. Fine, but memo papers are a small part of the memoing procedure and process from start to working paper.

Lora Lampert in her article on memoing in the *Sage Handbook of Grounded theory* supports the private style, "ones own, and not prerequired by formats." She says her paper presents "my own variation on the themes of memoing. Any one variation of memoing should not be taken as general or better than another. Learning to memo is a private skill suitable to the psychology of the researcher alone. What is important is no matter what the researcher's style of memos is that he memos to help generate the emergent conceptualizations from the data so too much to remember is not lost. Reviewing memos on a category can help generate new emergent concepts and links between them. But the reviewing is a private personal matter of the researcher." Lampert agrees with personal style, even though much of her article deals with how to formulate and format them. Hard to resist formatting.

One student has captured the freedom of memoing to the max. Robb Shoaf emails me, "Memos are free verse. The free association of ideas that begin as inspired by a category or incident of a category that takes on a life of its own and go in directions we could not have foreseen, sometimes parallel or sometime deeper. The researcher should allow himself this ultimate freedom from the beginning. To be sure, memos will form up as they mature with clarity." Yes, indeed, memos lead to exciting discovery when the style of memoing is free.

A teacher wrote me to paraphrase the free style of memoing: "I had a student who drew picture diagrams to memo, so while she was talking about the diagrams, I



memoed them in writing to show her how they could be recorded for later sorting. When I demonstrate memoing to my students, I realize it is my style, which may not be their style. They eventually just get it according to their own style. When trying to teach memoing, I found it is best to relax and just let it happen as part of the magic of the GT process. I should not worry much about teaching memoing and just encourage its happening." Thus, doing memos come naturally like note taking. Thus, a teacher need only advise the novice student to do them in their own style and not worry any so called established style. But memoing they must do from the start of their research."

Another teacher wrote me that "many students are not trained in the ongoing process of taking notes in class. With all the information available on the internet why spend the time on writing one's own notes? This makes no sense, as the information can be quite different between self and the Internet and the student loses the creativity of memoing. Also, memoing methods media abound today for taking good notes and memoing on the spot. One can do memos on a cell phone, in an email, a smart phone or a tablet or a computer." Whatever the choice or choices, the media should be available to constantly memo as the stream of analysis occurs to keep track of. And most important, the memos should be printable so they can be cut up, piled and sorted. Otherwise they may be easily neglected or forgotten. Sorting a pile of memos is their end use for analysis."

The normal fear of getting memo style "right" in our academic world of seeking perfection disappears as the experience of generating theory grows. Another student wrote me: "Memo writing until I worked at it and gave myself permission to free write seemed daunting, I so wanted to get it right. Now it has become part of me so I think I must of have gotten it right. My style has become a part of me." To be sure, as the analysis continues, the fear of not memoing "perfectly" diminishes and memo skill increases and becomes natural. The fear of not getting it "right" will diminish over time as the skill of writing them in one's private style grows and with it is rich production and power of analysis. It is part of the growing experientiality of generating GT.

Anna Sandgren, a GT teacher, writes kernel wisdoms on fear of learning memoing. "It is good for the students to see varied examples of different ways of memoing, to see that they can memo in their own personal way. They can memo in a way that suites them best and it is ok." Of course since memos are private, it will be difficult to see varied examples. Trusting to variation is in order, but it will not matter so much as personal style takes over.

Anna continues: "If students want to type write on paper, on computer or in their own scribble etc., it is ok. Memos can be in any form in written word or in figures etc." I add to Anna's thoughts and emphasize that whatever the initial form, be sure your memos can end up in writing on paper so they can be sorted easily. Diagrams are difficult to sort clearly since they are of varied purpose.

Anna continues that "drawing figures helps me a lot during the theoretical coding process. I draw figures of the different options of theoretical codes to see how my concepts relate to each other. Some of my drawings might not be so grounded all the time, but it helps me to trigger my creativity so when I go back to my memos and write more memos

on memos I see how everything finally fits.” So obviously free style spawns many routes to a final working paper. Drawings and diagrams may help, but they indicate many variables, which then should be written up singularly so they can be sorted.

Anna closes with the same observation as many other teachers.. She says “At the same time that memoing without any rules are freedom for some people, it could be difficult for other students that are not used to having such freedom. They are used to following guides on ‘how to do’ and only feel safe with guides when they do not know, they think, how to write memos. They feel insecure and confused as a consequence.” To be sure, this is a possible beginning of memoing, but as these students focus on writing and not talking they soon become confident in style and privacy. Experientiality solves the fear and lost issue.

Style is what it is for each researcher and develops in skill and coverage over time as the research progresses. A student wrote me “I seem to memo best in the morning. Morning memos are a purging of all the work my mind has the night before. I get some pretty good ideas in the morning and it flows. I still do not have the habit of constant memoing if that makes sense. As a result, I think I miss the random ideas that occur during the day. I have an Ipad and use pages to document my memos although I really like to hand memo. I think memoing on a computer forces me to edit and I miss some of the free flow aspects that happen when I hand memo. I also like the idea of hybrid memoing where I scribble notes in a big think notebook, in my memo bank and memo jots in my field notes.”

### **A challenging learning curve**

Obviously, the learning curve of free style memoing using recent computer and cell technology is bumpy and challenging. The curve raises its own individual problems to solve unique for each individual researcher. Two items students must resolve is that all memos must finally be printed so they can be piled and be hand sorted. Then with sorting the memo ideas will finally find their place in the generated theory with fit and relevance. Memos that seem out of fit with the emerging theory will find themselves when being sorted. Keep in mind that memo learning curves vary, since they are about a private style. Private memoing is another dimension of the autonomy that GT research brings into the researchers career. Learning memoing is a vital part of the experientiality of going conceptual which fosters the researcher pride and excitement in knowing with confidence how to do GT research.

The constant questioning of oneself, of one’s memo, such as are they conceptual or abstract enough, am I relating concepts correctly, have I discovered the best theoretical code when sorting etc., etc., is autonomous. This questioning goes on constantly and answers improve with constant self learning. It is normal to quest an academic ok from a supervisor or colleague, but unnecessary and likely to be subversive to the researcher free individual style. Waiting for an ok will get tiresome. The researcher learns that outside comments are momentary. The merit of ones memos comes out in sorting for a theoretical code and doing a working paper (see *Stop Write*, Glaser 2012) which he can show to others.

Worrying their goodness for future sorting and subsequent writing will stimulate any necessary changes to one's memos by comparing to other memos suitable for sorting and generating more memos if changes in some memos become necessary for discovery of a good theoretical code and conceptualization that organizes the memos better for a working paper. Memos correct each other. Thus, the researcher is by personal style and privacy not locked into a particular preconceived theory as emergent changes and modifications occur in his memos as he sorts them for a working paper. This paper will show to others how he sees all the concepts fitting together. To be sure, the working paper can then be shown to significant others for comments.

### **Stop, jot**

Stop, jot is the memoing style jargon. Interrupt any activity to stop and write a memo on any idea. Do not talk the idea alternatively as you will likely to lose it because talk dilutes energy and motivation. Catch the idea any way any time in writing and note its grounding or preconception if possible. Capture the idea with imputed correction if need be. Writing the memo any way you can when you get an idea usually means you are capturing preconscious realizations that are grounded as your mind wanders over constant comparisons of incidents in your data. Note preconceptions which may lead to theoretical sampling and use selective coding to check them out. Note possible theoretical sampling for selective coding. You are on your own style, these are just ideas. But as the analysis proceeds and memos mature, theoretical sampling, selective coding, and possible theoretical codes will start to appear within your free style framework. Your free style should be open to surprising realizations and especially so for a eureka moment about a main concern, or a core category or a subcategory or a theoretical code. Expressing the memo any which way to capture ideas means you do not worry about grammar, English, spelling type of note etc. Just get the realization or plain idea down without talking. Do not, if possible, preconceive the ideas, their fit or relevance prematurely for the emerging theory.

As I have said, novices go through a period of some doubts and confusion beginning memoing. No showing memos to colleagues or supervisors puts the resolution of these doubts firmly on the researcher's shoulders. The tendency is to get them ok'd, which diminishes as one style develops during the progress of the research. These doubts occur even for those novices who have memo'd for other aspects of life or study and thus are experienced.

Here is some thought from a student who trusts to the future value of memoing and his growing skill. He writes me: "Memoing seems to be the key to GT research. However, I am in a bit of confused state about memoing. At this point I am memoing about questions that pop up as I code my interviews. I do not have a problem generating ideas and I think my memos will help put the ideas together. Memos are the only way I can remember ideas. Memos make me think about what is going on in the data, which I like. Yet, memos still seem to be an elusive concept to me, but I am trusting the memoing process. So I keep memoing. I may have to force longer memos. I am still memoing ideas as questions hoping answers will follow. I reserve my private right to write disjointed memos."

We see that growing pains surely come with the development of memoing skill. The memoing skill grows more and more to suits the needs of GT research. Doubts and confusion about memoing diminish as memos mature. Most researchers go through these growing skill pains and discover in due course the great benefits of memoing for GT analysis. And all this goes on privately so experienced memo makers have no perfective model priority. Fear of memoing properly has no bearing on the researcher's analysis. Examples of so called good memos seen in some books on doing GT are derailing as they miss the point that from beginning to end of the analysis as memo track the emergent theory privately. Also "good" memos book style easily derails the analysis with proper preconceptions. Free style is far more creative.

And of course, not showing memos also means not talking about them to maintain free style. Some colleagues' talk can be about the same as memo on your memo, which stimulates critiques, blocks, feeds fear, and derails your memo. Talk about or showing memos can make for over formalization memos that paralyze emergence before sorting, memos that yield a theoretical code that organizes the integration of the emerging theory. Do not yield your autonomy by preconceiving a theoretical code ahead of sorting for it. Do not allow yourself to structure up by preconception a theory before sorting. Some researchers just assume it's always a basic social process involved way before sorting, which is pure preconception. The memo bank of free style memos is there to sort for the theoretical code that fit with relevance. It is a shame to force when the memos are there for sorting.

Tape recording interviews gives a researcher the "feeling of hearing it all," not missing anything etc. Tape recording, I have warned over and over in my books, is too much coverage and too slow to get to analysis because of waiting for type written form. I have always advised taking field notes during interviews, to develop the field note skill and also to have data to start constantly comparative analysis THAT night the data is collected. And of course, start memoing along with the analysis so no ideas are lost. Forgetting ideas in the beginning is especially easy. Yes, free style memoing starts immediately with constant comparisons of the first interview data and even before analysis starts. Yes, memoing starts immediately with data collection, if not started before. It starts with note taking at the same time as taking field notes and very soon after as the researcher is filled with thoughts from listening to answers to interview questions.

### **Memoing holds preconscious thoughts**

Eventual theoretical completeness is GT's conceptual goal. Its goal is not achieved by full descriptive coverage provided by tape recording. It is achieved by the constant comparative analysis method tracked by memos and achieved by beginning to see the platter in the field notes. Memoing holds intuitive preconscious thought that generates emergent concepts that name patterns of behavior that fit, are relevant and delimit the conceptual theory. It is difficult to memo conceptual patterns from tape recordings that are not yet typed. Also, collecting data by tape collects too many interchangeable indicators of

patterns. It is over coverage and beyond concept saturation of interchangeable indicators. Adequate memoing catch all this by warning of waste of time and effort. The conceptual analysis is kept on track by memoing. The dictum is to start memoing immediately with starting data collection by field notes. And starting requires an autonomous free style to memo, since “who knows” what they should look like from the start. Memos take on a companionating power with the GT analysis, and worrying about the analysis is far more important than worrying about a “right” or “perfect” memo style. A suitable personal style will grow with the analysis.

Nudist recording of interview or observation data does away with the power of interchangeability of indices indicating patterns of behavior, thus, the power to delimit data collection, or descriptive coverage and thus delimit conceptualization. Or why keep collecting data on an already emergent concept and its relation to the emerging theory? Memoing tracks and helps control this waste of time, energy, and power of conceptualizing once a pattern has been discovered. Subsequent indices are interchangeable. The memo style is irrelevant as long as it gives the researcher this power. Memos take the researcher on to the intuitive grasp for selective sampling and coding for related concepts. Memoing field notes keeps up the current generating analytic activity of where, what, and who to interview next for more related concepts. The researcher learns to trust his style of memoing more and more as he memos his way to the sorting of mature memos for a working paper. Recording interviews no matter the device use stalls, if not totally blocks, this process. Recordings are not flexible enough for sorting and provide too much descriptive coverage. Hand sorted typed or written memoing can track and rescue this stall in favor of conceptual theory emerging quicker.

Asking me or other experienced GT researchers how to memo is not an “ignorance display,” as one student put it. The variability that goes on in private memoing is so great that there is no perfect answer for what a perfect memo looks like. I never know which way I will give an answer to both relieve insecurity yet not tell him what to do. Email me ([bglaser@speakeasy.net](mailto:bglaser@speakeasy.net)) For sure I will not reveal the question, nor who asked it in order to maintain memo privacy.

One student wrote me about how private memos filled with description function to spare the reader all the boring details of description that go into conceptualizing a pattern. They are not necessary to detail when writing up the inductive result which is abstract of time, place and people. And thus, when descriptions which yield the conception will soon be forgotten, and the substantive theory takes on a life of its own. The student further said: “It became clear to me that data do not speak themselves. There has to be a conceptual idea that helps them speak in memos as they are memoed when going back and forth between data and concept. It is not necessary or required in GT research to detail to the reader in the final paper how one generated their theory using all the GT procedures (such as coding, sampling comparing etc) to eventually end up with an abstract theory. Memos preserve this generating detail data privately.”

Hans Thulesius, a well known grounded theory researcher and teacher, confirms my dictum of free style memoing. Hans says “Memoing is very important in GT research, but

you can memo in whatever way you like. Hand writing, typing or drawing diagrams but keep them private. When you have a big stack of memos you can begin hand sorting them, placing them in smaller piles on a big table. Then writing more memos are triggered by the sorted memos which when you reach saturation will eventually lead to a working paper.” Hans continues about free style memoing: “Every person finds his or her own way of writing and organizing one’s memos. The most important thing about memos is that you get out your ideas onto paper. Glaser warns against rules for memos since they can stifle the creative memo writing. Memos should be written at any time to capture the ideas that come when you compare and code data. And stay open to whatever emerges and memo it at all stages of doing GT.”

Many students write me about the joy of free style memoing. It brings out their autonomy with the freedom to discover and then keep it memoed. The variation that occurs in free style memoing is amazingly wonderful. Brian Steven, a PhD candidate, wrote me “Can I say as a PhD, I am so excited having discovered GT, but oh I wish I had done so much earlier in my PhD. My write ups have been hampered by trying to fit QDA methods. I am free of trying to describe quotes under QDA methods. My other joy is that it allows me to free write and develop memos.” Yes, indeed, the excitement of free style memoing is part of the total excitement that comes with generating an emergent theory from data. Memos track this excitement as we shall discuss in the next chapter.

The variation that occurs from free style memoing is truly amazing, and wonderful, and unpredictable. Another student said that his daytime memos are increasing since he switched from internet memoing, which made him edit them, to doing handwriting in large notebook pads. His memo jots are increasing and he has a growing lessening need to have his memos ok’d. I trust many readers feel in their own story this growth of autonomy in a lessening need to be ok’d as they grow with the analysis.

Further this student says: “It gets tiresome waiting for approval of my memos, so I am memoing as I think memos should be. I write memos on memos on ideas about what concepts mean and how they may fit together.” Thus, memoing in private has taken over his GT analysis and it works. Many novices and researchers experience this take over of private memoing on concepts with delight as they work toward saturation of concepts and sorting memos for a working paper. They find that sorting their memos gives too what they think about their concepts the meaning and sense and need for personal ok’ing their private memos. And they realize no one else could have ok’d their memos properly. Private ok’ing of memo styles grows with the analysis. Ending with sorting memos finally gives all the meaning, creativity, autonomy, and ok sense wished for in personal memo style for generating one’s grounded theory. Memo styles vary widely but no matter what the style the consequence of sorting them has to be the same: an integrated, conceptual substantive theory. I deal with sorting memos at length in the next chapter and chapter 6.



## **A Partial Application of Classic Grounded Theory in a Study of Poverty in Greenland**

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### **Abstract**

This paper describes a partial application of the classic grounded method in a research project tasked to surface an understanding of poverty, and offer policy recommendations for change, to the Government of Greenland. The aim of analysis was to find the core category and related categories though analysis stopped short of conceptual completeness and conceptual integration. The theory explains that from the perspective of social sector administrators, there is a concern as to how to transition clients from a state of damaging dependence to a less dependent state. The administrators process this concern by engaging in proactive steering within a societal structure which is characterised by a lack of capacity and discontinuity, and in a context of overwhelm. The theory developed was successfully applied to satisfy the objectives of the research project.

### **Introduction**

In a study of poverty and its possible alleviation in Greenland, classic grounded theory (CGT) was partially applied to produce a new perspective to inform policymakers (Sørensen, 2010).

As a self-governing entity within the Danish realm, Greenland is financially subsidised by Denmark, and without this subsidy, Greenland would most likely be in a state of severe poverty equal to the poorest of developing nations. Social-structural issues regarding health, education and employment exacerbate poverty-related problems, which are more pronounced in Greenland than in other parts of the Danish realm, or in Western Europe as a whole. Startling examples of such problems are the high rates of suicide and sexual abuse, and that the number of abortions equals the number of births (Grønlandsstatistik 2013; Statistics Greenland 2013). In many respects, the situation of Greenland's population is closer to that of the indigenous people of North America than to its European neighbours.

In relation to poverty, the three primary tasks of Greenland's government are firstly, to provide for those who cannot provide for themselves due to lack of income; secondly, to take care of those who are unable to take care of themselves, e.g., due to age or handicap; and thirdly, to help people and families to become independent of



public assistance. To inform this work, the Government commissioned a wide-ranging study. The research design was complex and included analyses of quantitative data, comparison of poverty definitions, quantitative measurement of poverty, and comparisons of quantitative measurements of poverty. There was also a qualitative study of data collected from interviews with people in the administration and their clients, private entrepreneurs and members of the general public.

In particular, the Government requested a discovery of the meaning of poverty in the local Greenlandic context. This discovery was to be based on available quantitative data and on collected qualitative data. As far as possible, this discovery of the meaning of poverty should also include a discovery of clues to resolve some of the problems that were connected to poverty. Thus, part of the task was to give policy recommendations to the Government.

### **The CGT study**

Given this brief, classic grounded theory became an obvious choice of methodology. The consultant however, was not fully familiar with CGT and while CGT studies can be time-consuming, this part of the study had to be completed over a period of approximately four months. The consultant therefore needed to develop theoretical and practical insights into CGT methodology and its application, swiftly. To facilitate this process the consultant participated in a valuable CGT Workshop in the United Kingdom in February 2010, and sought equally valuable guidance from Olavur Christiansen, a Fellow of the Grounded Theory Institute. Given the time-frame, it was deemed impossible to use the CGT procedures in full as prescribed by Barney Glaser (Glaser & Strauss 1967, Glaser 1998, 2001) therefore, analysis had to be selective.

As is common with CGT, the data collected was mostly qualitative and obtained by interview; participants were mainly public employees within the educational and health sectors, and their respective clients. The selection of 70 interviewees during field work largely followed the prescribed CGT procedure for theoretical sampling. In total, Greenland has about 56,000 inhabitants covering an ice-free area of 410,000 km<sup>2</sup>. Nuuk, the capital, has 16,000 inhabitants with a further 32,000 inhabitants living in 16 towns, and 8,000 more inhabitants living in approximately 60 settlements. Most settlements comprise 50-75 people while a few are larger and have 200-500 people (Statistics Greenland 2013). The focus was on four geographical areas indicated by the quantitative data to be quite different from each other: Eastern Greenland (1 town, 1 settlement), Southern Greenland (1 town, 1 settlement), Central Greenland (1 settlement), and the Northern Greenland (1 town, 2 settlements). The a priori selection of these populations may be seen as a data selection approach designed to maximise the differences.

Since time was limited, the aims for analysis and the generation of theory were to find the core variable and several other high-level concepts. Based on the procedures executed, we are confident that we have developed useful categories that reflect the actual situation and that analysis sufficiently conceptualises the relationships between the categories. This new perspective enables us to proffer some new solutions to

poverty-related problems in Greenland. The core variable selected was one of several potential core categories and therefore whilst useful, the opportunity remains for developing a major CGT study.

### **The beginning of theory generation: current understanding**

From the perspective of administrators in the social sector, the problem relates to their clients and in particular to the clients' states of damaging dependence. The administrators' main concern is to do with the need to transition their clients into a less dependent state; a state they attempt to bring about by changing clients' behaviours. This process of proactive steering is undertaken within a societal structure which is characterised by a lack of capacity and discontinuity, and in a context of overwhelm.

### **Damaging dependence**

Traditional Inuit virtues such as humility, reservation and reticence are still practised in Greenland, but as a consequence of damaging dependence they are expressed in the form of subordination, meaninglessness and powerlessness. Where a desired state might be an inter-dependence based on family ties and social relationships, damaging dependence is based on an over-reliance on others and is perpetuated by a cycle of self-destructive behaviours. The following data-slices illustrate this concept and its significance.

Damaging dependence is seen in cases where a student or apprentice is unable to complete training due to a lack of trained teachers and is therefore unable to work and support herself. It is also seen where opportunities to work and self-support are limited. For example, the availability of work can be unreliable and dependent on the unpredictable conditions of natural resources: the fish processing factory might only work every other week and sometimes not at all. It may re-open or may not. This has a strong impact on the income levels of the towns and settlements and affects an individual's ability to self-support.

Abuse of many types underpins psycho-social and health issues often leading to dependence on public sector support. Compounding an original stress, a social situation that requires a response from an often ineffective or non-existent public authority can leave the client in isolation and 'paralysed'. Families de-railed by similar events must seek assistance from other family members, friends or the public system. It is also not rare for the economic resources of functioning families in the towns to be (ab)used by less well-off family members from settlements or from family members who might be drug or alcohol addicts. In these cases entire families can be drawn into a state of damaging dependence.

### **Proactively steering behaviour**

The challenges for the social workers in proactively steering clients' behaviour are significant and their efforts are often futile. The social workers are heavily overburdened and there is a very high turn-over of employees. The following data-slices illustrate the concept of proactively steering the clients' behaviour and its significance.

In the small towns and settlements of Greenland, there is almost an over-reliance on teachers to guide the young and the challenge for teachers is to proactively steer their students' behaviour both within the educational setting and without.

Similarly, social workers wish to proactively steer the behaviour of their clients to (i) ensure proper livelihoods for children, young people and families, and in particular (ii) to assist in detoxification or prevention of drug abuse and (iii) to assist in keeping 'law and order' at night-time, often addressing petty crime. Also, proactive steering of behaviour is observed in psychologists' efforts to treat and support sexually abused or traumatised children and young people.

An unintended consequence of social workers' efforts to proactively steer client behaviour toward problem prevention and problem solving behaviours is that these efforts can themselves lead to damaging dependence, increasing the burden on the social structures. For example, the processes used by the social workers often rely on 'external means' that do not enhance or engage the resources of the 'self' of the client, and instead perpetuates the problem by keeping the client dependent on 'externals', e.g., threats of withdrawal, rewards of delivery and cash.

The process of proactively steering client behaviour will not be elaborated in this paper as the substantively coded data has not yet been conceptually integrated into the theory. However, the considerable overburdening of the social workers was recurrently indicated in the data and studies from the wider research project have indicated that the overwhelm experienced by social workers in Greenland is strongly correlated to the issues of discontinuity within the basic social structure, and the lack of capacity within the public system. Indicators of discontinuity and lack of capacity follow.

Relocations, terminations and lay-offs throughout Greenland's public system have caused the disruption and loss of knowledge and skilled labour in the public system with huge attendant problems amounting to inefficient service delivery. Social projects are discontinued due to the persistent lack of professional staff, such as social workers and/or psychologists. In the remote settlement structure of Greenland, social services and support are provided randomly or through monthly visits from the central administration.

Lack of capacity and discontinuity are seen in nearly all towns and settlements, for example, there is an almost persistent lack of teaching staff available to fill vacant positions and those positions that are filled by qualified teachers frequently become vacant again, leaving a knowledge vacuum in the locality. Therefore, it is difficult to increase capacity through the recruitment, development and retention of qualified employees. The lack of an 'academic' or 'learning' environment often means that staff find it difficult to develop professionally and professional challenges remain unmet. Other professionals working with 'heavy' social cases often leave their positions due to an absence of collaboration and feelings of isolation. This situation is accentuated by the often inefficient political leadership of the towns.

This lack of capacity of the social structures is exacerbated by the problem of discontinuity within. Both factors contribute to the sense of overwhelm experienced by the administration which causes staff to leave and results in a further reduction in capacity and discontinuity. The lack of trained staff impacts on the efficiency of work and service delivery to clients. For example, data showed that many foster families had too many children placed with them. This had a negative effect on the care of the foster children who would often end up in a more severe situation than before being removed from their own families or former foster families.

### **A suggested definition of poverty and its related solution(s)**

One possible definition of poverty is the psychological distress caused by living in a state of damaging dependence; of being unable to utilise the resources of one's self in order to obtain a balanced 'dependency-independency vis-à-vis others'.

An opportunity of grounded theory is that key dependent and independent variables are identified. If an independent variable is changed, it will cause a change in each of the dependent variables. It is speculated that a key independent variable in this study is the resources of self and one way to enable an individual to utilise these resources is to develop the self, in particular, their self-confidence. An outcome of this study was therefore to recommend that a poverty reduction strategy for Greenland should take its point of departure in proactively steering behaviour with the aim of building the self-confidence of its clients. The societal structure being characterised by discontinuity and lack of capacity however, does not facilitate a fundamental social process in which one of the key solutions to address poverty concerns is sustainable confidence building. Nonetheless, data has shown that where there is *sustained trust* among the parties encouraged by transparency, access to information and information exchange, sustained trust contributes to positive behaviour change. Two examples are the reduction in drug abuse and an increase in the number of youth enrolled in education. The aim is therefore to reduce the burden on the system by increasing the self-reliance of clients and stepping outside of the cycle whereby support creates future damaging dependence.

At the operational level courses and training of social workers, teachers, and other public employees will embrace the concept of 'proactively steering behaviour' through the development of sustainable confidence building facilitated by sustained trust between social workers and clients. Supplementary and supportive approaches have also been identified including the adoption of a programmatic approach to social preventive work. This means combining different solutions more effectively than what has previously been done in traditional practices; for example, a 'family programme' that addresses, in a flexible manner, client-related training and support in (i) parental responsibility and the safeguarding of children and youth, (ii) education and housing, (iii) family economy/budgeting, and (iv) family and rules and regulations of the public sector.

### **Opportunities**

This study has explained a main concern of administrators in the social sector of Greenland and has gone some way to explain how the efforts to address the main concern worsen the problem. This understanding has enabled the development of a strategy to work within the constraints of a lack of capacity and discontinuity to improve the self-reliance of its destructively dependent population. It has been achieved through the partial use of the classic grounded theory method. An amount of data far in excess of the needs of a grounded theory was collected and only partially analysed. This analysis has emerged some relevant concepts and whilst the relationships between them are not yet fully understood, a core category is tentatively recognised, and some of the relationships postulated. Further selective coding, memoing and eventually sorting would reveal a more conceptually integrated theory. It is a credit to grounded theory that even in this partial state, the resultant theory is useful.

Moving forward, a paper in progress will compare the understanding of poverty generated by this study with other internationally recognised definitions of poverty. We also identify an opportunity to conduct a study across national borders to develop different understandings of poverty. We plan to discuss the implications of this theory for practice and seek to determine its contribution to knowledge by comparing it to extant theory and literature.

It is our hope that this study will encourage CGT consultants to feel increasingly confident with this method and to include this option in their contract proposals.

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## **Becoming Selfless: A Grounded Theory of Commitment to Service**

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### **Abstract**

This study focuses on the substantive area of commitment to service in the community of educational partners in the Philippines. Educational partners are lay people who assist religious organizations in the field of education, and in the Philippines, about 96 percent of educational partners are in Lasallian schools and organizations. Educational partners are young professionals, volunteers between the ages of 24-39 who strive to live the teachings of St. John Baptist De La Salle. The volunteers aim to generate a spirit of service, a sense of mission to the youth. By using a classic grounded theory approach, the theory of becoming selfless was generated. The theory explains the stages educational partners undergo when resolving their organizational commitment to service. Organizational commitment is the psychological attachment, involvement and identification of the individual to the organization. Becoming selfless provides a theoretical focal point to better understand the complexity of commitment.

### **Introduction**

In a predominantly Catholic country like the Philippines, the role of educational partners is very important. But in spite of their importance, the role might be somewhat unclear even to the educational partners themselves. The initial research question of this study was prompted by a comment by a lay teacher from one of the De La Salle Schools who said, "Why not explore the area of being an educational partner, since even after many years of being an educational partner, I still do not really know what it is to be one."

Educational partners' commitment to service are crucial especially in unpredictable times like in the aftermath of the catastrophe that hit the country because of the super typhoon in the fall of 2013. How might educational partners in affected areas manage, or even understand, their commitment to service when schools are destroyed and some of their students' families are possibly wiped out? Even though this study was conducted before the catastrophe, the question of what it is to be an educational partner transcends the tragedy that we have right now.

Data was collected through face-to-face interviews, and classic grounded theory was used for data abstraction and conceptualization that is vital, relevant, and

yields high-impact concerns (Glaser and Strauss 1967, Glaser 1978, 1992). Stakeholders such as graduate students, administration, faculty, and academic service staff comprise the participants in this study. Consistent with Glaser's (1998, 2001) recommendations, interviews of the participants were not tape-recorded. The researcher listened intently to the sharing of the participant after posing an initial question, then from time to time, in between questions, the researcher jotted down notes that were substantial.

Theoretical sampling and incidents articulated in the data were analyzed and coded, using the constant comparative method, to generate initially substantive and later theoretical categories (Holton, 2010). It is by constantly comparing the meaning of indicators that concepts and their properties are slowly built. Like a "pendulum" that swings back and forth from one indicator to the next the data was compared and analyzed. The emerging categories were theoretically coded by naming the particular relationship that exists between them a process (Glaser, 1978). At successive stages of the study, themes moved from low levels of abstraction to overarching themes. These overarching themes served as the foundational pillars of theoretical saturation when the additional data for such themes failed to uncover any new ideas about the developing theory (Bowen, 2006).

### **The Theory**

Becoming selfless emerged as a theory about a pattern of behavior of educational partners who seek to resolve the main concern of commitment to service. Essentially, educational partners undergo five stages of attachment to the Lasallian school or organization: 1) discovering the nature of being an educational partner; 2) realizing implications; 3) contextualizing; 4) living-out; 5) unveiling expected outcome or consequences;

Discovering the nature of being an educational partner involves the imperative of being rooted, which means being deeply connected with the ideals of St. John Baptist De La Salle. These ideals include being a visionary, having a vocation to serve, a sense of stewardship and belonging to a network of Lasallians, assuming a role in the shared mission, and giving an undaunted service to the marginalized. A feeling of being rooted is expressed in sentences like "being an educational partner gives me a direction in life through the principles of the founder" and "...to have a strong sensitivity to work in the name of the founder." Discovering means figuring out what an educational partner is through statements like "we mold the children to love and serve." Stakeholders such as the graduate students, administration, faculty, and academic service staff begin to find out what it means for them to share in the Lasallian mission of being educational partners in service.

Realizing, on the other hand, requires stakeholders to comprehend more deeply how the life and mission of the founder relates to their own work and lives. The realizing stage involves a dynamic sensitivity where educational partners are



focusing more intensively on their own passion to teach and serve. They develop a personal conviction where the individual role of being a Lasallian is identified through statements like “educating the young, especially the poor” and “I knew that I have that calling to teach.” Such a passion and conviction is necessary in order to recognize, understand, and realize the shared mission.

The stages of discovering and realizing trigger the causal condition of being an educational partner. The new role is further contextualized through extended ties to Lasallians in school and the rest of the community; through their dedicated excellence as graduate students and in the administration, faculty, and academic service staff. Their connectedness to the Lasallian institution is identified in statements like “the need to get together in terms of our vision on why we are doing this is crucial,” and “we work with different kinds of people in achieving our goals.”

At the next stage, living-out, the actions and strategies of being a Lasallian educational partner surface. Educational partners now become more sensitive to their own passion to teach and serve, and they develop their own personal conviction. Living-out manifests through collaboration with other partners; practicing collegial-action; having unity of purpose with moral and ethical standards; taking part in different school and socio-activities; dedicating one’s self to progressive formation; and leading people towards God by salvation-orientation.

At the fifth stage of becoming selfless, the consequences of becoming an educational partner manifest in that he or she becomes associated living witnesses, value-driven individuals who are spiritually grounded agents of personal transformation. The theory of becoming selfless provides a substantive theoretical understanding of the systematic way that educational partners apply organizational commitment in their own lives.

## **Discussion**

Becoming selfless, which emerged from the data of this study, is the core category of a basic social process by which stakeholders attempt to understand and articulate their commitment to service in being educational partners in the Philippines. The conditions that evoke becoming selfless may be outward actions or internalized mental/attitudinal states (Gatin, 2013) from being self-centered to selflessness.

From the data collected in this analysis, it emerges that the process of becoming selfless depends on how stakeholders in De La Salle Schools understand and manage the seed of shared mission in being educational partners. Just like in the onset of seed germination, in their early engagement in the work of shared mission educational partners become selfless as kernel seeds. They are beginners in the Lasallian school/organization that need to be configured, oriented and guided. When a catastrophe like a super typhoon destroys an area, novice educational

partners will not yet be aware of what needs to be done; they still have to internalize the values of the organization and are not able to put the values into action.

Educational partners have the liberty to grow in the organization by enjoying their personal beliefs and attitudes. They usually become very much willing to share and partake in the shared mission. However, they often have certain personal reservations such as shallow personal conviction to serve others and the institution. They have been attracted and inspired to do the shared mission, but are not able to concretize their ideals in response to what has to be done.

Educational partners become selfless for others by being hard-coated seeds. They are the ones that can be pricked, chipped, nicked or fired. They usually take time to realize their shared mission and identity, as educational partners, but remain open to it. At first, they hesitate to be part of the many concrete ways to respond as partners to the mission, They are still not very open to change and progress. They know the demands of tradition and of the organization, but remain unwilling to give up their self and become selfless agents of transformation. They have to be softened through various forms of exposure in order to assimilate the life of the founder and the core values of the institution. Once fired-up, pricked, chipped or nicked from their selfishness through progressive formation, they eventually ignite the spark of other stakeholders to go out of their shell and be one together in fulfilling the mission. These are the educational partners that, in the aftermath of the storm, are willing to take the risk in order to bring relief, food, and service to those who are in need, regardless of what the situation brings. According to Hampton (1993), service to others in need is only morally acceptable when it arises from an authentically defined preference, interest, or project undertaken by one who pursues such legitimate needs as a human being.

Becoming selfless is the move educational partners take by being moisture-soaked seeds in times of those needs. They stir up the spirit of mission and germinate faster in terms of living up to the sense of service and commitment of this shared mission. They become living examples of being associated with the mission and a lasting influence on how to be committed to work together as a team for a common end and purpose. They function as helpers and doers of action, giving hope to people in the darkest event of the situation (Sally & Sibley, 2004). The multifaceted care that educational partners provide people whom they do not know suggest that becoming selfless might take many forms. According to psychologists, no matter in what ways help is provided it leads to higher levels of happiness among the helpers (Anik, Akin, Norton & Dunn, 2009).

In times of calamity, suffering and uncertainty, people who help other people and are humane by providing the best possible aid and care that they can, reflect the improbable thread that binds together the stages of becoming selfless and resolves commitment to service.

### **Implications and Limitations**

The grounded theory of commitment to service in becoming selfless allows stakeholders/educational partners to view their work and their organizations not just a place of work, but a way of life. It supports the enduring principle that "teaching is a service and a vocation."

Moreover, the theory of becoming selfless can aid in creating a more encompassing theory that could explain a basic sociological process of not only being "interdependent" (Senge, 1994) but also of being "interconnected" (Mitroff & Denton, 1999), in which people in their everyday lives would make their own decisions to become part of something in discovering their own spirituality in the workplace. Further studies might be explored to find out more about predisposing factors that lead to a person's loyalty and commitment to the organization and its cause, especially in educational institutions.

Organizational commitment is indeed an important concept in management and has been widely studied by organizational researchers, especially in organizational psychology and organizational behavior (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002). The commitment of employees to their organization is of vital importance because employee interests, goals and needs have to dovetail with those of the organization so that it can work efficiently (Macmahon, 2007). Becoming selfless therefore allows people to direct their efforts effectively. Recent studies have focused on variables that relate to the theory of becoming selfless, such as different self-concepts of caring and loving others (Johnson and Chang, 2006) and leadership behavior towards selflessness (Steyrer et al., 2008), which affect and modulate commitment to service.

### **Conclusion**

In an article written by Barney G. Glaser (2010) entitled "Organizational Careers: A Forward Theory," Glaser points out that since so much of what we all do is linked with organizations, it is very important to consider an organizational career as a special entity and develop our understanding of it.

The theory of commitment to service in becoming selfless therefore provides the interested reader, especially educational leaders, a body of comparative knowledge, experience, and thought on organizational careers. The theory can serve as a frame of reference upon which stakeholders in various organizations and educational institutions can better understand their commitment to serve, with its subsequent effect on the organization. In its entirety, the theory of becoming selfless points to a process of "being and becoming" that provides opportunities for personal growth, professional development and spiritual enfoldment.

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## Secondary Analysis: A Strategy for the Use of Knowledge from Research

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In recent years there has been a «rapidly expanding demand for sociologists services by organizations and groups for aid in solving their operating problems (Parsons, 1959). When a prospective client approaches the social scientist with a problem and asks what research can do to help solve it, he will generally focus this question in one or two ways: 1) what research already exists that may help and/or 2) what research can be done directly in the present situation? (Likert & Lippitt, 1953). This paper will discuss on strategy for applying existing research in the hope that it may help social scientist cope more effectively with the expanding demand for applied social research.

In the application of scientific knowledge '*discovered elsewhere*' to the solution of an operating problem, the social scientist must face certain important questions of comparability between the past research and the present operating situation. They are comparability of: 1) populations, 2) situational dynamics, 3) problems under study, 4) variables or concepts, and 5) past findings with present hypotheses. If these questions are ignored, the social scientist may err in two ways. He may either prematurely reject important prior research because of glaring manifest differences or he may accept uncritically all findings and insights as relevant to the present situation.

In discussing ways of handling these questions of comparability, Likert and Lippitt (1953) focus only on strategies for obtaining data on the *present situation*. These are "budding of" conferences, research conferences and research application conferences, focusing on a specific operating problem, direct social scientist consultation on a solution of an operating problem, in-service seminars, and a technique for quick analysis of the present situation.

Obtaining data from *past research* for comparisons may equally be a problem. The social scientist may find, in returning to the original publication, that concepts are not clear; populations are not specified; situational dynamics has not been dealt with; the right variables have not been taken up or, if they were, relevant interrelations have not been done; and the analysis of problems has taken too dissimilar a track. He may ask, "What would have happened if the author had done this or that with his data?"

*If the social scientist is able to apply the strategy of secondary analysis, inability to make comparisons or apparent noncomparability with the present situation may not be sufficient cause for discarding potentially applicable past research.* On the contrary, past research is just the beginning to be tapped for its relevance to solving present problems. With this strategy one does not have to depend solely on the previous analyst's approach and bent of mind. Lipset and Bendix (1959) have defined secondary analysis as the study of specific problems through analysis of existing data which were originally collected for other purposes. I suggest that through the use of secondary analysis the social scientist may be better enabled to serve his client. First, it widens the potential applicability of a past research by changing its limits from data presented to data collected. Second, with this strategy the social scientist can turn from printed to vast reservoirs of existing data (published and unpublished) that sit in the basements and files of institutes, bureaus and centers throughout the country. Thus he increases the amount of past research that can be brought to bear on the operating problem.

## Comparability

The first phase of secondary analysis is to face the questions of comparability. If the *populations* of the past research and present situation are somewhat similar, but the social scientist is not sure how similar, he can find out the characteristics of the past population and make specific comparisons. If the past population is inappropriate as is, he can carve out of it a comparable sub-group. The latter is a powerful operation afforded by secondary analysis. By using secondary analysis one can take a past study of a seemingly incomparable population and end up with a sub population that is comparable<sup>1</sup>. For example, if the social scientist is asked by a group of science-oriented pathologists how best defend their place in both science and medicine, which is being challenged by Ph.D's and clinical pathologists respectively (Bucher, 1961), he can turn to national samples of college graduates or to surveys of research organizations and take out of the total group the sub-group of pathologists for study. In this sense the base of selection of past research is broadened considerably. The social scientist need not be content with, or constrained by, the population units designed by the primary analyst, hence left with a limited number of useful past researches. This strategy will alert him to the use of data that normally would not be considered or thought of as applicable to present problems.

When he turns to *situational dynamics* the social scientist can again do the necessary secondary analysis for making comparisons. If the science oriented pathologists, who have come for this help are under siege in an affiliated hospital, he might want to sort out past populations those pathologists who are safe at basic research in a government subsidized, non-profit, medical research organization. Of course, these comparisons overlap with population comparisons to some extent and both are limited by the amount of data collected in the past research. But in using secondary analysis social scientists are not limited by the amount of data presented in the past research publication.

The social scientist is not limited by the level of thinking of the *concepts or variables* of the primary analyst. Likert and Lippitt (1953) suggest that the primary analyst try to move to a level of theorizing which makes it possible for a wide range of practitioners to see how generalizations apply to analysis of their problems. To be sure the social scientist can raise the level of abstraction or reconceptualize the past research without resorting to secondary analysis. But suppose the variables in the past research do not come close enough to his conceptualization of the present situation. By secondary analysis the social scientist can take up variables that were not presented in the past publication, or he can clarify unclear variables, and most importantly he can construct new variables (indexes) which indicate the present concepts. For example, if his hypothesis is that science-oriented pathologists who are losing their identity will tend not to defend their place in medicine and science, and if he has no measure of identity, it may be a simple matter to combine a few of all items to obtain this measure.

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<sup>1</sup> If this sub-group is taken from a large survey or a field project that has gone on for years and is, itself, too large to handle conveniently for the purpose of application to a situation elsewhere, it is a simple matter to take some kind of systematic sample (e.g., random stratified, etc.) of the sub-group of IBM cards or field notes. thus, it can be reduced to a more manageable size for faster results and smaller cost of processing.

When it comes to comparisons of past problems and findings to present problems and hypotheses, the social scientist is even freer of the primary analyst's purposes. It does not matter if the problem analyzed in the past research resembles the present problem. If the data are comparable with respect to population, situation, and variables, then the social scientist merely analyzes it according to the specific operating problem. *This is the very essence of secondary analysis.* The social scientist may, of course, use existing findings, but he is quite free to take the data to its limits for his own purposes. Thus he may look at all possible relations between variables to search for findings that are needed for application to the present problem, it is here that most of all secondary analysis changes the limits of application of past research from data published to data collected.

It has been suggested to me that in some instances one need not even be content with the limits of the data collected. If the data come from an organization, the social scientist may be able to return to it by interviewing people who were there from the past or by studying pertinent documents the social scientist may be able to fill in for the past data<sup>2</sup>. Enhancing past data may be accomplished, though perhaps less effectively, by letters of inquiry and/or by requests for document copies.

#### **Other benefits from secondary analysis**

*Economies:* This strategy has many other useful consequences for the application of research done elsewhere. If the people with the operating problem do not have enough money for an adequate study of their situation, secondary analysis is a much less expensive process and can, through use of a number of past researches, potentially provide a sufficient amount of data. If the present situation requires action in a short time, secondary analysis can usually be done more quickly than collecting and analyzing new data. If the operating problem is of a such a nature that a study of the situation would be inadvisable, secondary analysis provides a way to study the problem elsewhere.

*Readiness:* Likert and Lippitt (1953) state that clients will utilize social science only if they are ready for its help. This readiness depends on 1) a problem sensitivity, 2) an image of potentiality, and 3) a general experimental attitude toward innovation. In order to create this readiness for utilization of research the social scientist should try to develop these elements in his clients. When new research is not feasible or when the clients are not ready for it and the past research (as published) may be too barren from the point of view of comparability to be used for creating readiness, secondary analysis which shows clients that what was done elsewhere may be a very useful device in developing problem sensitivity. By supplying the client an image of what the social scientist can offer, including a feel for research, the social scientist fosters readiness. Additionally, secondary analysis may provide an empirically based design for guiding future research in the present situation, both by suggesting gaps to be filled in and providing findings to validate and to further analyze.

*Application Testing:* Application of social science research provides some unique problems that secondary analysis may help solve. If past research meets the criteria of comparability and a particular finding seems applicable to the present situation the client may be eager to apply it. This may put the social scientist in the awkward position of having to challenge the application in some measure. He must suggest limits of generalization, he must ward against over-simplification; he must explain how findings need considerable testing before

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<sup>2</sup> Suggestion made to author by Robert K. Merton.



application. He must stress, as Hyman suggests, that findings to be applied should first be analyzed as much as possible in terms of the realities of the present situation in order to judge their potential consequences. At this point it is likely that the past research will let the social scientist down. The previous finding may not have been tested or tested enough in a manner appropriate to the present situation. The social scientist is faced with the conflict of wanting to apply a fact to ready clients which his expertise says he cannot do. Secondary analysis is a potential way out of this dilemma. With this strategy the social scientist can do the necessary sub-group comparisons and characterizations; bring out the associated norms, beliefs, values, and sentiments; look at the variations that strategic contextual variables make in the findings; and he can analyze the potential side-effects of implementing policy based on the findings.

*Application Variables:* Another problem is that variables which have theoretical importance do not necessarily have practical importance. By using secondary analysis, the social scientist can take comparable past research, particularly that which is theoretically oriented, and search for strategic application variables. He can develop their importance by looking at their distribution in various sub-groups, showing their relation to other acknowledged strategic variables, and looking for crucial cutting points. He can also look for the controllable variables in the study which are more important for application than the noncontrollable ones, even though the latter may be stronger determinants of the phenomena under study and therefore more emphasized in a theoretical approach. Gouldner (1957) has indicated other properties of variables useful in applied social science. They are easily translated into lay concepts; they will not impede intended change when collected, studied or implemented; they are accessible, reliable and efficient; they provide preferential entry to the situation, and they are latent to the client with the operating problem. Returning to original data will allow scanning for variables with these properties hence their potential use in solving the operating problem.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has been written to suggest a strategy for practice that is also being used for theory development. The social scientist will be guided in its implementation by the requirements of the operative situation and the controls surrounding the past research data. In some cases he may obtain the data easily; in others he may find it appropriate to ask the primary analyst or custodian of the existing data to have a few tables run. . Sometimes the data may not be relinquished, but if code books or schedules can be obtained he can send in orders for the necessary machine work. To be sure, secondary analysis is not limited to quantitative data. Observation notes, unstructured interviews, and documents can also be usefully reanalyzed. In fact, some field workers may be delighted to have their notes, long buried in their files, reanalyzed from another point of view. Lastly, secondary analysis of the past research for application purposes need never hinder the researcher from writing up the theoretical side. Man is a data gathering animal. This paper suggests a strategy for using the data that he gathers.

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## **Generalizability and the Theory of Offsetting the Affective Filter**

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### **Abstract**

When online, post-secondary foreign language learners wrestle with the course material and environment because of their inexperience or misguided expectations, frustration and anxiety often ensue. The resulting imbalance often hinders satisfactory progress in the course. Classic grounded theory was used to develop the substantive theory of offsetting the affective filter, which explains the behaviors of learners in the substantive area of online, post-secondary foreign language classes. With the grab and conceptual generalities of this substantive theory, it is valuable for novice researchers to understand that the possibility is strong to continue the research and develop a formal theory. In this paper, the author examines the aforementioned theory in light of possibly developing a formal grounded theory.

### **Introduction**

An important element involving the classic grounded theory method (CGT) proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and subsequently by Glaser (1978) is the idea of generalizability. Generalizability, along with the other components—“fit, work, relevance, and modifiability” (Glaser, 1992, p. 15)—allows the researcher to “broaden the theory so that it is more generally applicable and has greater explanatory and predictive power” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 24). In grounded theory terms, the newly discovered endogenous (1967) theory must apply to a variety of situations and environments within and outside of the substantive area not just one situation (Glaser, 1996). The idea of generalizability—especially for doctoral candidates—has important ramifications for researchers inside and outside of the initial substantive area. In this article, I will present (a) the five pillars of grounded theory, (b) a brief discussion of generalizability, (c) an overview of the grounded theory process vis-à-vis generalizability, (d) a theory—Offsetting the Affective Filter—developed using CGT, and finally, (e) a brief analysis of generalizability vis-à-vis the aforementioned theory. By illuminating the importance of the substantive theory (Glaser, 1978) outside the field of online foreign language education, I hope to present a potentially bigger picture of the theory thereby demonstrating generalizability and to show that generalizing “a core category is strong . . . [and] hard to resist” (Glaser, 2007, p. 14).

### **The five pillars**

When a novice researcher uses CGT as a design—perhaps for a doctoral dissertation—he or she quickly learns about its five pillars necessary for developing a satisfactory theory: fit,

grab, work, relevance, and modifiability (Glaser, 1978, 1992, 1998). To negate or minimize one of them is to create a unbalanced and inadequate theory. Because these terms are vital to grounded theory, each is discussed briefly in this research.

In the world of classic grounded theory, in order to have fit, researchers must ask whether a “concept adequately [expresses] the pattern in the data which it purports to conceptualize” (Glaser, 1998, p. 18). If such a connection exists between the concept and the data, fit exists. With theories discovered using grounded theory, it is vital that the researcher not force the data into preconceived patterns. If the theory is indeed developed through detailed analysis of the data according to the precepts of CGT (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1965, 1992), the theory is said to have fit (Glaser, 2002a). On the other hand, if an idea is forced and therefore not directly and solely derived from the original data, the theory has validity issues and does not fit the data (Chametzky, 2013a).

Grab is the ability of an idea to snag the attention of a person quickly (Glaser, 1978). When a reader senses that he or she understands the idea and what is going on (Glaser, 2002a), grab is achieved. Grab and generalizability are closely related as one aids the other. Similarly, without one the other becomes difficult to achieve, as each depends on the other.

In examining a theory developed via grounded theory, a researcher must ensure that it speaks to “the major variations in behavior in the area with respect to the processing of the main concerns of the subjects” (Glaser, 1992, p. 15). If the theory is sufficiently multidimensional to tackle any variations within the substantive area, the theory works. A theory that does not work is insufficient. Further, should a theory not work (though implausible as it might be), a researcher will find generalizing the theory challenging because it is not sufficiently multidimensional.

According to Glaser (1998), relevance is synonymous with importance. If a theory has relevance, it has appeal to people. Thus, relevance has a direct connection with grab; if one exists, the other is suggested (Glaser (1998).

Finally, a theory derived using grounded theory needs to be sufficiently flexible. If a researcher obtains new data representing variations in any of the “properties and categories” (Glaser, 1992, p. 15), the theory needs to be adaptable and modifiable to accommodate the new data. If the theory is appropriately flexible to accommodate new data, it is modifiable. Together, the five pillars form a foundation for all theories derived via the classic grounded theory method.

### **Generalizability and transferability**

In research studies—especially doctoral dissertations—the concept of generalizability is often mandatory. When talking about external validity, a researcher asks him or herself whether the findings or conclusions of the study are equally applicable to other people, in different places, and at different times (Schram, 2006; Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). If the response is positive, the study has generalizable results.

Such an explanation of generalizability is foundational in the field of education. In CGT however, the term *generalizability* has a slightly different meaning. Following the precepts presented by Glaser (1978), a theory developed via grounded theory is based on the ideas a researcher finds in the data and not from the contributors or respondents in the project. Thus, a theory must have “conceptual generality [rather than] unit generality” (Glaser, 1998, p. 125). In other words, the theory must be conceptual rather than descriptive (Glaser, 2007) and thus not tied to any specific location, occasion, or person (Glaser, 2007).

There exists, however, a potentially satisfying medium between the two definitions. Generalizability, perhaps more accurately termed transferability, as Glaser (1998) used it, is the ability to extend the relevance or appropriateness of the study beyond the substantive area of the researcher and delineate the relevant boundaries (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) of the study. With this extension, the researcher would be able to have the “theory . . . apply to less obvious areas” (p. 65). Because ideas and theories are conceptualized in CGT, and because theories must have grab, a certain amount of generalizability (in the educational sense) is appropriate and present. Such generalizability may aid the researcher should he or she wish to develop a formal grounded theory (Glaser, 2007).

### **Overview of CGT**

According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), grounded theory is “the discovery of theory from data” (p. 1). The objective of a researcher using grounded theory is to uncover a theory explaining the behaviors of participants within a specific interest area (Glaser, 1992). The non-linear (Glaser, 1978; Simmons, 2008) process by which a researcher uncovers the theory is multipartite, “iterative, [and] cyclic” (Chametzky, 2013a, p. 14) though some researchers (Gatin, 2009; Jones & Alony, 2011) have endeavored to display its non-linearity in a two dimensional representation.

As soon as data collection begins, the researcher attempts to connect the elements of the data with more general concepts and then those concepts with other ones. Such conceptualizations lead the researcher to formulate a theory that explains behaviors or problems in the particular area of investigation. Developing conceptualizations occur through a process of constant comparison of data (Glaser, 1965) and memo writing (addressed later in this article). As a researcher conceptualizes, compares, and memos, he or she uncovers these emerging themes (Charmaz, 2008; Glaser, 2002b) and organizes these “emergent conceptualizations into integrated patterns, which are denoted by categories and their properties” (Glaser, 2002a, p. 23). By iteratively comparing (Mavetera & Kroeze, 2009) the codes, a researcher begins to discover code relationships (Radulescu & Vessey, 2011). As these relationships and groupings solidify (Glaser, 1992) and richen, theoretical saturation occurs (Holton, 2010). Ultimately, a core category and a single core variable emerge (Radulescu & Vessey, 2011; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). A core category is necessary in the study “as it resolves the main concern” (Glaser, 1998, p. 115) and forms the heart of the theory. It is the concept that reflects what the researcher believes is the principal issue in the substantive area (Glaser & Holton, 2005).

Memos form the “ideational and conceptual” (Glaser, 1998, p. 180) link between the codes, categories, and properties (Glaser, 1998). The purpose is to write down any ideas about concepts and their possible connections with one other. Memos are the conscious manifestation of the preconscious (Glaser, 1998) thought. Memo writing, like the process of coding, is iterative.

As a researcher raises the conceptual level of the codes and categories, and as the memos become increasingly conceptual, two things will invariably happen. First, the researcher will explain (without preconception) the behaviors of participants in the substantive area. Explaining (without preconception) the behaviors of participants is the heart of any theory developed using CGT. Second, the conceptualized theory will not be tied to “time, place, [or] people” (Glaser, 2009, p. 24). As previously mentioned, grab is one of the pillars that form a good theory developed using CGT. When people can relate to a theory (or its elements), because of its grab and “conceptual generality” (Glaser, 1998, p. 125), the theory has a certain amount of generalizability (in the educational sense) outside the substantive area (Glaser, 2007).

Does this “conceptual generality” (Glaser, 1998, p. 125) of a core category mean categorically that a substantive theory is a formal grounded theory? The answer to this question must be *no* at least initially. Though a certain amount of applicability or transferability of a substantive theory may exist, the leap to a formal theory must not be made without additional work (Glaser, 2007). The amount of work is not trivial. However, “doing [a formal grounded theory] is just a natural, next step to the general implications of a [substantive grounded theory’s] core category” (Glaser, 2007, p. 40).

### **Offsetting the affective filter**

The substantive area for the research involving offsetting the affective filter is post-secondary, online foreign language classes and learners. Given the continued increase of online courses (Allen & Seaman, 2010) throughout the world, it is reasonable to presume that research dealing with e-learning—even tangentially—would be relevant to many people. Further, because of (a) the limited amount of research in the field of online foreign language learning, (b) the incidents that learners experience (Myers, 2008), and (c) the general nature of individuals to be inquisitive (Gazzaniga, 2009), it is reasonable to presume that the study regarding Offsetting the Affective Filter has appeal (Glaser, 1992) and relevance to many people in the field of education.

Students in an asynchronous, online, post-secondary foreign language class might not have the experience or understanding of how learning occurs or why online course presentation methods are not always complementary with their preferred methods of learning. Their lack of experience and understanding will increase their stress and anxiety levels. In these courses, learners often get out of their realm of familiarity (Chametzky, 2013b). When students feel anxious with an online course and its technological tools, their affective filters—the psychological barrier that prevents people from internalizing the subject

matter, concepts, or ideas presented to them—become elevated. The result is the progressively challenging task of completing the foreign language course successfully.

When some learners step beyond their zone of familiarity and comfort (Chametzky, 2013b), they have great problems overcoming challenges caused by an increased affective filter while simultaneously trying to grasp onto any positive components in the course. Based on the theory of offsetting the affective filter (Chametzky, 2013b), students in online foreign language classes attempt to strategize and to stabilize themselves in their academic lives in three ways: (a) through interacting with other people, (b) by adapting to the situation, and (c) by negotiating the importance of the given task.

Because of their increased affective filters, foreign language learners will interact with classmates, relatives, or instructors in order to vent their frustrations. When such interaction is insufficient to reduce their elevated affective filters, some learners feel overwhelmed. As the feeling of being overwhelmed persists or increases, some learners isolate themselves.

Another way that that students counterbalance their discomfort is through adapting. At times, learners need to focus on the course material in a highly myopic manner in order to complete the course successfully. Simply lumbering through the course and adapting to the suboptimal environment as much as possible is mandatory for other learners. Throughout the online course, students need to be independent, self-directed, and highly motivated in order to succeed and to “move past the ‘daunting’ feeling of ‘Am I really the only one not understanding?’” (Chametzky, 2013a, p. 132). Sadly, as with any venture, some learners give up because they are unable to restore the needed balance.

Every activity people do is accomplished because a choice was made. Making decisions “is based on several criteria not the least of which is balance” (Chametzky, 2013b, p. 13). For example, when an activity is easy to accomplish satisfactorily, stability is easily sustainable. An overly complicated or unimportant task, however, might cause the learner to discontinue or not start it (Lee, 2010). As learners try to offset their affective filters, they negotiate “what elements [are] overly stressful and what they [are] willing to tolerate” (Chametzky, 2013a, p. 123). Stability might be restored when learners are aware than an imbalance exists and when they engage in activities to counterbalance the instability such as interacting, adapting, and/or negotiating. Such “give and take” (Chametzky, 2013a, p. 138) helps compensate for an elevated affective filter and is often crucial for online foreign language students to succeed in the course.

### **Generalizing the theory: Its implications**

The objective of generalizing the theory of offsetting the affective filter is possible with and because of CGT. As a researcher codes and writes memos, he or she takes the conceptual codes, properties, and categories, and further conceptualizes relationships without forcing any connections. Ultimately, when a core variable and theory are developed, both address

the behaviors of participants in the substantive area as well as people outside that area. As Glaser (2007) commented,

Core category implication applications are seen all around in social life. They start to compare to see variation. It is only a short step to conceptualizing the comparison into a category or property of a category to start a FGT. (p. 42)

Again, a researcher must be careful not to presume categorically that a substantive theory equates to or will become a formal theory.

With respect to anxiety, it is perhaps not difficult to see how a person might want or need to regain balance when his or her affective filter—the psychological barrier between the person and the object (whether it be knowledge, satisfaction, need, safety, or desire)—is elevated. During times of high anxiety, when a person wishes to regain stability, he or she needs to negotiate with him or herself to determine whether the objective is sufficiently important, to interact with other people in order to make his or her anxieties known, and/or to adapt his or her perspective. Specifically how a person attempts to regain stability depends on the situation and the individual's abilities and attitude during the stressful situation.

While the theory of offsetting the affective filter has its roots in the field of education, the theory may also have wider implications across multiple areas. Offsetting the Affective Filter is “pervasive [and may] occur over time [. . . . It is] abstract of any specific unit's structure and [thus] can vary sufficiently to go on in very different other units” (Glaser, 1978, pp. 100-101). The idea of regaining stability, through negotiating, interacting, and adapting, could be a universal behavior.

A theory discovered using CGT could and should have implications not only within the substantive area but also in other areas. I am intentionally not stating that the substantive theory of Offsetting the Affective Filter *equates* to a formal theory but merely that the possibility exists for further research to develop one. “It is only a short step to conceptualizing the comparison into a category or property of a category to start a FGT” (Glaser, 2007, p. 42). In order for the theory of Offsetting the Affective Filter to develop into a formal theory, it will be necessary for the researcher to “[extend] the general implications of a core variable by sampling wider in the original substantive area and in other substantive areas and then constantly comparing with the purpose to conceptualize the general implications” (Glaser, 2007, p. 5). If a theory does not have the potential to be transferable to a wider audience beyond the substantive area, it is potentially inadequate and possibly too descriptive. The grab and thus transferability of a core category is a desirable thing.

### **Conclusion**

In grounded theory, researchers attempt to explain people's patterns of behavior. The behavior patterns of post-secondary, online foreign language learners, as evidenced in their



attempts to offset their affective filters, are easily transferable to people in other environments because of “concept generality rather than unit generality” (Glaser, 1998, p. 125). Because of this transferability, it is reasonable to state that the consequence of stepping outside of one’s comfort zone results in a person’s need to reestablish stability through negotiating, interacting, and/or adapting. The specific way a person accomplishes this task—regardless of the cause that elevated the affective filter—is not “a one-step, linear process; [it] requires people to employ . . . different strategies depending on different external influences affecting the participant at a given moment” (Chametzky, 2013a, p. 148). The implications for this substantive theory are potentially far-reaching and generalizable to areas outside the initial substantive area thereby naturally leading to a formal grounded theory (Glaser, 2007). However, additional research is warranted before the substantive theory could become a formal grounded theory.

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