

## **From the Editor's Desk**

### **Remembering Barney Glaser**

It is hard to believe that nearly a year has passed since the loss of Dr. Barney G. Glaser, our dear teacher, mentor, friend, and colleague. As co-originator and constant champion of the original classic theory method, Glaser focused much of his life on teaching grounded theory and mentoring novice and experienced grounded theorists. He founded the Grounded Theory Institute, Sociology Press, and this journal, the Grounded Theory Review. He wrote or co-wrote more than 30 books and papers focused on grounded theory. He hosted innovative grounded theory seminars in the US, Europe, and Asia and mentored hundreds of PhD candidates and novice researchers through the years. In this issue, we re-publish the Glaser's *Origins and Growth of Grounded Theory*, which was originally published as the first chapter in his 2016 book, *Grounded Theory Perspectives: Its Origin and Growth*. This chapter described Glaser's perspective on the original method and how it was first discovered. He also discussed how remodeling of the original method was produced by people who did not understand the basic assumptions of the method and how the method's procedures flowed logically from these assumptions. Glaser aimed to clarify misinterpretations of the method in the many subsequent books and papers that he published.

The Grounded Theory Review will remain as originally intended by Glaser—a repository of original research and other works that adhere to the classic grounded theory method. The current issue has four basic foci: an editorial on theory in general, an essay tribute to Glaser, methodological papers, original research, and a book review.

In the form of a guest editorial, Kara Vander Linden tackles the question, *What is 'Theory' in Grounded Theory*. Although theory is often discussed in relation to research, Vander Linden proposes that there is a lack of consensus on what theory is. The author briefly discusses some views of theory within sociology and the lack of consensus over what constitutes theory. This lack of consensus makes it important that grounded theorists not only explain what is meant by a theory being grounded in data but also what is meant by theory in grounded theory.

Glaser was active with grounded theorists in China. In their paper, *Becoming Independent: The Life-Changing Experiences of GT Researchers in China*, Fei, Chen, Feng, and Wang pay tribute to Glaser. The paper lays out some life-changing experiences of these GT researchers, which ultimately led toward their academic independence. They identify three intertwining aspects of their experience with grounded theory: inspiration and empowerment of Glaser and his methodology, developing a critical mind, and growth in personal character.

This issue also has two classic grounded theory methodology papers, both of which are republished with permission. In his paper, *Coding in Classic Grounded Theory*, Chametzky gives novice researchers interested in the classic grounded theory design a foothold in how to do one aspect of classic grounded theory analysis: coding. The explanation offered in this paper is based in theory and supported with practical examples. In the paper, *When and How to Use Extant Literature in Classic Grounded Theory*, Nathaniel weaves together Glaser's recommendations on how, why, and when to review the literature and which literature to review. The paper includes a section debunking the no literature myth followed by descriptions of the three phases of the classic grounded theory literature review.

There are four original research papers in this issue. In the paper, *Transcending Inequality: A Classic Grounded Theory of Filipino Factory Workers in Taiwan*, Peter Sun presents a theory that explains how individuals resolve inequality via three overlapping patterns of behavior: coping, bonding, and serving. In a paper entitled *Theory of Flowing: Going with the Flow of the Ups-and-Downs of Recovery from an Ordeal*, Alan Kim-Loc Oh outlines the theory of flowing, which is an intervention strategy that ordinary people implement in order to go with the flow of the ups-and-downs of recovering from an ordeal. Alos Joan Sumner studied the processes of teams who utilize a particular tool—the De Bono thinking tool. In the paper, *Getting on the Same Page*, Sumner described a three-stage process of change in personal cognitive capability with participants using the De Bono instrument. In the paper entitled, *The Behavioural Motivations of Police Officers Engaged in Domestic Abuse Incident Work*, Daniel Ash explores domestic abuse police work by considering the behavioural motivations of officers. Ash examined how officers behave when carrying out police incident work in England.

We at the Grounded Theory Review often refer to the extent to which Glaser influenced classic grounded theorists through his writings, teaching, and mentoring. A student of Glaser, Odis Simmons, became a colleague and lifelong friend to Glaser. Vander Linden, Allen-Hammer, Goldberg, Kellogg, and Underwood review Simmons's newly published book, *Experiencing Grounded Theory*. They recommend the book to both novice and practicing grounded theorists as an enjoyable, easy-to-read journey through Simmons's 55 years of learning, doing, mentoring, teaching, and applying grounded theory. The book begins with Simmons's introduction to grounded theory and progresses through his years of teaching the methodology. The authors propose that while there are many books written on grounded theory, few explain the method as clearly as this one.

We at the Grounded Theory Review wish you a very productive new year, filled with joy and productive scholarship.

Alvita Nathaniel, PhD  
Editor

## Origins and Growth of Grounded Theory

**Barney G. Glaser PhD, Hon PhD**

Editor's Note: As we continue celebrate Barney Glaser's life, we re-publish<sup>1</sup> this gently edited paper about the origin and growth of grounded theory. Through the years as he noticed trends surrounding the method, Glaser codified the different elements and procedures of grounded theory and compared/contrasted them with remodeled versions. This paper was first published as chapter 1 in *Grounded Theory Perspectives: Its Origin and Growth* (2016). All books mentioned in this paper can be purchased via Sociology Press at <http://sociologypress.com/book.htm>.

[This paper] is about the origins and growth of grounded theory (GT) as developed and written by Barney G. Glaser. It is not written to compete or compare with other QDA [qualitative data analysis] methods. The competition with other perspectives is up to the reader to write up if he so desires. My goal in this paper is to write up the GT perspective clearly and historically to date so it can be used by others in research and the rhetorical wrestle between different perspectives. As GT spreads throughout the world, a clear view of the GT perspective is constantly needed and requested from me by researchers for doing GT and for trying to explain the method to others, particularly supervisors and peer reviewers.

There is an immense amount of writing on aspects of the GT perspective, often mixed with other perspectives, thus confusing its use. I trust this paper will help clarify GT with no remodeling. I am not saying that GT is better than other methodologies. I am just saying that the GT method stands on its own and produces excellent conceptual theory. Let other QDA methodologies stand on their own as they wish. This paper will just show differences in methodologies, as the reader may see. It is not written to correct other methodologies. I have written many books on the GT perspective. I trust this book will bring most of the GT perspectives under one cover.

GT emerged as a fledgling methodology when analyzing the data on dying in hospitals in the book *Awareness of Dying* (1965). Awareness context theory took the world of research by storm. We were constantly asked how we did it. In 1967 we published our beginning formulations of GT in *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for*

---

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted and lightly edited from Glaser (2016) *Grounded theory perspective: Its origin and growth*. Sociology Press.

*Qualitative Research* by Glaser and Strauss. It was our first attempt to write a method that closed the gap between theory and method. We focused on procedures for grounding theory not on verification of theory. We called the methodology Grounded Theory. We put to rest the 100% focus on the verifying of grand theory that was all conjectured. We discovered that GT provided us with relevant predictions, explanations, interpretations, and applications that fit.

It was our explanations that were the beginning of codifying GT as a methodology. The key elements of the theory were that the concepts in the theory should have fit and relevance. So many concepts in the world of social research were conjectural, that is reified and not relevant to the area and the participants. To gain fit and be relevant the concepts had to be based on data from in the field of inquiry and be relevant to the participants. In short, they had to be grounded. They also had to be conceptual so they could be integrated by a theoretical code into a conceptual theory. What theoretical code that seemed to fit the dying data was context theory. The total product was an emergent, grounded theory of 'Awareness Contexts.'

How to generate grounded concepts for a grounded theory needed to be articulated. So, I wrote a paper explaining how to generate grounded patterns to be named as concepts. It was *The Constant Comparative Method of Qualitative Analysis* published in 1965 in *Social Problems*. It dealt with the comparing of data from different respondents to find interchangeable indicators that showed a grounded pattern. This became a GT procedure to generate enough concepts for a theory. In generating the concepts, a main concern of the participants emerged with a core concept that continually handled the concern. The emergent concepts often run as exceptions to the conjectured trend. Thus, our perspective was to start off knowing nothing in contrast to the typical research plan of knowing the problem beforehand. GT became a no preconception method. We let the participants tell us what to research with fit and relevance. When their problem emerges, the participants will spill with data talking about it. The emergent problem is the focus of a GT research, no matter how distant it is from the original conjectured problem. This always happens as part of the GT perspectives: that is no preconceptions. GT only researches what patterns emerge.

In our book on awareness of dying, theoretical coding as a procedure for organizing the concepts emerged. It was context analysis. Soon the theoretical code *basic social process* [BSP] became popular. These organizing codes came after conceptualization,

however easy it was to force them ahead of emergent conceptualization. With *Awareness of Dying* the grounded theory perspective had begun.

The power of theoretical codes was hard to resist for forcing data. Anselm liked the theoretical code of status passage. He wanted a book about dying as a status passage, so we wrote *Time for Dying* (1968). It was part emergent, and part forced. It never sold well. It did not have the grab like *Awareness of Dying*. For me it proved the value of staying 100% open to the emergent.

Theoretical codes have general implications that are hard to resist. Thus, Anselm and I wrote a formal theory called *Status Passage* in 1971. The first systematic study of society as a negotiated order of interlocked careers and changes in status, it was based on various readings that could be conceptualized as status passage infused with conjectural wisdoms of advance academics. It did not sell beyond a few copies. Again, it proved to me the value of staying 100% open to the emergent. Again, *Mirrors and Masks: the Search for identity* (1969) was a formal theory by Strauss based on conjecture. It did not sell but a few copies. Again, convincing me of the grab and power of staying 100% emergent to keep a theory relevant with conceptual fit.

The power and grab of a 100% emergent grounded theory thrilled me personally and with prospects. Thus, I wrote three pure GT monographs about how real life goes on. They were easy to write since there was no conjecture just conceptualization of data. They almost wrote themselves as the data/conceptualized came through me. The three books were *Organizational Scientist: Their Professional Careers* (1964) that dealt with scientists receiving an average amount of recognition for their research. Second, *Second Deeds of Trust: How to Make Money Safely* (1969) that was about mortgage back investments, the investments in my finance firm. Safety of investment was the main concern. And third, *Experts versus Laymen: A Study of the Patsy and the Subcontractor* (1972), the main concern was how to build a house without a contractor when not knowing construction. In writing these books and the dying books, I discovered that writing up data was much faster than thinking up conjectures to suit a perspective that could be very irrelevant. Also, I discovered that GT writing was a write-up not writing from groundless conjecture. Further, the main concern of these areas in these books had much interest to readers. Their relevance and fit gave them grab and sales.

Further, to make the GT perspective known, I published three very thick GT readers full of GT papers. They were *Examples of Grounded Theory* (1993), *More Grounded Theory*

*Methodology* (1994) and in two large volumes *Grounded Theory 1984 to 1994* (1995). I had discovered that exemplifying was a very good way to spread the GT perspective safely. GT sells itself with its grab and its general universal implications. In short, I realized that discovering a theory from one data source gives it a general conceptual application to many data sources. For example, super-normalizing theory discovered in a study of heart attack victims can be used in many areas that produce physical stress. I extended my theory of exemplifying as a way of training researchers to do GT in my introduction to another reader put out by Judith Holton and myself in *The Grounded Theory Seminar Reader* (2007) in which we included 24 well-done GT papers. I also used exemplifying theory to produce a reader in 1996, *Gerund Grounded Theory*, which exemplified eleven basic social process theories. At the time basic social process was a popular theoretical code. The BSP theories came from dissertations that led to awarding the author a PhD.

I also realized that a reader of several articles on a problem area or topic could be data for a formal grounded theory, so in 1968 I edited a reader *Organizational Career: A Source Book for Theory*. It had 63 articles on organizational careers, which were suitable for generating several formal theories. My general perspective on GT methodology use and production was growing. To show this procedure I used formal theory methodology to compare all the articles in the reader *Sage Handbook of Grounded Theory* (2007) Bryant and Charmaz editors. My formal theory ended up a book called *Jargonizing: The Use of the Grounded Theory Vocabulary*. I had discovered that GT was not only a methodology but also a vocabulary for expressing all QDA methods that had no or limited vocabulary. Jargonizing is powerfully used in remodeling QDA to sound like GT. The main concern is how to make QDA sound like it is GT in both lofty talk and research procedures.

In the early years 2000s jargonizing helped the increasing spread of GT, but it did not help the clear spread of GT research procedures. As jargonizing helped reversioning GT, it generally distorted several of the GT procedures that supported its general perspective of emergence. To clarify GT's emergent procedures, I planned three books and wrote them on specific procedural perspectives to clarify their GT use. The first was *The Grounded Theory Perspective: Conceptualization Contrasted with Description* (2001). This book was my effort to clarify the distinction of conceptual theory generation compared to QDA descriptive methods and their positivistic claim on data. I wanted to show that GT humbly stands on its own as a generalizing conceptual generated method and was not descriptive.

This book helped, but still descriptive methods were remodeling GT, so in 2003 I wrote another GT perspective book called *The Grounded Theory Perspective II: Description's*

*Remodeling of Grounded Theory*. It dealt extensively with the procedural contrast and conflict between descriptive and conceptual procedures. The effort was to ensure the GT procedural perspectives as conceptual and scientific compared to normal descriptions of everyday life. In these two books, I emphasize the difference in generalizing between GT and QDA methods. GT produces conceptual generality that is abstract of time, place and people. In comparison description generality depends on data accuracy to prove a generality. It is stale dated as description changes quickly over time. Conceptual generality is simply modified conceptually to suit the data applied to [it]. But conceptual generality does not need to be applied to data, as it stands on it own. For example, routing theory can be applied or can just be discussed generally. Worrysome accuracy is a big issue in description for asserting accuracy. In contrast, the GT constant comparative method makes sure that the emergent concepts are grounded patterns that obtain no matter what kind of forcing. The conceptual perspective on generality of GT is vital to maintain.

These two books went a long way toward maintaining the GT perspective, but more was needed. A book was needed on staying open to the emergence of theoretical codes as opposed to using the everyday theoretical codes, such as dimensions, conditions, causes, types, process etc. which are so easy to force on the data as they are based on everyday parlance. They prematurely provide by forcing formation to the confused states of GT that are necessary for emergence. For this perspective I wrote the book *The Grounded Theory Perspective III: Theoretical Coding* (2005). Theoretical codes are needed to integrate the write up of a GT and have powerful grab if left to the emergent from sorting memos. They can be simple like a process, types, or a dimension or complex like amplifying causal looping. They put the ceiling on emergence of the GT theory.

This book on theoretical codes started a confusion with the formal theory perspective. They sounded alike especially as very general when a theoretical code led to a theory when the data was left out. For example, a paper on desisting residual selves, without the data, sounds like a formal theory, but it is not. A formal theory is a GT based on several different groups of participants or data. For example, a theory of proximity ethics can be based on several populations and thusly becomes a formal theory. And many substantive GTs based on one population have formal theory implications and are used as such. To make them formal theory, just add to the research on different populations. In sum, to clarify the confusion between theoretical codes and formal theory, I wrote the book *Doing Formal Grounded Theory: A Proposal* (2007). My GT perspective was growing and in print with these four books.

As I was writing these books to clarify the GT perspective, researchers were asking me how did my book *Basics of Grounded Theory Analysis* (1992) fit in. It was written pre-perspective when GT was barely named and known only from reading *Awareness of Dying*. In 1988 Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin wrote a methods book called *Basics of Qualitative Analysis* that emphasized GT as a forcing procedure of analysis that were considered GT. I was upset and asked Anselm to correct the forcing perspective to emergence. He said “no”, and if I do not like it write a book about it.... I did and published *Basics of Grounded Theory Analysis: Emergence vs Forcing* (1992) in an effort to set the GT perspective straight. *Basics* still sells well 24 years later; the general GT perspective was rescued.

I published two more books with Strauss to broaden the GT perspective in the late 1900s. They were *Anguish: A Case History of a Dying Trajectory* (1970) and *Chronic Illness and the Quality of Life* (1975). The theoretical code of status passage became popular and was brought out theoretically in these two books. We wrote the book *Status Passage, a Formal Theory* (1971) grounded in our growing knowledge of various status passages. Dying and chronic illness as patient status passages were grounded in GT research in various hospitals.

All these books dealt with qualitative data, and I was continually asked what about quantitative GT. Does it exist? It did in my book *Organizational Scientists: Their Professional Careers* (1964). To bring this book into the GT perspective I wrote a methodology book, *Doing Quantitative Grounded Theory* (2008) to show how to do research for generating a quantitative GT. The first chapter was a history of GT based on quantitative data using Lazarsfeld 's methodology called elaboration analysis. I also backed up my books with a reader called *Organizational Careers: A Source Book for Theory* (1968). It had 63 articles in it to use for generating more career theory. Organizations offer careers, I wrote, let's have some theory about organizational careers that are so vital.

By the early 2000s I was satisfied that the GT perspective was in good use in papers and dissertations in spite of the increase in remodeling and multiple versioning in books and articles. Many people were getting their PhDs and having their GTs accepted in journals. *Theoretical Sensitivity: Advances in the Methodology of Grounded Theory* (1978) and *Doing Grounded Theory: Issues and Discussion* (1998) I published to answer many perspective questions and procedural research issues to reinforce the GT perspective. They sold overwhelmingly and still sell well today. Researchers tell me that they want to do GT “right”.

But given the worldwide spread of GT, I was receiving a large number of emails that were cries for help, especially with GT procedures. Thus, I started and did write five more books on GT procedures which adhered to the GT perspective. [These books] were *Getting Out of the Data: Grounded Theory Conceptualization* (2005), *Stop, Write: Writing Grounded Theory* (2012), *No Preconceptions: The Grounded Theory Dictum* (2014) , *Memoing: A Vital Grounded Theory Procedure* (2014) and *Applying Grounded Theory: a Neglected Option* (2014). These books on procedures answered a multitude of questions originating from the start of doing a GT research project to finalizing it in a paper or dissertation. They preserve the GT perspective as fully grounded.

To further support the answers to the 100s of quests for procedure clarifications, Judith Holton and I published a reader in 2012 of 19 articles taken from our journal the GT Review. It was the *GT Review Methodology Reader*. Again, it preserved the GT perspective which is always under the rhetorical wrestle of which methodology perspective is best.

One frequent cry for help is, "How do I convince my supervisor that GT is ok to use for a dissertation?". This is a very fateful question of certification. A PhD candidate will put much time and money into getting the PhD. During his research his life will be on hold. Convincing the supervisor wedded to another QDA perspective is difficult for a beginner researcher. To answer the question, I wrote (part book and part reader) *Choosing Classic Grounded Theory: A Grounded Theory Reader of Expert Advice* (2014) for candidates to learn the pro GT arguments and to simply show the book to a supervisor to read for himself. Again, I codified the GT perspective.

As the reader can see over the last 40 years and over 35 books, I have put out much energy and many books to establish and grow the GT methodology and keep its perspective pure and safe from remodeling. As a result, it is spreading throughout the world as a no preconception concept generator of conceptual theory methodology. It suits a methodology for the PhD dissertation, since it automatically provides the desired original contribution required for the PhD.

## What is 'Theory' in Grounded Theory?

Kara L. Vander Linden, Institute for Research and Theory Methodologies

### Abstract

Theory is often discussed in relation to research. However, despite its frequent reference, there is a lack of consensus on what theory is. This article briefly discusses some views of theory within sociology and the lack of consensus over what constitutes theory. This lack of consensus makes it important that grounded theorists not only explain what is meant by a theory being grounded in data but also what is meant by theory in grounded theory.

**Keywords:** theory, grounded theory, definitions, debate

### Introduction

As a grounded theorist, I have often explained the "grounded" aspect of grounded theory, that the theory developed is grounded in data. However, more recently I have found myself exploring and explaining "what is theory?" as I have interacted with students and other faculty. As a research instructor, I teach about the role of theory in research, discussing the use of theory as a theoretical framework in qualitative studies, as the source of hypotheses to test in quantitative studies, and as the product of research when using the grounded theory method. However, Sandberg and Alvesson (2021) noted, "Although the word 'theory' is omnipresent in research texts, it is rarely defined precisely and systematically" (p. 488). As I have talked with other faculty, I have realized that we are not always talking about the same thing when we discuss theory. Similarly, many journals require researchers to connect their research to theory, and this requirement frequently appears in peer reviewers' feedback. These comments assume that there is a universally agreed-upon understanding of what theory is. However, as this article will demonstrate, there is not one universally agreed-upon understanding of what theory is; thus, it is important to also explain what we mean by theory as grounded theorists.

### What is "Theory"?

Within academic and scholarly literature, there are often many different perspectives and opinions, and such is the case with the term "theory." The question "what is theory?" may seem simple at first, especially if you turn to dictionary definitions. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines theory as "a plausible or scientifically acceptable general principle or body of principles

offered to explain phenomena." The Oxford English Dictionary defines it as "a supposition or a system of ideas intended to explain something." In their brief literature review on how theory literature defines theory, Sandberg and Alvesson (2021) found that the most common and critical element discussed within the literature is that theory explains, which aligns with the dictionary definitions. Despite this common and critical element of theory, there is still much debate about what theory is within and across academic fields and disciplines.

Authors in various fields have written articles to tackle this question and discovered that the meaning of theory varies depending on the context in which it is used and how it is used (Abend, 2008; Gelso, 2006; Gregor, 2006; Sandberg & Alvesson, 2021; Thomas, 1997). While some scholars claimed the definition of theory is ambiguous, others believed it is too narrowly conceived. Even within a single academic field, there is often a lack of consensus about what theory is. Since grounded theory emerged from the field of sociology, a need exists to look at what theory is according to scholars from within sociology.

Turner (1991) explained what theory is and some different perspectives on theory as follows:

Theory is a 'story' about how and why events in the universe occur. Sociological theory thus seeks to explain how and why humans behave, interact, and organize themselves in certain ways. When stated in this way, few would disagree; but, as soon as we question *what kind* of story is to be developed by sociology, controversy and acrimony immediately surface. Sociologists in general, and social theorist in particular, do not agree on such basic issues as what kind of knowledge about human interactions and organizations can be developed, what procedures can and should be used in developing explanations, what ends or goals are to be served by sociological knowledge, or even what phenomena should be the topics of our explanations. (p. 1)

Turner captured the issue in trying to define theory with sociology.

Amend (2008) stated that we must begin by looking at the semantics of the word "theory." He explained, "Like the lexicographer, I want to give an empirical account of different ways in which a particular word is used by competent speakers of a certain language" (p. 177). He did this by classifying sociologists' use of the word "theory" into categories.

Through his work, he developed seven different categories of how sociologists use the term "theory" which he differentiated through subscripts. For example, according to a "reasonably large group of sociologists, . . . [ theory ] . . . is a general proposition, or logically-connected system of general propositions, which establishes a relationship between two or more variables" (Amend, 2008, p. 177), which Amend labeled as Theory<sub>1</sub>. In contrast, he identified that to other sociologists "the study of and the students of the writings of authors such as Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Simmel, Parsons, Habermas, or Bourdieu" (Amend, 2008, p. 197) is theory and labeled this type as Theory<sub>4</sub>. As these examples show, there are significant differences between the seven categories of theory he discovered.

Amend (2008) concluded that when sociologists begin talking about theory, they may not even be discussing the same thing and may not even be aware that they are referencing different

things when using the term theory. Often what some sociologists consider theory is not always considered theory by other sociologists. Because a variety of different things are all referred to as theory, it leads to miscommunication and confusion. Amend's work demonstrates the wide variation of what is considered theory within the field of sociology. If it is hard to develop an agreed-on definition of theory within sociology, then it is even more difficult when looking at what theory is across various academic fields and disciplines.

Sandberg and Alvesson (2021) also looked at the meaning of theory but did not limit it to their field of business. They asserted that defining theory as explanatory knowledge is too limiting and provided four rationales for this view. First, theory as (only) explanatory knowledge "is likely to encourage explanatory knowledge pursuits over others, as they are considered more important, superior and prestigious" (p. 488). Second, it may limit how we theorize. Third, theory as explanatory knowledge "is also likely to impede researchers and practitioners from developing multidimensional understandings of aspects of reality, as there is a tendency to take what is to be explained as given" (p. 489). Fourth, "the dominant meaning of 'theory' disfavors many forms of research that do not pursue the development of explanatory knowledge" (p. 489).

Given these arguments, Sandberg and Alvesson (2021) proposed a broader, more general definition of theory, recommending that all theories should contain the following structural elements. Theory needs "a *purpose*, indicating what it is for [and] should be directed to a *phenomenon*" (p. 491). Theory "must offer some form of *conceptual order* that makes productive distinctions and discriminations concerning this phenomenon, illuminating central features, such as its specific composition, structure, key characteristics and sequence or flow" (p. 491). Theory must also provide new "*intellectual insights* about the phenomenon [and] include *relevance criteria* that can be used to evaluate how effectively it performs its overall purpose, including its scientific or practical usefulness" (p. 491). Theory should also have "some form of *empirical support* [and] is always constrained by *boundary conditions*, such as what aspects of a phenomenon it includes and excludes and its range of application across specific situations and populations" (p. 491). However, they also explained that the emphasis of each of these elements will vary across different types of theory. Thus, we might ask if we see these elements within grounded theory.

### **"Theory" in grounded theory**

Given the level of debate regarding what constitutes theory, it is important that we, as grounded theorists, not only explain what we mean by grounded but also what we mean by theory. So, the question is, what do we mean by theory in grounded theory? Luckily, Glaser and Strauss (1967) addressed what theory is when they wrote, "The form in which a theory is presented does not make it a theory; it is a theory because it explains or predicts something" (p. 31). This definition aligns with the general explanatory definition of theory accepted across various fields and disciplines. Yet is this too general given the level of debate?

Glaser and Strauss (1967) provided further guidance on what theory is when they stated, the interrelated jobs of theory in sociology are: (1) to enable prediction and explanation of behavior; (2) to be useful in theoretical advance in sociology; (3) to be usable in practical applications-prediction and explanation should be able to give the practitioner under-

standing and some control of situations; (4) to provide a perspective on behavior—a stance to be taken toward data; and (5) to guide and provide a style for research on particular areas of behavior. (p. 3)

Amend's (2008) categorizations of theory within sociology demonstrate that grounded theory is not universally accepted as the only form of theory. However, using this Glaser and Strauss's description of the jobs of theory and the structural elements that Sandberg and Alvesson (2021) proposed, we can explain what theory is in grounded theory.

Glaser and Strauss (1964) and Sandberg and Alvesson (2021) recognized the importance of a theory having a purpose. The purpose of a grounded theory is to explain patterns of behavior used to address a main concern or issue of the people within the topic area. Thus, theories developed using the grounded theory method address Sandberg and Alvesson's recommendation that theory should have a purpose.

To achieve its purpose a grounded theory needs to be conceptual, not descriptive. Concepts are the basic building blocks of theory. A concept is an abstract, generalized idea that is given a name to identify a pattern identified in a real-life phenomenon. For example, the concept of quiet quitting is a name given to a pattern of behavior where people do the basic job they are paid for and not more. However, a grounded theory is more than a group of concepts. It also explains the relationships among the concept in the form of tentative hypotheses. "Grounded theories are made up of interrelated tentative hypotheses that consist of concepts linked by theoretical codes" (Nathaniel, personal communication, September 20, 2022). The concepts and the relationships among the concepts, and the hypotheses that form a grounded theory are never preconceived, imagined, or conjectured. Grounded theorists identify the concepts, their relationship, and the hypotheses through the analysis of data (i.e., the grounded part of grounded theory). Thus, the "*conceptual order* that makes productive distinctions and discriminations concerning this phenomenon, illuminating central features, such as its specific composition, structure, key characteristics and sequence or flow" (Sandberg & Alvesson, 2021, p. 491) is grounded in the data using constant comparative analysis in grounded theory. The systematic generation of grounded theory from data that has also been systematically collected clearly fulfills Sandberg and Alvesson's suggestion that theory needs "some form of *empirical support*" (p 491).

The relationship among the concepts, expressed as tentative hypotheses, helps the theory explain and predict patterns of human behavior by explaining on a conceptual level what is happening within data. A grounded theory is about what is happening, not what the researcher thinks should be happening. Thus, the theoretical explanations are useful for practitioners by providing them with an understanding and a theoretical foothold (Glaser & Strauss 1967) into what is happening within the area of study. Thus, the theory provides *intellectual insights* about the *phenomenon* being studied as Sandberg and Alvesson advocated for in theory.

However, for the theory to work, Sandberg and Alvesson (2021) advocated for the need for boundary conditions within theories. The boundaries of a grounded theory determine by where the theory applies conceptually rather than having descriptive boundaries. While at times, grounded theorist bound their theory within a specific topic area, ideally the boundaries of the

theory are concepts that are grounded in the data, which I refer to as grounded boundaries, rather than ones that are pre-determined by the topic area.

Finally, Sandberg and Alvesson (2021) articulated the necessity for "*relevance criteria* that can be used to evaluate how effectively it performs its overall purpose, including its scientific or practical usefulness" (p. 491). Glaser and Strauss (1967) recognized from the creation of grounded theory that it needed its own set of evaluative criteria. They stated,

The first requisite property is that the theory must closely *fit* the substantive area in which it will be used. Second, it must be readily *understandable* by laymen concerned with this area. Third, it must be sufficiently *general* to be applicable to a multitude of diverse daily situations within the substantive area, not just a specific type of situation. Fourth, it must allow the user partial *control* over the structure and process of daily situations as they change through time. (p. 237)

### Conclusion

This article demonstrates that despite all the debate around "what is theory?" grounded theory is theory. Using the structural elements proposed by Sandberg and Alvesson (2021) to produce a broader, more general definition of theory, we can see how grounded theory addresses these structural elements and may help grounded theorists discuss the theory component of grounded theory. This is not to say that grounded theory is the only type of theory. Amend's (2008) classification of sociological theory demonstrated that forms of theory may extend beyond that of grounded theory and Sandberg and Alvesson's broader, more general definition of theory. However, the grounded theory method does provide researchers with a systematic research method for generating theory across various academic fields and disciplines.

### References

- Abend, G. (2008). The meaning of "theory." *Sociological Theory*, 26, 173–99.
- Gelso, C. J. (2006). Applying theories to research: The interplay of theory and research in science. In F. L. Leong and J. T. Austin (Eds.), *The psychology research handbook: A guide for graduate students and research assistants* (pp. 455-464). Sage.
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Aldine.
- Gregor, S. (2006). The nature of theory in information systems. *MIS Quarterly*, 30, 611–42.
- Sandberg, J. and Alvesson, M. (2021). Meanings of theory: Clarifying theory through typification, *Journal of Management Studies*. 58(2) 487-516. <https://doi.org/10.1111/joms.12587>
- Thomas, G. (1997). What is the use of theory? *Harvard Educational Review*, 67, 75–104.
- Turner R.H. (1991). Sociological theory: Diversity and disagreement. In J. H. Turner (Ed.) *Handbook of sociological theory. Handbooks of Sociology and Social Research*. Wadsworth

Publishing.

**Declaration of Conflicting Interests:** The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

**Funding:** The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

© Kara L. Vander Linden 2022

## **Becoming Independent: The Life-Changing Experiences of GT Researchers in China**

Y. Chen, Nanjing Normal University  
Y. Feng, China University of Political Science and Law  
Y. Wang, Fujian Medical University  
F. Fei, Grounded Theory Institute

### **Abstract**

The popularisation of Glaser's grounded theory (GT) methodology in China over the past two decades or so has seen some faithful use of classic (Glaserian) GT in several areas (i.e. psychology, culture of rule of law, and nursing) amid the overall misuse and abuse of the methodology. And arising from these endeavours are some life-changing experiences of GT researchers leading towards their academic independence. These individual experiences cover three intertwining aspects, namely inspiration and empowerment of Glaser and his methodology, developing a critical mind, and growth in personal character.

**Keywords:** grounded theory, Glaser, China

### **Introduction**

Over the past two decades or so, Glaser's grounded theory (GT) methodology has been hugely popularised in China. Glaser's books are now available in the National Library of China. And Glaser's virtual participation in seminars and other types of events that took place in China helped the GT researchers better appreciate the methodology and Glaser's own perspective on any derailment of the methodology originated by himself. Having said that, the overall GT research landscape in China is not vastly different from elsewhere in the world. It is observed that the term "grounded theory" has been generally misused. The study of the original texts of the GT methodology (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978) is, to a great extent, disregarded. And ironically, what has emerged from China are some self-proclaimed "innovations" including the localisation of GT; thus, the extreme distortion of the original GT methodology (e.g., Chen, 2015; Chen & Wang, 2020; Jia & Heng, 2016, 2020), let alone widespread plagiarism and academic misconduct (e.g., Chen & Wang, 2020; Jia & Heng, 2016, 2020; Wu & Li, 2020) as we have discovered here. This essay outlines the life-changing experiences of some Chinese GT researchers and the journey towards academic independence. In particular, it highlights the following three intertwining aspects of the experiences arising from our own GT research endeavours: inspiration and empowerment of Glaser and his methodology, developing a critical mind, and growth in personal character.

### **Inspiration and Empowerment of Glaser and His Methodology**

Glaser's methodology, per se, has been an immense source of inspiration for those who have been minus-mentored (Glaser, 1998) at their own research institutions. Chen (2020), once a minus-mentored doctoral candidate thinking of quitting her doctoral programme, stated that

Glaser himself, his methodological ideas and experiences are highly critical to the most challenging part of her life, i.e., her doctoral study (personal communications, 18 January, 2022). Fei (2008) shared this view when reflecting upon his experience of being seriously challenged by not having a clearly-defined research problem at the outset of his doctoral project. Similarly, Feng (2022) appreciated Glaser's

life-long work in bringing us such a unique methodology...[and] unceasing academic efforts on GT . . . The words you have written for GT n[ovice] researchers deeply inspired me and helped me complete my paper in two years, which I would never forget in my life.(personal communications · 18 January, 2022)

One of the common challenges that classic (Glaserian) GT researchers often have to address is convincing others that Glaser's GT is perfectly do-able, despite the fact that their colleagues may have a preference towards other methods with the label "GT" on them. In order to overcome this particular challenge that some of us have encountered, Glaser has kindly supported the novice researchers by producing letters of endorsement to, for instance, confirm that the use of secondary data (i.e., a fictional novel) as the sole data type is entirely acceptable in Feng's (2021) study (personal communications, 25 June, 2020). He also empowers Chen's (2020) research into family bereavement, having lost the only child in the Chinese families, describing it as an "excellent topic for a [GT] study" (personal communications, 19 September, 2019).

### **Developing a Critical Mind**

A natural outcome of Chinese classic GT researchers having been inspired and empowered by Glaser and his methodology is the development of a critical mind, an integral feature of academic qualities. As part of her classic GT learning, Wang (2022) has been constantly trained to develop her critical skills that are not always deliberately taught in Chinese universities. Therefore, a significant part of Wang's (2022) GT training covers the critical reading of the methods literature vis-a-vie the original texts and her own grappling with a seemingly messy body of literature.

For instance, Wang (2022) found Bryant's (2019) misinterpretation of both literature review and theoretical coding in GT deeply disturbing:

[u]se of the literature – initially to establish the basis for the research, but far more importantly, to refer to and engage with therelevant literature as an additional and critical form of data against which interim or later analyses can be positioned – this is what is referred to as theoretical coding. (p. xxvi)

She has also discovered some in-text citation inaccuracies in Charmaz (2006), having cross-checked Glaser (1978) and other texts: "[f]ocused coding is the second major phase in coding. These codes are more directed, selective, and conceptual than word-by-word, line-by-line, and incident-by-incident coding (Glaser, 1978)..." (Charmaz, 2006, p. 57). It casts serious doubt on who had come up with the notion of "word-by-word...coding" in the first place? If it is someone else's, i.e., Strauss's, (1987) idea, why not cite it in order not to cause further confusion?

Bryant and Charmaz's (2007) work is also critiqued when they suggest that

Glaser strongly maintains that GTM (grounded theory methodology) can use all forms of data: qualitative and quantitative. Glaser has consistently made this argument over the years, but it is worth noting that the full title of Glaser and Strauss's book was *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research.*" (p. 2)

Bryant and Charmaz (2007) have regrettably chosen to disregard Glaser and Strauss's (1967) explicit assertion, in the very text, that

[a]lthough the emphasis on qualitative data is strong in our book, most chapters also can be used by those who wish to generate theory with quantitative data, since the process of generating theory is independent of the kind of data used." (p.18)

This is indeed "worth noting" (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007, p. 2) to borrow Bryant and Charmaz's exact phrase. Furthermore, Bryant and Charmaz (2007) argued that "Glaser (2003) recently changed his stance on the grounded theory quest to discover a single basic social process" (p. 9). Wang (2022) has then revisited the original texts and discovered that the notion of "the basic problem and basic social process" (Glaser, 1978, p. 45) has been at the centre of the GT methodology since the very beginning with no change whatsoever.

Bryant and Charmaz (2007) further argued that

Chapter VII of *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* concerns 'theoretical elaboration of quantitative data', and so does lay the basis for Glaser's valid contention that GTM can use all kinds of data. But we would still hold to the generally accepted view that GTM is a qualitative research method, even if it can incorporate quantitative data: this characteristic is also true for many other qualitative methods" (p. 26).

According to Wang's (2022) analysis, the very origination of the GT methodology by Glaser and Strauss (1967) addresses "how can we systematically relate qualitative and quantitative research to obtain the best of both methods for generating grounded theory?" (p. 261). It is absolutely not about "incorporat[ing] quantitative data" (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007, p. 26) in a qualitative research method as suggested by Bryant and Charmaz. To the contrary, the goal of GT is to "systematically relate qualitative and quantitative research to obtain the best of both methods for generating grounded theory" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 261). As far as quantitative research is concerned, Glaser and Strauss (1967) firmly indicated that "[t]o be sure, there are many styles of quantitative analysis with their own rules. Our focus here is an illustration of how these numerous other styles can also be flexibly adapted to generating theory" (p.187). To recap, "[g]rounded theory is a general methodology for generating theory... It is useful in any field that wishes to generate [a]n inductive theory from systematically collected data, whether qualitative or quantitative" (Glaser, 1978, p.164, emphasis in original).

### **Growth in Personal Character**

Given the passage of time during which we read Glaser's writings, conduct GT studies, and network with GT colleagues around the globe, our level of understanding of the methodology has been undoubtedly increased. The third aspect of life-changing experiences of Chinese classic GT researchers is the growth in personal character arising from coping with multiple challenges and expectations (sometimes, conflicting), working under stress, and being minus-mentored GT researchers (Glaser, 1998). It is evident that the growth in personal character has led us to become more independent in our respective fields.

It is very unusual for a student like Feng (2021) to conduct a full GT study at the master's level. In her recent experience, she then had to cope with a multitude of challenges with support from different sources who witnessed her learnt ability to work under stress. Being the first master's level ever to conduct a full-fledged GT study in China, Feng (2021) found herself in an uncharted territory and has to navigate largely on her own over an extended

period of time permitted for her study. Feng's (2021) own supervisor had no knowledge of GT at all but has agreed for Feng (2021) to explore GT in whichever direction that she wants to go.

Chen's (2020) experience of doing a GT study as a minus-mentored (Glaser, 1998) doctoral candidate highlights a significant part of character building in academic research. Chen had to choose between following the footsteps of her supervisor by adopting a remodeled GT (Glaser, 2003) or to trust and follow her own instinct. Chen chose to adopt Glaser's original methodology with a set of reasons well documented in her thesis. Quite understandably, she has had a real uphill battle to explain, convince, and defend her choice of methodology. Chen (2020) was surely not alone in searching for her autonomy. As Glaser (2005) put it,

[t]his puts a call on one's seniors, on faculty and the social structure of departments to allow the PhD candidate to do his own thing, irrespective of faculty and supervisor desires to have the candidate work on their ideas...it puts a call on supervisor control and ownership of the candidate's work in favour of giving him/her full freedom and license. It is a claim that the candidate must stand for irrespective of senior or supervisor obstruction and efforts to the contrary." (23 August, 2005)

Wang (2022) described her experience of finishing a classic GT study in the doctoral project as a self-renewing one, having observed changes in her levels of thinking and learning capabilities. Both aspects are also part of the challenges she has encountered during the doctoral research. Contrary to Chen (2020), who was minus-mentored (Glaser, 1998), Wang (2022) was fortunate enough to make decisions in GT entirely on her own. The only thing that Wang (2022) has to justify is the use of classic GT and other methods in four separate studies which constitute the whole project. In other words, she has to cope with the institutional expectation that doing a GT study alone is not sufficient and GT's stance of not having to know about her area of research beforehand (Glaser, 1978), having previously conducted the other three studies before GT in her doctoral project.

In writing this essay with some genuinely mixed feelings, I am reminded of those good old days with Glaser at seminars (in-person and virtual), over telephones, and in email exchanges. To conclude, these three aspects of life-changing experiences of ours are highly valuable to ourselves. They are also fairly unique in the sense that we wouldn't have necessarily had these experiences, if we had chosen other methods in our studies. We all admit that we have learned a great deal from Glaser himself and his GT methodology which has subsequently shaped us into who we are. The strength and power that Glaser's GT methodology has given us will be passed on to more people, as hoped by Chen (private communications, 18 January 2022). The GT field in China today, as well as elsewhere, has been filled with a range of other methods all with the label "GT" on them. As we have briefly highlighted in this essay, it is utterly unacceptable that in these other methods branded as GT, there exists some serious flaws pertaining to in-text citation (e.g., "word-by-word" coding (Charmaz, 2006, p. 57), misinterpretation (e.g., theoretical coding in Bryant, 2019, p. xxvi), and sheer disregard of the original text of Glaser and Strauss (1967) (e.g., "GTM is a qualitative research method" [Bryant & Charmaz, 2007, p. 26])). It, therefore, requires the researchers to sharpen and exercise their judgment by simply (re)visiting the original method and carrying out GT research as intended by Glaser since its origination.

## References

Bryant, A. (2019) Senior editor's introduction. In: A. Bryant & K. Charmaz (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of current developments in grounded theory* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp. xxv-xxvii). Sage.

- Bryant, A. & Charmaz, K. (2007). Grounded theory research: Methods and practices. In: A. Bryant & K. Charmaz (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of grounded theory* (pp. 1-28). Sage.
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. Sage.
- Chen, X. (2015). Critical application of grounded theory in Chinese education research, *Peking University Education Review*, 13(1), 2-15. 陈向明 (2015) 扎根理论在中国教育研究中的探索·北京大学学报·13(1)·2-15。
- Chen, X. & Wang, F. (2020) How should literature be used in grounded theory approach? *Journal of Comparative Education*, 2, 3-14. 陈向明、王富伟 (2020) 扎根理论研究需要如何读文献?——兼论扎根理论不同版本的界定之争, 比较教育学报, 2·3-14。
- Chen, Y. (2020). *The classic grounded theory methodology and its application in the study of only-child loss*, [Unpublished doctoral thesis]. Nanjing Normal University. 陈尹(2020) 经典扎根理论方法论及其在失独理论研究中的应用, 未发表的博士学位论文, 南京师范大学。
- Fei, F. (2008). *Resourcing change: A grounded theory explaining the process by which managers address challenges in their initiation of change as learning at work*, [Unpublished doctoral thesis]. University of Bath.
- Feng, Y. (2021). *Sustaining symbiosis during change: a study on the behavioral pattern of farmers' response to policies in Life and Death are Wearing Me Out*, [Unpublished master's thesis]. China University of Political Science and Law 冯园 (2021) 变中维持共生:《生死疲劳》中农民应对政策的模式研究·未发表的硕士学位论文·中国政法大学。
- Glaser, B. G. (1978). *Theoretical sensitivity: Advances in the methodology of grounded theory*. Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B. G. (1998). *Doing grounded theory: Issues and discussions*. Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B. G. (2003). *The grounded theory perspective II: Description's remodeling of grounded theory*. Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B. G. (2005, August 23). *The roots of grounded theory*. [Keynote presentation]. 3rd International Qualitative Research Convention, Johor Bahru, Malaysia.
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Aldine.
- Jia, X. & Heng, L. (2016) Research on the paradigm of Chinese indigenous management theory building bases on grounded spirit, *Chinese Journal of Management*, 13(3), 336-46. 贾旭东、衡量 (2016) 基于“扎根精神”的中国本土管理理论构建范式初探·管理学报·13(3)·336-46。
- Jia, X. & Heng, L. (2020) The "jungle", history, and approach road of the grounded theory, *Science Research Management*, 41(5), 151-63. 贾旭东、衡量 (2020) 扎根理论的“丛林”·过往与进路·科研管理·41(5)·151-63。
- Strauss, A. L. (1987). *Qualitative analysis for social scientists*. Cambridge University Press.
- Wang, Y. (2022). *Effects of micro-website based psycho-educational intervention program on*

*acute leukemia patients and their family caregivers and the behaviour pattern of coping with disease* [Unpublished doctoral thesis]. Fujian Medical University. 王颖 (2022) 基于微信站的心理教育干预对急性白血病患者及其家庭照顾者的干预成效与疾病应对行为模式研究·未发表的博士学位论文·福建医科大学。

Wu, S. & Li, M. (2020) Grounded theory: History and logic, *Sociological Studies*, 2, 75-98. 吴肃然、李名荟 (2020) 扎根理论的历史与逻辑·社会学研究·2, 75-98。

**Declaration of Conflicting Interests:** The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

**Funding:** The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

## Coding in Classic Grounded Theory:

### I've Done an Interview; Now What?<sup>1</sup>

Barry Chametzky, USA

#### Abstract

Without a doubt, many graduate students—especially those who do not have a mentor skilled in the classic grounded theory design—are concerned about doing studies or dissertations using the classic grounded theory design for fear of doing it incorrectly. While there is extant literature in the field of classic grounded theory, a clear and simple how-to does not exist. The purpose of this paper is to give novice researchers interested in the classic grounded theory design a foothold in how to do one aspect of classic grounded theory analysis: coding. The explanation offered in this paper is based in theory and supported with practical examples.

**Keywords:** classic grounded theory, coding

#### Introduction

Congratulations on conducting your first interview for your dissertation using classic grounded theory. Now the fun and, no doubt, confusion truly begin. As you know, several theorists (Glaser, 1978; Mezirow, 1978) spoke about the educational power and importance of confusion. Now is the time when you get to experience this "epistemological anarchy" (Glaser, 2005, p. 43). Despite what Glaser (1998) said, classic grounded theory is complicated for novice researchers. Yet, in order to ease possible frustrations, I will discuss what codes are and are not, different types of codes, and the overall process coding from a theoretical and practical perspective. In this manner, the reader will be able to see how theory and practice come together.

---

<sup>1</sup> This paper was originally published in the **Sociology Mind** (<http://www.scirp.org/journal/sm>) and is reprinted here with the kind permission of the publisher. **Reference:** Chametzky, B. (2016). Coding in classic grounded theory: I've done an interview; Now what? *Sociology Mind*, 6(4), 163-172. <http://doi.org/10.4236/sm.2016.64014>.

### **Significance of this Research**

Without a doubt, many graduate (masters and doctoral) students—especially those who do not have a mentor skilled in the classic grounded theory design (Glaser, 1998)—are concerned about doing studies or dissertations using the classic grounded theory design for fear of doing them incorrectly. While there is extant literature in the field of classic grounded theory, a clear and simple how-to does not exist. Because the process of acculturation, so to speak, into the classic grounded theory realm takes time and requires novice researchers to ask numerous questions, this paper will be extremely valuable to them as it allows any minus mentored (Glaser, 1998) researcher to understand the research design more easily. Tangentially, this research will help allay some fears of novice researchers; with lowered fears and lowered affective filters (Chametzky, 2014), these researchers would be able to conduct their research more expeditiously.

### **What is Classic Grounded Theory?**

According to one of the founders of classic grounded theory, Glaser (2009), this research design is a “simple procedural method formulated to generate substantive, conceptual theory” (p. 72). While no person would ever doubt Glaser, it might be more useful to novice researchers to elaborate on (and clarify) what he said. Grounded theory is a research design in which a researcher explains the behaviors of participants vis-à-vis their main concern. The explanation, derived solely and exclusively from the (qualitative or quantitative) data, takes the ultimate form of a theory that explains the behaviors. While the theory may be unique to the particular group of people, called the substantive area, because the concepts are abstract of “time, place, and people” (Glaser, 2001, p. 10), a highly developed, conceptualized theory is created.

The term “classic” comes from the fact that Glaser and Strauss (1967) were the first two theorists to develop this research design. Subsequent to Glaser and Strauss in 1967, numerous other researchers have developed what they described as other types of grounded theory designs. In this paper, however, the researcher is discussing solely the (pure) classic grounded theory design.

### **What are Codes?**

Let us begin this discussion with what codes are from a practical perspective. Codes are one- or two-word ideas that cogently and succinctly explain what is happening in the data. They are the mechanism that allows you get from raw data to a well-developed theory (Holton, 2010). In other words, a code is how you, the researcher, conceptualize the data (Glaser, 1992). Additionally, codes are gerunds—verbs that end in -ing. Some examples of codes could be limiting, minimizing, feeling fearful, and so on. As you start your coding, if you need or want to create a made-up word (like fearfulizing [sic], to use an example from the previous sentence), to describe the various slices or segments of (raw) data, do so. In time, you will capture “the data in a [more] mature way” (Glaser, 1978, p. 61).

**Conceptualization versus description.** Codes are conceptual in order to achieve maximum generalizability; they are “concepts are abstract of time, place and people and

that concepts have enduring grab, which appeal can literally go on forever as an applied way of seeing events" (Glaser, 2001, p. 10). With conceptualization, the what-is-happening-in-the-data-ness becomes generalizable and modifiable to other places, times, and people. Description, on the other hand, limits the ideas to specific situations.

This theoretical explanation is important so that the reader could appreciate a more practical perspective: Imagine you had raw data that you could explain in one of two ways: either (a) reducing teaching duties or (b) limiting. Which idea is more descriptive and which seems not to be tied to a specific time, place, or person (Glaser, 2001)? Does it not seem that the idea of reducing teaching duties explains a specific situation while limiting is broader? In the case of codes, broadness is desirable. In the theory of surviving situational suffering (Chametzky, 2015), though the substantive area is part-time adjunct instructors in the United States, the idea of overcoming obstacles in order to make it through each day is common to many different walks of life. Thus, while the idea of reducing teaching duties was an important concept in the theory, I needed to ask myself, through memos, what that idea meant. The idea of reducing teaching duties, vis-à-vis the aforementioned theory, referred to how adjunct educators were limited.

Conceptualizing codes initially—especially for novice researchers in classic grounded theory—is challenging. With this idea in mind, consider simply explaining what is going on in the data even if you use a descriptive idea. Additionally, as you look at your interview data and start to code it, if you create a code that is neither a gerund nor a gerund-phrase, put it down. Or, if you have more than one gerund to explain the slice of data, put them down. Don't be concerned at this point that you feel you didn't code correctly. As you constantly compare the codes, and ask yourself what is going on in the data, and what the main concern is of the participants, you will tweak your codes in order to "capture . . . the data in a mature way" (Glaser, 1978, p. 61). Thus, if you need to describe initially, do it; code conceptualization will come in time.

### **The Coding Process**

Now that we have spoken about codes, let us look at sample interview data and see how to code it in an efficient manner. The process from doing an interview to coding, writing memos, and ultimately developing a theory is sometimes challenging, as novice researchers do not know how to advance through the process. Though perhaps intimidating, the process is not as complex as first imagined.

#### **Some Practical Suggestions During the Initial (Open) Coding Process.**

No doubt you have read Glaser (1978) who said that coding is done line-by-line. While that information is accurate, the important question to ask is how long is a line? There is a clear importance when you consider that a line could be, for example, 10" or 4" long; and, depending on the length of a line, there could be one or more than one code used to explain what is going on in the data. What would be better than doing a line-by-line analysis where each line might be 10 inches long would be to fracture the notes into shorter lines. In this way, each line could possibly have one idea. Additionally, with shorter lines, you will be in a better position to have the codes next to the data for easier analysis. This

ease will be invaluable to you when you need to review your raw data as you selectively code.

When I was a doctoral student and candidate learning about classic grounded theory, one of the practice coding sessions we had in our online Skype cohort was extremely valuable. I reproduced part of that experience here and would like to give special thanks for Dr. Barbara Yalof, my coding buddy, for her gracious permission to share her codes on this exercise. The grand tour question (Spradley, 1979) in the following text was to talk about an "aha" moment. During the short (mock) interview initially done in written format, we were told to have the interview/raw data on the left-hand side of the paper and the associated codes on the right. By having the codes easily associated with the data, you would be in a better position to code the segments or incidents (Gibson & Hartman, 2014). Additionally, if you write the code in a different color of ink on the same line as the text (see the figure below), then, if you need to go back to the raw data (if and when you feel you need to double-check yourself), you will be able to see the associated code immediately.

Interview data	Codes
I'd have to say that an 'aha' moment for me was the time I spoke with a mentor at my school and asked for advice on a particular topic.	Being unsure and reaching out Testing one's viewpoint
She suggested what I should do and I was amazed that I had already done exactly what she wanted!	Opening to suggestions and evaluating alternatives
I should mention that I got to that point because of lots of struggles and um what's the word...	Self-reflecting
bypass (not the right word).  OK... I was struggling with GT and the dichotomy between what Glaser/Strauss want/require and what my school requires. I had done a lot of reading in various related (or not so related) methodological/design areas and was increasingly frustrated.	Struggling to find a path  Feeling frustration
I decided that I was going to wear 2 hats: one what the school wanted for the dissertation and one for GT.	Developing a plan Remaining optimistic
Well, that was the advice given to me. It was an 'aha' moment because I realized how contrary GT is to the school's requirements.	Determining a plan Confronting unrealistic expectation

And it was also an 'aha' moment because I was able to figure out what to do by myself (only asking for help afterwards).	Overcoming obstacles
Yes, I thought about (reflected) how in order to get the degree, I have to do what the faculty, committees, etc. want even if it goes against classical theory.	Reasoning out the plan
A related 'aha' moment happened when I was told what some of the seminal works in GT are.	Seeking information
Not only was I able to respectfully disagree with that information but was able to explain why I disagreed. That moment, too, showed me that I was definitely on the right track!	Raising self esteem Experiencing self-efficacy

Figure 1. Sample coding format

Glaser (1978) supported this format when he stated that researchers should "code in the margin right next to the indicator" (p. 71). If writing the (interview) data on shorter lines is not possible, then analyze "sentence by sentence" (Glaser, 1978, p. 16) rather than line-by-line. On the other hand, if you have a line of data that goes across the page, you could be in the situation where line-by-line coding might not work well as there could be several codes per line.

When I did my dissertation and took detailed notes during the phone or Skype sessions, I used half-sheets of paper for my raw data. It was a great use of scrap paper for me! On these sheets on which I wrote my interview notes/comments, on the right-hand side, in red ink (or at least a different color ink from the interview notes), I wrote my "ideas." I should explain that I put "ideas" in quotation marks because sometimes I did not use gerunds as I did not have the correct word at that moment to explain the data slice. Sometimes, too, I used made-up words like "alone-ing" to explain the data. I knew, too, that I was able to go back to my interviews and find a better, more appropriate word; memoing would help manifest any preconscious connections or words about which I didn't initially think.

In examining the aforementioned sample interview, here are some suggestions to keep in mind as you do your own research. First, as you notice, if you create two codes for the same slice of data, it is acceptable. Through comparing codes during the memo-writing phase, you will develop new, more exacting codes for the data you received. I will briefly discuss memos shortly.

Second, during this phase, called open coding because you code everything (Glaser, 1998), you need continually to ask yourself: What is the main concern of the participant? "What is this data a study of " (Glaser, 1978, p. 57)? And, "what is actually happening in

the data (Glaser, 1978, p. 57)? To not ask these questions will result in potentially misinterpreting the data and cause you to lose several hours of work. Remember that what participants say reflects directly their behaviors. When I did my dissertation, I neglected to keep the main concerns of participants in mind; the result was misdirected coding that required me to revisit the raw data and code anew.

Third, do your own coding by hand. Do not use a qualitative analysis tool (like NVivo) to help with your coding. The problem with software tools like NVivo is that they do not have the finesse that you do—even at this early stage in your grounded theory careers!

Finally, a corollary rule to not using qualitative tools to do your coding analysis would be to trust yourself and trust the grounded theory process. Many novice doctoral researchers using the classic grounded theory design want it to be done perfectly. I know I did when I did my dissertation. There is nothing wrong with wanting the methodology to be done perfectly. The problem, though, is that there might not be a definitive answer to "Am I doing this right?" It is important to trust yourself and know that you've carefully read the seminal classic grounded theory books and know the process. Now, you need to trust the grounded theory process because it really does work!

### **Organizing Codes**

You will, certainly have a great deal of codes from your first interview. When I conducted my first classic grounded theory study, I had approximately 20-30 codes. As Glaser (1978) stated, in the beginning, "codes come very fast, and it is important to realize that these codes need correction by trimming and fitting" (pp. 60-61). During my coding process, I also looked for any important words that participants used. These *in vivo* terms were be important as they added a level of richness since they expressed participants' "notions, behaviors, gestures, perspectives, attitudes, and so forth" (Stern & Porr, 2011, p. 64).

When you finish coding your first interview, copy all the codes to a blank MS Word document. Be sure, of course, to omit duplicate codes. Have each code separated by a few blank lines. It is in this document, too, that you will start your memo writing. The nice thing about having all the code in one file is that when you start memoing and start constantly comparing and moving memos around, it will all be in one place. If you find you have similar codes, determine, through memoing, whether they are truly different or not. For example, in my study on offsetting the affective filter (Chametzky, 2013a), I found I had codes like isolating, causing aloneness, and alone-ing [sic]. By the way, do not be afraid to keep writing memos! I had approximately 70 pages of single-spaced memos when I wrote my dissertation. You will always have time to cut down the memos.

### **Comparing Codes**

Now comes the excitement of comparing the codes with each other and trying to understand how one relates to another. As you compare and write memos, you will see patterns develop. Be sure to ask yourself continually, what is going on in the data (Glaser, 1978)? It is only through constantly comparing incident to incident, . . . incident to concept," (Glaser, 1992, p. 39) and, concept to concept (Glaser, 1978, p. 50) that a theory

could be discovered. Additionally, it is through constant comparison that data become saturated so that categories and multivariate properties develop. Keep in mind, too, what the main concern is of the participants.

Comparing concepts is not necessarily challenging. The key is to ask how the terms are or might be related to one another and then write memos on that possible relationship. Remember that it is through memos that precious thought manifests itself (Chametzky, 2013b; Glaser, 1998). According to Glaser (1978), "Comparing the apparently non-comparable increases the broad range of groups and ideas available to the emerging theory" (p. 42). My favorite comparison is the one that Glaser (1978) made: "diarrhea and perfume both indicate body pollution" (p. 43).

At this point in your coding, no doubt you will have many codes and many more pages of memos; the aforementioned MS Word will become long. It might be challenging to scroll through many pages of memos to get to a code. As I started finding patterns (as manifested by possible categories and properties), I used a huge white board to write what I thought at that time were categories, their properties, and relationships. The white board was also useful as I was able to draw arrows and think aloud. Then, as possible connections were made, I wrote memos. With the white board, I was able to see and draw possible connections. And, when a connection did not "feel" right, I learned the sensation was the direct result of forcing—or trying inadvertently to force—the data. I tried to fit what I thought were patterns into categories where they did not fit. I tried to fit data in places into which it would not go. Such an experience is normal and indicates that more analysis is needed. When you find what you think is your core variable with its properties, the data will indeed fit like a glove.

### **A Word or Two about Memos.**

Though a detailed discussion about memos would be outside the realm of this document, it is nonetheless valuable briefly to discuss memos vis-à-vis coding. While many researchers (Chametzky, 2013b; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978, 1992, 1998; Stern & Porr, 2011) have discussed memos in classic grounded theory in great detail, novice researchers still have questions about what memos are. Memos are simply the written-down connections between incidents, codes, properties, and categories. As you write down your ideas about possible connections, you make apparent any unconscious connections (Chametzky, 2013b). Additionally, memos could be as long or as short as necessary—from one sentence to several pages.

To give the reader an example, let us imagine that we have a code of feeling stressed. A researcher could pose several questions to him- or herself to aid in writing the memo: What causes a feeling of stress? When and why does stress occur? How does stress manifest itself? Then, if the researcher has a second code of, say, behaving bizarrely, the researcher would need to compare the two codes and see how they are related and how they differ from one another. Connections will undoubtedly be established.

### **Selective Coding**

As you develop categories, your core variable will undoubtedly emerge. During this phase of your analysis, you delimit and focus on the recurring issue (Stern & Porr, 2011) and "related categories" (Glaser, 1998, p. 138). In other words, you no longer code everything in your data; you code selectively for the core variable in order to enrich your core variable and its properties. From a practical perspective, though, there is no difference between open and selective coding: you are still comparing ideas, incidences, and codes with one another; then you are writing memos. The difference now is that you are focusing on the categories and properties of your core variable.

If you find that your categories are not yet sufficiently multivariate, go back to your raw data (interview, field notes, etc.) and code in a more selective manner. It is acceptable, and indeed necessary, to re-examine your raw data several times during your analysis; each time you study it, you do so with a different objective and with a different eye. What you might have overlooked initially will become apparent now.

### **Conceptualization and Theoretical Codes**

As you continue to compare codes, incidences, and categories, you will see how ideas that were initially somewhat descriptive become abstract and conceptual (Glaser, 1978). Keep in mind that "incident tripping" (Glaser, 1998, p. 153), or description with numerous examples, is not the objective of a theory developed using classic grounded theory; such a theory must have "conceptual generality, not unit generality" (Glaser, 1998, p. 125). In other words, while you are clearly talking about your substantive area, the reader should feel that the information is generalizable to other areas. Let us explore the element of conceptuality from a higher perspective.

After saturation has occurred and a core variable has been found, what is left is examining your theory from a high level. While your theory represents the main concerns of participants, here we are interested in the relationship of the categories *to each other*. What is the abstract glue, so to speak, that holds them together? The way categories fit together in relation to each other is via theoretical codes. Though theoretical codes are not required in a classic grounded theory study (Glaser, 2005), they are valuable. According to Glaser (1978, 2005), "theoretical codes conceptualize how the substantive codes of a research may relate to each other as hypotheses to be integrated into a theory." (Glaser, 1978, p. 72; Glaser, 2005, p. 2).

In my theory of surviving situational suffering, the three categories are limiting, balancing conflict, and falling short. In the case of this theory, I examined the categories and their properties. How did they all come together? The going back and forth between limiting, balancing, and falling short while progressing through the muck and mire of a part-time adjunct experience allowed me to look carefully at Glaser's (1978, 2005) numerous theoretical codes. I realized that more than one theoretical code was applicable to the theory. On one level, a cause-effect was present (Chametzky, 2015). Full-time educators and administrators did (or did not) do something, which resulted in part-time educators feeling and behaving in a certain way. Additionally, a "conditional relationship" (Chametzky, 2015, para. 7) is present in the theory. The strong interdependence between the categories

and situational issues permitted educators to move continuously and in a fluid manner from the beginning to the end of the theory.

I suggest to all novice researchers using classic grounded theory to examine the theoretical codes that Glaser (1978, 2005) discussed. Both books helped me develop a certain understanding to conceptual abstraction. Even if you are not yet comfortable with conceptuality, read (or skim) these books; they are invaluable as you learn and experience the classic grounded theory design. As you will undoubtedly see after quickly examining these sources, theoretical codes do not have the same grab as substantive code because theoretical codes "are empty abstractions" (Glaser, 2005, p. 11); they are "models" (Glaser, 2005, p. 12) that are highly useful in a theory developed using classic grounded theory. In Glaser's (1978) work, *Theoretical sensitivity*, he presented examples of numerous theoretical coding families. If a theoretical family is not applicable to your study—for example, the degree or the consensus families, disregard them. In Glaser's (2005) other book, a great deal of time has been devoted to many other theoretical codes. Glaser (2005) made is very clear that though theoretical codes are valuable and highly useful, they are not a requirement for a classic grounded theory study: "many good GTs . . . have no theoretical code or codes" (p. 59). Do not feel that having theoretical codes in your study is a necessity.

### **Limitations of this Research**

As beneficial as this research might be to novice grounded theory researchers, it has some limitations. Because each research study is unique, it is not possible to explain all the elements in conducting a classic grounded theory study. Though the researcher has explained coding, other aspects of a classic grounded theory design study are missing: interviewing, conducting observations, writing memos, conceptualizing, sorting, and so on. Additionally, there are nuances of substantive and formal theories that have not been addressed here. The scope of this paper, then, is narrow and yet simultaneously points to other elements in classic grounded theory that need to be sufficiently explained. It is hoped that in future publications, the researcher will tackle these other elements of classic grounded theory.

### **Conclusion**

The process of coding in a classic grounded theory study becomes increasingly difficult as the number of codes, larger patterns of behaviors, and categories increase. Such complexity is normal and should be expected. Coding is not difficult in-and-of-itself; it becomes difficult when we don't constantly compare codes, incidents, categories, and properties. Additionally, if we describe we lose generalizability and fall easily into the realm of too much data. When we conceptualize data, we are able to keep the workload manageable and, more importantly, we decouple data from being tied to places, persons, and time (Glaser, 1998).

## References

- Chametzky, B. (2013a). Offsetting the affective filter and online foreign language learners. <http://www.igi-global.com/open-access/paper/offsetting-affective-filter-classic-grounded/7>
- Chametzky, B. (2013b). Generalizability and offsetting the affective filter. *Grounded Theory Review*, 12(2). <http://groundedtheoryreview.com/>
- Chametzky, B. (2015). Surviving situational suffering: A classic grounded theory study of post-secondary contingent faculty members in the United States. *Grounded Theory Review*, 14(1). <http://groundedtheoryreview.com>
- Chametzky, B. (2014). Andragogy and engagement in online learning: Tenets and solutions. *Creative Education*, 5(10), 813-821. <http://www.scirp.org/journal/CE/>
- Gibson, B., & Hartman, J. (2014). *Rediscovering grounded theory*. Sage.
- Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B. (1978). *Theoretical sensitivity*. Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B. (1992). *Basics of grounded theory analysis*. Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B. (1998). *Doing grounded theory: Issues and discussions*. Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B. (2001). *The grounded theory perspective: Conceptualization contrasted with description*. Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B. (2005). *The grounded theory perspective III: Theoretical coding*. Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B. (2007). All is [sic] data. *The Grounded Theory Review*, 6(2), 1-22. <http://groundedtheoryreview.com>
- Glaser, B. (2009). *Jargonizing using the grounded theory vocabulary*. Sociology Press.
- Hayes-Bautista, D. (1996). Becoming Chicano: A dissimilation theory of transformation of ethnic identity. In B. Glaser (Ed.), *Grounded theory: The basic social process dissertation*. Sociology Press.
- Holton, J. (2010). The coding process and its challenges. *The Grounded Theory Review*, 9(1), 21-40. <http://www.groundedtheoryreview.com>
- Mezirow, J. (1978). Perspective transformation. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 28(2), 100-110. <http://doi.org/10.1177/074171367802800202>
- Spradley, J. (1979). *The ethnographic interview*. NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston. [http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=2\\_\\_Tt3FJm18C&oi=fnd&pg=PA44&dq=spradley+%2B%22asking+descriptive+questions%22&ots=QNud4eW9IZ&sig=S1PuRYt3B8IBcLSfaUR8Ov-](http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=2__Tt3FJm18C&oi=fnd&pg=PA44&dq=spradley+%2B%22asking+descriptive+questions%22&ots=QNud4eW9IZ&sig=S1PuRYt3B8IBcLSfaUR8Ov-)

GXhY#v=onepage&q=spradley%20%2B%22asking%20descriptive%20questions %2  
2&f=false

Stern, P., & Porr, C. (2011). *Essentials of accessible grounded theory*. Left Coast Press.

## When and How to Use Extant Literature in Classic Grounded Theory<sup>1</sup>

Alvita K. Nathaniel, PhD, APRN, BC, FAANP  
Professor Emerita, West Virginia University

### Abstract

Glaser and Strauss (1967) sprinkled suggestions about the use of the literature throughout their seminal work as did Glaser in subsequent years. They, however, did not lay out a clear and structured overview of how to use the literature. The aim of this paper is to weave together the recommendations from classic grounded theory originators and to describe how, why, and when to review the literature and which literature to review. The paper includes a section debunking the no literature myth followed by descriptions of the three phases of the classic grounded theory literature review—the introduction phase, the integration phase, and the disposition phase. The three phases work together to substantiate, confirm, and enhance an emerging grounded theory and situate it within the existing body of knowledge.

**Keywords:** literature review, extant literature, grounded theory, classic grounded theory.

### Introduction

This paper lays out a systematic approach to the literature review that is consistent with the classic grounded theory method as established by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and further by Glaser in subsequent publications. Their ideas about the pre-investigation literature review adhere to the foundational assumptions of the classic grounded theory method including discovery, emergence, and a foundation based upon participants' perspectives. Through sentences and short paragraphs, Glaser and Strauss sprinkled suggestions about the use of the literature throughout their seminal work, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (1967), as did Glaser in subsequent years. They, however, did not articulate a complete and structured overview of how to use the literature. Much has been written in intervening years, mostly focusing on misunderstandings. Few have attempted to piece together Glaser and Strauss' advice into a cohesive whole. Even the most adamant proponents of classic grounded theory have struggled to rectify Glaser and Strauss's (1967) suggestions about the literature review with the exigencies of authoritarian social structures that have strict rules for reviewing the literature. This paper explains how a classic grounded theory literature review can be accomplished, even within strict institutional standards. The aim of this paper is to weave

---

<sup>1</sup> This paper was originally published in the **American Journal of Qualitative Research** (<https://www.ajqr.org/>) and is reprinted here with the kind permission of the publisher. **Reference:** Nathaniel, A.N. (2022). When and how to use extant literature in classic grounded theory. *American Journal of Qualitative Research*, , 6(3), 45-59. <https://doi.org/10.29333/ajqr/12441>

together the classic grounded theory originators' advice and describe what, how, why, and when to review the literature. Recommendations in this paper derive from original sources of classic grounded theory and other proponents of the method but also interweave complementary, sometimes surprising, views expressed by authors of remodeled versions of grounded theory and also advice from general research methods literature.

The grounded theory literature review is defined for this paper as the systematic selection, interpretation, and review of published and unpublished material on a particular topic. The literature may include empirical data, research findings, ideas, theories, recordings, and other collections and may include the work of researchers, scholars, and theorists along with other historic and current grounded sources. A literature review can also include conceptual and opinion pieces that provide insight into others' thinking about a topic (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). As you read further, you will see that the appropriate grounded theory literature review is intended to be focused, deliberate, and useful.

The preliminary grounded theory literature review does not focus on concepts from a fixed research question, as is customary in quantitative research, because grounded theory research questions begin very broad and evolve as data are collected and analyzed. As Creswell and Creswell (2018) suggest, this can be uncomfortable for researchers since it challenges the accepted approaches of some faculty, ethics committees, and funding sources whose background in research is often quantitative and deductive. This paper proposes strategies to avoid these conflicts and demonstrates that an institutionally required pre-investigation literature review is sometimes acceptable, even to classic grounded theory purists, as a strategy to move forward with research. The paper includes a section debunking the "no literature review" myth followed by descriptions of the three phases of the classic grounded theory literature review—the introduction phase, the integration phase, and the disposition phase.

### **The No Literature Review Myth**

What do classic grounded theory sources have to say about the literature review? Contrary to what some critics have put forth, the originators of grounded theory, Glaser and Strauss (Glaser, 1978, 1992, 1998, 2001; Glaser & Holton, 2004; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) call for an extensive review of the literature, both within the area of study and in other fields. Andrews (2006), an experienced classic grounded theorist, agrees that a preliminary review of the literature is "entirely consistent" with the established principles of grounded theory. The issue of *when* to, rather than *whether* to perform the literature review sets classic grounded theory apart from other research methods. Glaser and Strauss established the ideal method of researching the extant literature, while recognizing the practical issues that can arise. They propose arguments in favor of avoiding a pre-investigation literature review but acknowledge that one might be needed.

Since qualitative studies are generally exploratory, with little written about the topic, Creswell and Creswell (2018) agree that researchers must use the literature as a complement to participant-focused inquiry, rather than as a springboard for preconceived questions. In the *Discovery of Grounded Theory*, Glaser and Strauss (1967) suggest that delaying the empirical and theoretical literature within the area under study is one effective

strategy to assure that categories in the evolving theory will not be contaminated by received ideas less suitable to the research focus. Glaser suggested that the researcher should choose areas for the initial literature review that will not pre-conceptually contaminate the emerging theory but will enhance theoretical sensitivity (Glaser, 1998). Dey (2007), who argues in favor of a pre-investigation literature review, nevertheless recognized that Glaser and Strauss did not advise investigators to completely abstain from reviewing the literature, but rather to engage broadly and with literature from other academic and non-academic fields.

Glaser and Strauss's suggestion to read the literature of different disciplines at the beginning of the research process is consistent with Abraham Kaplan's position. Kaplan, who believed that a discipline can remain autonomous even though sharing and borrowing the science of others, wrote,

*For the domain of truth has no fixed boundaries within it. In the one world of ideas there are no barriers to trade or to travel. Each discipline may take from others techniques, concepts, laws, data, models, theories, or explanations—in short, whatever it finds useful in its own inquiries.* (Kaplan, 2011/1998, p. 4)

As Glaser and Strauss suggested, then, reading widely from other disciplines broadens the researcher's knowledge and sensitivity to a realm of theoretical codes that might not be present in other disciplines' literature. Dey (2007) and Hallberg (2010) agree that working with a wide range of interdisciplinary ideas, including Glaser's coding families, sharpens theoretical sensitivity, avoiding "the blinkered vision of an established theoretical framework" (Dey, 2007, p. 75). In addition to reading widely from the research of other disciplines, students of Glaser and Strauss were encouraged to read good theoretical studies (Stern & Covan, 2001) in order to become familiar with the structure of the theory.

Glaser (1998) initially reiterated that the researcher should avoid a phenomenon-specific pre-investigation literature review in the substantive area, but should review the literature when the grounded theory is nearly completed. Reacting to practical exigencies, however, Glaser later acknowledged that the investigator must fulfill the basic institutional requirements of the university or funding source because, without it, the research would not be possible. He wrote,

*If the regulations state that any Ph.D. research proposal must be accompanied by a literature review, then do a literature [review]. If the regulations state that a literature review must become the first paper of the Ph.D., then again, give them a literature review.* (Glaser, 2011, p. 56)

Guthrie and Lowe (2011) agreed with Glaser when they advised that, when faced with institutional requirements the researcher should "fully comply with the university regulations, and write a logically plausible (but quite irrelevant) literature review" (p. 61). Glaser (2011) and Guthrie and Lowe (2011) agree that novice grounded theorists should be assured that they can discover a classic grounded theory even if required to perform extensive pre-investigation literature reviews.

The reasons for avoiding an extensive pre-investigation literature review, however, are integral to the assumptions of the method—that is, a pre-investigation literature review threatens to derail emergence and diminish the focus on the participants' perspectives. Glaser points out that the results of an early literature review are inimical to generating grounded theory. As suggested by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Glaser (1998), there are a number of interrelated reasons to avoid a pre-investigation literature review.

First, the investigator may become enthralled, or “grabbed,” by received concepts that neither fit nor are relevant (Glaser, 1998). Although it is possible that some concepts can be borrowed from extant theory if they fit the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), other concepts in the literature may be fascinating to the investigator but wildly unrelated to the processes occurring in the study participants' lives or simply unimportant to the participants. Dunne (2011) is correct that this is a pragmatic view because it can save time and energy by guiding the researcher away from avenues that may be of little ultimate importance.

Second, the investigator may derail a potential emergent theory through a preconceived academic or discipline-specific problem of no relevance to the substantive area of the research (Glaser, 1998). Dey (2007) labeled that “ploughing ahead along an established theoretical furrow regardless of the diversity and richness of the data” (p. 175). This often happens when the novice researcher joins a supervisor's ongoing study. The investigator may find that merely selecting data for a received concept hinders the generation of new categories because the major effort is data selection, rather than discovery or emergence (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). For example, for a PhD thesis, Amélia Didier was asked to join an ongoing faculty study about interdisciplinary health care teams. Didier (2019) chose to use classic grounded theory to learn about hospitalized patients' perspectives on interdisciplinary teams. She quickly learned that patients had no knowledge of nor interest in interdisciplinary teams. The patients were focused on seeking *aufgehobenheit*, a German term which encompasses the concepts of safety, dignity, humanity and respect (Didier, 2019, p. iv). In other words, patients main concern was to feel in safe hands, well cared for. Fortunately, Didier was allowed to proceed with the grounded theory, focus on the patients' main concern, and develop the rich and useful theory of *aufgehobenheit*.

Although Didier (2019) was successful in re-directing her research focus, Kaplan agreed with Glaser and Strauss's concern, proposing that

*officers of the professional associations, honored elders, editors of journals, reviewers, faculties, committees on grants, fellowship and prizes—all exert a steady pressure of conformity to professional standards. . . . The innate conservatism, or at least inertia, of professional standards has from time to time stood in the way of scientific progress.* (Kaplan, 2011/1998, p. 4)

Guthrie and Lowe (2011) go so far as to propose that those who demand to be in control cannot let go of their pre-understanding—they are likely “experts in their fields” who think they know the answers already.

Third, the investigator may become imbued with speculative, non-scientifically related interpretations and theoretical connections, likely through a review of deductive, pre-

conceived theories (Glaser, 1998). Every discipline has popular speculative theories, philosophical frameworks, or conceptual models written in the jargon of the profession. Use of these interpretations and theoretical connections can hijack inductive concept emergence if they are not relevant or do not fit the data. Suddaby (2006) suggests that this will force the researcher into testing hypotheses, rather than directly observing. Thornberg and Dunne (2020), on the other hand, warn that when researchers view an extant theory as correct or superior, they will become "data resistant, disregarding or overlooking data that do not support that particular theory, and their theory will act as a self-fulfilling prophecy" (p. 207).

Fourth, the investigator may become awed by famous or celebrated scholars, theorists, or researchers, thus detracting from the investigators' own self-valuation. Glaser (1978) proposed that being doctrinaire or revering 'great scholars' interferes both with sensitivity to the data and with generating ideas that fit and work best since the investigator may configure the data to fit the doctrine. He also wrote that pre-conceived or ungrounded theory "derives from any combination of several sources; whims and wisdoms of usually deceased great men, conjecture and assumptions about the "oughts" of life, and other extant speculative theory" (Glaser, 1978, p. 143), and thus is unsuited to use in grounded theories. Strauss and Corbin (1998) agreed with this concern proposing that it is not unusual for students to become enamored with a previous study to the point that they are nearly paralyzed.

Fifth, the investigator may become what Glaser terms "rhetorized," relying on rhetorical jargon that is in vogue at the time, rather than allowing theory to emerge. Rhetorized jargon is a discipline's authoritarian method of control. It does not pass the test of time well and may fail to cross disciplinary boundaries, limiting the scope and power of emerging theories.

Sixth, the investigator can completely miss the focus of a (yet to emerge) theory. Since classic grounded theory relies on emergence, a purely speculative pre-investigation literature review wastes valuable time and energy and can send the researcher off on useless tangents.

The researcher must understand why a preliminary review of the literature is not recommended. Equally important are guidelines on the timing and the phases of the literature review, the types of literature to be reviewed, and the importance of the literature when situating the new theory among extant works. The following discussion focuses on these issues and offers a three-phase literature review process.

### **Phases of the Classic Grounded Theory Literature Review**

The classic grounded theory literature review is neither performed nor presented in the traditional hypothetical-deductive manner. The discursive literature review, which is traditional with other research methods, is structured around specific concepts articulated in the research question, conducted before the investigation is initiated, and presented in writing preceding the research findings. This is an immediate problem for grounded theories in which research questions are broad, and specific concepts are unknown at the beginning of the study. Creswell and Creswell (2018) acknowledge that the literature review in

qualitative studies may be conducted and presented in a manner that is congruent with the assumptions of the method. The qualitative literature review may be conducted in a serial fashion and presented in a separate section, included in the introduction, or woven into the study as is generally the case with classic grounded theory. Creswell and Creswell also acknowledge that the literature is used less often to set the stage for grounded theory studies, though the eventual breadth will be comparable.

The eventual scope of the grounded theory literature review is both broad and specific—at different points in the research process. Most classic grounded theorists perform the literature review in three phases, with one caveat: they read widely in other fields throughout the research process in order to increase theoretical sensitivity. The three phases include the *introduction phase*, which makes the case for the study; the *integration phase*, in which the extant literature is identified, synthesized, and integrated into the theory; and the *disposition phase*, which situates the new theory in relation to the extant theoretical and empirical literature.

### **Introduction Phase of the Literature Review**

The introduction phase prepares the researcher and builds the case for the research study. The multi-faceted literature review during this phase sets the course for the research. For the reader, it makes the case for the study, which is especially important when institutional and funding entities require a pre-investigation literature review for the research to proceed. The introduction phase of the literature review gives a general overview of the substantive area and indicates gaps in the knowledge base if those are known. It demonstrates the investigator's familiarity with the substantive area, describes the method of investigation, describes the study population, and often gives clues as to the investigator's worldview or philosophic stance.

### **Review of Literature in the Substantive Area.**

As noted previously, the ideal review of literature in the substantive area should be delayed until the integration phase, which is not to suggest that the classic grounded theorist enters a study "empty-headed" as some would suggest. McCallin (2006) reminded us that students and others tend to misunderstand that each research study is about *something* in the beginning, even though the specific problem is unknown in the early stages. Hallberg (2010) is right that any researcher has acquired years of academic and professional knowledge in their disciplines. Although they moved away from many of the original classic grounded theory tenets, Strauss and Corbin (1998) also made the assumption that most professionals are familiar with the literature in their field. Glaser often reminded Ph.D. candidates in his seminars that they (Ph.D. students) are the institutionally and self-selected elite. Investigators generally begin studies with a depth and breadth of knowledge and a sense of curiosity—something they are interested in. Many will have identified a gap in knowledge early in their academic program or professional career. As a supervisor to Ph.D. students, Andrews (2006) discovered that some will enter the field with a clear question in mind. Since the classic grounded theory is an inductive method of discovery, investigators will begin by asking themselves. "What is going on" with *this* group of people in *this* situation?

Ideally, then, the classic grounded theorist who already has a depth of knowledge would not need to perform an extensive pre-investigation literature review in the substantive area. However, as most classic grounded theorists acknowledge, a literature review in the substantive area may be necessary to verify the investigator's questions, withstand public scrutiny, establish a defensible rationale for a given project, and fulfill institutional requirements (Andrews, 2006; Ekstrom, 2006; Glaser, 2011; Martin, 2006; McCallin, 2006; Nathaniel, 2006b; Thornberg & Dunne, 2020; Thulesius, 2006). McCallin (2006) wrote,

*While the beginner researcher receives that [no literature review] interpretation happily, supervisors and institutional review committees are rather more nervous of such a simplistic approach. Those responsible for student researchers seek some reassurance that the student knows what they are doing, has a general focus, and is at least safe to enter the field. (p. 12).*

Creswell and Creswell (2018) admitted that satisfying the reader is more important than the length of the literature review. The researcher must convince the reader that the study was or will be possible in a practical sense, necessary, and potentially significant.

Holton and Walsh (2017) and McCallin (2006) agree that a common strategy to fulfill institutional requirements and satisfy readers is for the investigator to perform a pre-investigation review of the literature that is broad in scope in the substantive area, setting the stage for an exploratory study, while avoiding specific concepts or phenomena. McCallin suggests that the "mental wrestle" for investigators is for the literature review to remain general, avoiding the main interest as much as possible, yet focused enough to meet institutional requirements.

What facets of the literature are reviewed in the introduction phase? In addition to reviewing the general literature around the substantive area, the investigator will review the literature for descriptions of the population of interest, the research method, and often the researcher's worldview. The researcher may also need to become familiar with population-specific terminology that may be encountered during data gathering.

### ***Review of the Literature Describing the Population.***

Descriptions of the population of interest should include enough information to give readers a glimpse of the context and to grab their interest. The investigator will review the literature for demographics of the study population and other statistics, which may also include a historical review (Rhoades, 2011) of the population. For example, to study the homeless female population in Denver, Colorado, the researcher would review the literature from established sources for the statistics and demographics of the national, state, and city homeless population. Information on weather trends that affect the homeless, crimes committed by or against homeless people, the progression of homelessness, causes of homelessness, special concerns of homeless women, and available resources might also be helpful. If the researcher wants to further limit the study to those who are addicted to methamphetamine, another search of the literature would add information about the

prevalence of methamphetamine addiction in the general population versus the homeless population, the risk factors associated with addiction, and the life expectancy of this population. For an exploratory study asking, “what is going on with this population,” this type of literature review may satisfy an institution’s literature review requirement.

### ***Review of the Grounded Theory Methodology/Method Literature***

In addition to general literature surrounding the substantive area and the population of interest, the investigator should review the literature about the classic grounded theory method. Although Glaser stipulated that grounded theory is a general method that can be used with both qualitative and quantitative data, it is found to be the most frequently used qualitative method. Yet, paradoxically, many researchers, thesis/dissertation supervisors, ethics committees, and readers are poorly versed in the classic grounded theory methodology, therefore misinterpretations abound. Thulesius (2006) advised the researcher to begin a classic grounded theory study to educate readers on the method’s background, language, procedures, and the rationale for choosing grounded theory. Further, Thulesius proposes that reading the appropriate grounded theory method books repeatedly throughout the research process is the most important facet of reading the literature. The most often cited primary sources of information on the method are *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* by Glaser and Strauss (1967), *Theoretical Sensitivity: Advances in the Methodology of Grounded Theory* (Glaser, 1978), and *Doing Grounded Theory: Issues and Discussion* (Glaser, 1998). All of Glaser’s subsequent publications are also excellent primary sources for classic grounded theory as well as *Grounded Theory: The Philosophy, Method, and Work of Barney Glaser* (Martin & Gynnild, 2012), *Classic Grounded Theory: Applications with Qualitative and Quantitative Data* (Holton & Walsh, 2017), and *Experiencing Grounded Theory: A Comprehensive Guide to Learning, Doing, Mentoring, Teaching, and Applying Grounded Theory* (Simmons, 2022) Since all peer reviewers are experienced classic grounded theorists, methodological papers published in the *Grounded Theory Review* are also good sources for classic grounded theory methodology and original theories published there can serve as exemplars for novice researchers.

Because classic grounded theory is vastly different from other methods, a review of the methodological literature should be comprehensive, descriptive, and explanatory. A meticulous review of the method literature can forestall questions and objections from Ph.D. supervisors, ethics committees, and funding sources. The researcher should review the literature on the use of grounded theory’s inductive approach as contrasted with the hypothetical-deductive approach used in many other methods. The review of methods literature should also include the method’s dependence upon participants’ perceptions, conceptualization, category development, and theoretical relationships. Procedures, processes, and language of classic grounded theory that should be covered in the literature review include sampling; data sources; data collection methods; data recording methods (generally field notes); emergence; constant comparison; open, selective, and theoretical coding; memoing; memo sorting; identification of the core category; unique criteria for rigor in grounded theory; and standard ways of writing and presenting grounded theories. A description of the method’s procedures also serves as a primer for grounded theory language. It is always helpful when research supervisors unfamiliar with grounded theory also read the method literature.

Although Glaser and Strauss wrote the seminal work from which all grounded theory has developed, Strauss and others went on to modify the method and write about grounded theory's perspectives and procedures in significantly remodeled ways—adding procedures, philosophic foundations, new language, and adapted understandings. So, subsequent publications by Strauss and Corbin (Corbin & Strauss, 1997, 2015; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), Charmaz (Bryant & Charmaz, 2016; Charmaz, 2000, 2006), Clarke (Clarke, 2005; Clarke et al., 2016, 2018), Birks and Mills (Burks & Mills, 2015), and others, although easy to find in the literature, cannot be used to describe the classic grounded theory.

### ***Review of Extant Theory Literature in the Introduction Phase***

Except when modifying an existing grounded theory or developing a formal grounded theory, a review of extant theories should not be performed in the introduction phase of the grounded theory literature review. The goal of classic grounded theory is to use inductive reasoning with a particular type of data from which concepts, categories, and theoretical relationships emerge. As noted previously, reviewing extant theories before gathering data puts the investigator at risk of consciously or unconsciously adopting speculative pre-conceived concepts and finding ways to configure data to conform to them. There are two main exceptions to this tenet. First, extant grounded theories *must* be reviewed during the introduction phase if the purpose of the research is to modify the existing theory. For example, data from front-line nurses' experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic might easily modify Nathaniel's (2006a) theory of *Moral Reckoning in Nursing* or Andrews' (2003) theory of *Making Credible: A Grounded Theory of How Nurses Detect and Report Physiological Deterioration in Acutely Ill Patients*, both of which were developed in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century prior to the pandemic. The extremely difficult context of health care during height of the pandemic vastly affected patients,' physicians,' and nurses' relationships; the structure of health care delivery; and previously rigid ethical parameters, which shifted with each new crippling wave of the pandemic. New, more current studies could modify these two theories to fit real-world circumstances and therefore become more explanatory, predictive, and useful for nurses who might face similar situations during future pandemics or other catastrophic events.

Second, grounded theory researchers must review the theory literature when developing formal grounded theory. Up to this point, the discussion has focused solely on substantive theory, or theory of the middle range that focuses on real-life issues in specific contexts. Formal theory, on the other hand, raises the level of abstraction and expands the context. Glaser defined formal grounded theory as an overarching theory of a "substantive grounded theory core category's general implications [broader than the initial context] generated from, as wide as possible, other data and studies in the same substantive and in other substantive areas" (Glaser, 2007b, p. 4). Thus, the investigator preparing to develop a formal grounded theory must review theoretical literature in the introduction phase. The literature review, in this case, is restricted to empirical research and theories, often from disparate disciplines, that apply directly to the core category and concepts of the original substantive theory. But, to reiterate, unless the investigator intends to modify an existing theory or develop a formal grounded theory, extant theories should not be reviewed during the introduction phase.

### ***Philosophical Foundations Literature***

Many universities require Ph.D. students to review the literature surrounding the philosophical foundations of the research method used in a study. Creswell and Creswell (2018) agree with Annells (1996) that the researcher should include philosophical assumptions or worldviews of qualitative research in the literature review. However, the philosophical foundations of classic grounded theory are as controversial as the literature review itself since Glaser and Strauss (1967) did not articulate a philosophical foundation for the method. In fact, Glaser stated emphatically that grounded theory is not based upon a particular philosophy (personal communication). So, what philosophical literature does the investigator review when the method has no established philosophical foundation?

If a review of the philosophical foundations of the grounded theory method is institutionally required, there are three options, each of which includes an acknowledgment that the method has no philosophical foundation. The first option is to present the researcher's own worldview as the foundation of the research study. For example, Holton and Walsh (2017) acknowledge that they hold the critical realist perspective. Thus, their research investigations and analyses are conducted through the critical realist lens. A literature review of critical realism with its implications for the research processes would be appropriate for the introduction phase of the literature review. A second option is to adopt a formal theory of science that includes inductive logic, such as that of Charles Sanders Peirce (1901/1992), as a philosophical foundation for the method. If the investigator chooses to use a philosophy of science as the philosophical foundation, the literature review should include primary source ontology and epistemology elements that logically fit with the classic grounded theory method. The third option is to select symbolic interactionism as the philosophical foundation of the method. Even though Glaser denied a specific foundation of the method, he recognized that symbolic interactionism could serve as a sensitizing agent for grounded theory research (personal communication). That is, symbolic interactionism is not the foundation of the method but can be used as a lens through which to conduct and analyze grounded data. If a researcher chooses to propose symbolic interactionism as the foundation of a research study, the literature review should use primary sources to describe the elements that affect the research process.

### ***Population-Specific Terminology***

Sometimes, researchers seeking to closely follow the procedures of classic grounded theory worry that *any* review of any literature, including sources that will help them to understand the study population, will violate the method's precepts. For example, a researcher studying problems encountered by those interested in cryptocurrency found that new terms and unfamiliar language surrounding virtual currency had developed. For example, terms such as *ashraked*, *atomic swap*, and *blockchain*, are not part of common language. Understanding the language or terminology is critical in collecting and analyzing data. The researchers could not pierce the language barrier without familiarizing themselves with these and other critical terms. For that reason, familiarizing oneself with population-specific language is preparatory to a study and is not considered part of the review of literature.

### **Integration Phase of the Literature Review**

The integration phase of the literature review occurs during the data collection and analysis stages of the research process. Finally! A focused literature review of the substantive area is an essential element at this point in grounded theory development. Classic grounded theorists use extant literature in a systematic, yet entirely different manner from quantitative and most qualitative methods. The purpose and process of the literature review in classic grounded theory is unique and the type of literature to be reviewed can be vast—unrestricted by conventional rules. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967) theorizing begs for comparative analysis, creating what Creswell and Creswell (2018) labeled, a reciprocal relationship between theory and data. Once the analysis is well underway, the grounded theorist compares the literature to the emerging theory and uses the literature to support, corroborate, and illustrate the emerging theory. Glaser (1978) believed that well done grounded theories can transcend previous works while integrating them into the new theory, thus providing a theory of greater scope. Martin (2006) contends that grounded theory can help researchers to cross disciplinary boundaries and use existing literature to develop more potent theories. Strübing (2007) points out that the secret lies in how to properly use previous knowledge. Following is a discussion of the process of the literature review in the integration phase and the types of literature to be considered.

#### ***Process of Literature Integration***

Since grounded theory is an inductive method and the problem is not known beforehand, the focused literature review cannot occur until data collection is underway and analysis has begun. Glaser (1998) proposed that the literature review in the substantive area should be done when the theory is nearly completed, during the sorting and writing the theory. Specifically, Holton and Walsh (2017) and Glaser and Strauss (1967) suggested that similarities and convergences with the literature can begin to be reviewed once the analytic core of categories emerges. At that time the literature can be used as additional data to be constantly compared with the emergent concepts, elaborating emerging concepts and directing further theoretical sampling (Holton & Walsh, 2017).

Grounded theory analysis occurs quickly and each new hypothesis directs the researcher to new sources of library material and exceptionally revealing comparison groups (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). To be clear, as concepts emerge from the data, literature searches are conducted for those specific concepts or others that are closely related. For example, Ekstrom (2006) was led to papers about how women experienced menopause and papers about status passages, since these were the concepts emerging from her data. Stern turned to the literature on fathering and family dynamics (Stern & Covan, 2001). Once the concepts and categories emerge from the data and it is time for a literature search, the researcher must carefully choose sources of data and search terms.

Library databases serve as invaluable tools for locating existing literature in the electronic age. However, Boell and Cecez-Kecmanovic (2010) warn that databases are limited in their coverage since single databases only cover a subset of academic journals. Further, some databases do not include all papers included in each journal. For that reason, Boell and Cecez-Kecmanovic propose that researchers conduct searches of multiple

databases. But what are the best search terms? Glaser and Strauss (1967) instructed their students to cultivate several functional synonyms in order to fully explore relevant literature. For example, when searching the literature for moral reckoning, literature on moral distress, moral outrage, moral agony, moral uncertainty, and other possible synonyms was searched. Boell and Cecez-Kecmanovic recognize that specific topics can be described using an almost indefinite number of words. One strategy to overcome this problem is to scour books such as a thesaurus or Rodale's (1978) *Synonym Finder* using a snowball technique by moving from one term to another in an attempt to gather many possible common language search terms. Glaser and Strauss focused on library literature and methods to search a brick-and-mortar library, but in the electronic age researchers have almost unlimited access to many types of literature.

### ***Types of Literature to Integrate***

In grounded theory, there is no clear distinction between data and literature since existing theoretical and empirical literature can be integrated into an emerging theory. Simmons (2022) states that one unique feature of classic grounded theory is that literature is often treated as if it were data. In fact, Glaser (2007a) proposed that "all is data," blurring the line between data and empiric literature. Glaser and Strauss (1967) stressed that the decision about what sources of data to use is crucial to the outcome of the study. So, what types of literature-cum-data will the researcher use?

Many sources of library material are available for comparison and integration. In fact, Glaser and Strauss (1967) proposed that a researcher should use *any* relevant material bearing on the substantive area. One of the best sources of literature is existing behavioral research, which offers data, categories, theoretical relationships, and illustrations. Most types of qualitative research are grounded in the data but should be carefully evaluated before being integrated into or compared with the emerging theory. Once the emerging theory has shape, extant themes, ideas, hypotheses, and concepts can be analyzed, compared, and integrated if they are found to be relevant and if they fit and work. The researcher must be careful, though, because words used in existing literature may not have the same meaning or relevance as the emerging theory. Other sources of library data include letters, diaries, newspaper accounts, government documents, speeches, sermons, annual reports, and company files (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). For example, Glaser and Strauss found a collection of interviews with very poor New Yorkers in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, which offered a vivid picture of poverty during that era (1967). These types of documents tend to be used almost exclusively for verification of the emerging theory or for illustration. In today's age of information technology, there are many sources of data. Blogs, for instance, can offer rich information that can be useful in grounded theory studies.

Formal grounded theory, especially, makes use of empiric literature and existing theories. Glaser (2011) suggested that a major source of data for generating a formal grounded theory includes a secondary analysis of data collected for other reasons. Caches of secondary analysis include those of interviews, speeches, collections of letters, journals, and so forth. Glaser wrote, "But it amazes me how many data sources just bursting for use in a formal grounded theory such as readers, journals, documents, researched newspaper articles, or areas of much literature coverage with arrays of articles" (Glaser, 2011, p. 262). When the analysis is complete, the literature review has been fully integrated, and the

theory has been written the researcher is ready to present a disposition of the newly emerged theory.

### **Disposition Phase**

The disposition phase occurs after the theory is written. During this phase, the researcher prepares the discussion section of the research study, often chapter five of a traditional thesis or dissertation. Creswell and Creswell (2018) agree that this is appropriate for a grounded theory study. The ongoing development of knowledge is the incessant interaction between induction and deduction between empirical and theoretical realms (de Groot, 1969) in which hypotheses link the two worlds together (van de Wijngaert et al., 2014). Therefore, the literature reviewed at this point should not be an exhaustive (and exhausting) review of all literature, but rather a carefully analytic meaningful review of related extant empiric and theory literature. Stern and Covan (2001) wrote,

*Without reverence to existing knowledge, even grounded theories remain sterile: a researcher is unable to add to the body of knowledge expected in a research enterprise. In other words, without this step of comparing and coordinating the work of other scholars, a researcher may not develop his or her theory completely and others may not be able to develop a theory further in the future. (p. 25)*

In this section of the written research study, the researcher provides a scholarly discussion about the position and contribution of the new theory in relation to extant literature. During the disposition phase, the order and relative position of the new theory is established in terms of the discipline's knowledge base, placing the theory among other researchers' work on the same ideas. The discussion in this phase of the literature review can add a new dimension to existing work (Stern & Covan, 2001) or extend the theory of others. The new theory will usually, if not invariably, "transcend diverse previous works while integrating them into a new theory of greater scope than extant ones" (Glaser, 1978, p. 10). The fully emerged theory becomes a powerful instrument that can clarify, synthesize, and organize prior grounded theories and refute flawed theories, thus contributing to the knowledge base of a discipline. Thus, each work adds to or corrects those before it, moving closer to knowledge that is true and correct—what Peirce called moving humankind toward the *final opinion* (Houser & Kloesel, 1992).

The approach to the literature review during the disposition phase is important. Glaser advised his students to measure extant literature against the newly emerged theory, rather than the other way around. He warned researchers to avoid an attitude of reverence for extant works or to search for their own best ideas in previous works in order to legitimate the new theories—"as if they could not be allowed to generate on their own" (Glaser, 1978, p. 137). Nor should there be an implication that the current theory was derived from a previous work merely to legitimize the new theory. Idolization, Glaser proposed, should be replaced with the thought that "he *too* was working on these ideas" (p. 138). In other words, the researcher should not give older works precedence over the newly generated theory. However, Glaser (1978) also advised that the researcher should not attempt to debunk old theories since a vigorous justification of the new theory, beyond its normal justification, would not be useful, and the good aspects of the extant theory could be lost in the bargain. The secret is to compare and contrast the new theory with existing works

while maintaining the power of the new theory and respecting the old.

### Conclusion

The literature review of a classic grounded theory study is an integral piece of a newly emerged theory, which enhances both the new and old, adds to the knowledge base, and positions the new theory in relation to extant works. Consistent with the classic grounded theory method, this paper lays out a rigorous and systematic three-phase approach to the literature review. It also refutes common misunderstandings of critics that claim the timing and procedures of the grounded theory literature review are inadequate. The paper offers strategies to avoid conflicts and demonstrates that an institutionally required pre-investigation literature review is sometimes accepted as a strategy to move forward with research, even to classic theory purists. The paper gathers together Glaser and Strauss's recommendations and establishes a clear roadmap for conducting a literature review for a classic grounded theory study.

### References

- Andrews, T. (2003). *Making credible: A grounded theory of how nurses detect and report physiological deterioration in acutely ill patients*. University of Manchester.
- Andrews, T. (2006). The literature in grounded theory: A response to McCallin (2003). *Grounded Theory Review*, 5(2/3), 29-32.  
<http://groundedtheoryreview.com/2006/06/30/1421/>
- Anells, M. (1996). Grounded theory method: Philosophical perspectives, paradigm of inquiry, and postmodernism. *Qualitative Health Research*, 6(3), 397-393.
- Boell, S., & Cecez-Kecmanovic, D. (2010). Literature reviews and the hermeneutic circle. *Australian Academic & Research Libraries*, 41(2), 129-144.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00048623.2010.10721450>
- Bryant, A., & Charmaz, K. (Eds.). (2016). *The SAGE handbook of grounded theory*. SAGE Publications.
- Burks, M., Mills, J. (2015). *Grounded theory: A practical guide*. SAGE Publications.
- Charmaz, K. (2000). Grounded theory: Objectivist and constructivist methods. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 509-535). SAGE Publications.
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory*. SAGE Publications.
- Clarke, A. E. (2005). *Situational analysis: Grounded theory after the postmodern turn*. SAGE Publications.
- Clarke, A. E., Friese, C., & Washburn, R. S. (2018). *Situational analysis: Grounded theory after the interpretive turn*. SAGE Publications.
- Clarke, A. E., Friese, C., & Washburn, R. S. (Eds.). (2016). *Situational analysis in practice: Mapping research with grounded theory*. Routledge.
- Corbin, J. M., & Strauss, A. L. (1997). *Grounded theory in practice*. SAGE Publications.
- Corbin, J. M., & Strauss, A. L. (2015). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. SAGE Publications.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative quantitative and mixed methods approaches* (5 ed.). SAGE Publications.

- de Groot, A. D. (1969). *Methodology: foundations of inference and research in the behavioral sciences*. Mouton.
- Dey, I. (2007). Grounding categories. In K. Charmaz & A. Bryant (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of grounded theory* (pp. 166-190). SAGE Publications.
- Didier, A. (2019). *Aufgehobenheit: Patients' perspective of interprofessional collaboration within a multidisciplinary care team*. Université de Lausanne. Lausanne.
- Dunne, C. (2011). The place of the literature review in grounded theory research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 14(2), 111-124. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2010.494930>
- Ekstrom, H. (2006). Aspects of McCallin's paper "grappling with the literature in a grounded theory study. *Grounded Theory Review*, 5(2/3), 45-46. <http://groundedtheoryreview.com/2006/06/30/1407/>
- Glaser, B. G. (1978). *Theoretical sensitivity: Advances in the methodology of grounded theory*. Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B. G. (1992). *Emergence vs forcing: Basics of grounded theory analysis*. Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B. G. (1998). *Doing grounded theory: Issues and discussion*. Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B. G. (2001). *The grounded theory perspective: Conceptualization contrasted with description*. Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B. G. (2007a). All is data. *Grounded Theory Review*, 6(2), 1-22.
- Glaser, B. G. (2007b). *Doing formal grounded theory: A proposal*. Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B. G. (2011). Generating formal theory. In V. B. Martin & A. Gynnild (Eds.), *Grounded theory: The philosophy, method, and works of Barney Glaser* (pp. 257-276). BrownWalker.
- Glaser, B. G., & Holton, J. A. (2004). Remodeling grounded theory. *Grounded Theory Review*, 4(1-24).
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Aldine Transaction.
- Guthrie, W., & Lowe, A. (2011). Getting through the PhD process using GT: A supervisor-researcher perspective. In V. B. Martin & A. Gynnild (Eds.), *Grounded theory: The philosophy, method, and works of Barney Glaser* (pp. 51-68). BrownWalker.
- Hallberg, L. R. M. (2010). Some thoughts about the literature review in grounded theory studies. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-Being*, 5(3), Article 5387. <https://doi.org/10.3402/qhw.v5i3.5387>
- Holton, J. A., & Walsh, I. (2017). *Classic grounded theory: Applications with qualitative and quantitative data*. SAGE Publications.
- Houser, N., & Kloesel, C. (Eds.). (1992). *The essential Peirce: Selected philosophical writings* (Vol. 1). Indiana University Press.
- Kaplan, A. (2011/1998). *The conduct of inquiry: Methodology for behavioral science*. Transaction Publishers. (Original work published in 1964)
- Martin, V. B. (2006). The relationship between an emerging grounded theory and the existing literature: Four phases for consideration. *Grounded Theory Review*, 5(2/3), 47-50.
- Martin, V. B., & Gynnild, A. (Eds.). (2012). *Grounded theory: The philosophy, method, and work of Barney Glaser*. BrownWalker.
- McCallin, A. (2006). Grappling with the literature in a grounded theory study. *Grounded Theory Review*, 5(2-3), 11-27. (Reprinted from "Grappling with the literature in a

- grounded theory study." 2003, *Contemporary Nurse*, 15(1), 61-69.  
<https://doi.org/10.5172/conu.15.1-2.61>
- Nathaniel, A. K. (2006a). Moral reckoning in nursing. *Western journal of nursing research*, 28(4), 419-438.
- Nathaniel, A. K. (2006b). Thoughts on the literature review and GT. *Grounded Theory Review*, 5(2/3), 35-41.
- Peirce, C. S. (1901/1992). On the logic of drawing history from ancient documents, especially from testimonies. In N. Houser & C. Kloesel (Eds.), *The essential Peirce: Selected philosophical writings* (Vol. 2, pp. 75-114). Indiana University Press.
- Rhoades, E. A. (2011). Literature reviews. *The Volta Review*, 111(3), 353-368.
- Rodale, J. I. (1978). *The synonym finder*. Warner.
- Simmons, O. E. (2022). *Experiencing grounded theory: A comprehensive guide to learning, doing, mentoring, teaching, and applying grounded theory*. BrownWalker.
- Stern, P. N., & Covan, E. K. (2001). Early grounded theory: Its processes and products. In P. N. Stern & E. K. Covan (Eds.), *Using grounded theory in nursing* (pp. 17-34). Springer.
- Strauss, A. L., & Corbin, J. M. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Strübing, J. (2007). Research as pragmatic problem solving: The pragmatist roots of empirically-grounded theorizing. In A. Bryant & K. Charmaz (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of grounded theory* (pp. 580-601). SAGE Publications.
- Suddaby, R. (2006). From the editors: What grounded theory is not. *Academy of Management Journal*, 49(4), 633-642.
- Thornberg, R., & Dunne, C. (2020). Literature review in grounded theory. In A. Bryant & K. Charmaz (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of current developments in grounded theory* (pp. 206-221). SAGE Publications.
- Thulesius, H. (2006). New way of using literature in GT. *Grounded Theory Review*, 5(2/3), 43-44.
- van de Wijngaert, L., Bouwman, H., & Contractor, N. (2014). A network approach toward literature review. *Quality & Quantity: International Journal of Methodology*, 48(2), 623-643. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-012-9791-3>

## Disclosures

**Declaration of Conflicting Interests:** The author declares no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

**Funding:** The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

## **Transcending Inequality: A Classic Grounded Theory of Filipino Factory Workers in Taiwan**

Peter C. Sun, University of Washington

### **Abstract**

The purpose of this research is to develop a classic grounded theory of the main concern of Filipino factory workers in Taiwan and the latent pattern of behavior that accounts for its continual resolution. Nine participants were interviewed and the data were analyzed using the constant comparative method of analysis. The theory that emerged from this study was transcending inequality, which explains how individuals resolve inequality via three overlapping patterns of behavior: coping, bonding, and serving. These behaviors represent a constellation of individual, cultural, social, and spiritual resources. The findings have implications for three areas of practice and policy: (a) local and transnational community life, (b) religious and spiritual practices, and (c) the strength-based approach.

**Keywords:** Migrant worker, inequality, classic grounded theory

### **Introduction**

Taiwan's population of migrant workers has risen dramatically since the establishment of a formal guest worker program in 1991 (Lu, 2000). By the end of 2012, Taiwan had 445,579 migrant workers, predominantly from Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam. More than half the migrant workers were employed in manufacturing industries, with the rest being primarily domestic workers (Council of Labor Affairs, 2012). Rapid economic growth, industrialization, and rising labor costs (Tierney, 2007), as well as social changes such as growth in women's employment, declining fertility rates, and changing job attitudes, especially the aversion to so-called 3D (dirty, dangerous, and demanding) occupations, have increased the demand for foreign labor (Lan, 2000a).

Numerous studies have established migrant workers as a vulnerable and oppressed population. In 2011, as many as 42.4% of migrant workers in Taiwan had not had a single day off (Hsiao, 2013). Many work long hours in isolated or hazardous environments without legal and social support (Wu, 2006). Exorbitant placement and brokerage fees result in debts that can take as long as a year and a half to pay off (Sheu, 2007). Studies have also investigated exploitative

broker and employment practices (Loveband, 2004); unequal wages and benefits (Hsiao, 2013); cultural shock and homesickness (Chen et al., 2011); occupational hazards (Liao, 2011); limited citizenship rights and social participation (Sassen, 2002); discrimination and racism (Lan, 2003); emotional, physical, and sexual abuse (Pan & Yang, 2012); and lack of social service provisions (Lai, 2012). Partly because of these problems, many migrants become undocumented, runaway workers (Lan, 2006).

Even though research has studied migrant workers' psychosocial experiences and analyzed the systemic aspects of migration, less articulated are the resources and strategies used by migrants to mitigate or overcome their environmental stressors (Wong & Song, 2008). Some studies have considered the coping strategies of migrant workers, yet the samples comprised domestic workers. The purpose of this study is to explore the main concern of Filipino factory workers and how they resolve that concern. Gaining knowledge about the resources used by migrant factory workers has direct implications for policy and practice that would contribute to their well-being. Specifically, this study uses the classic grounded theory approach to address the following research questions (Glaser, 1978):

1. What main concern emerges from Filipino factory workers' migration experiences?
2. How do Filipino factory workers continually resolve this main concern?

## **Methodology**

### **Classic Grounded Theory Approach**

Classic grounded theory was used to generate a theory about Filipino factory workers' main concern and its resolution. Data were collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews that, consistent with the aims of grounded theory, permitted entry into the perspectives of the interviewees in their own terms.

The aim of grounded theory is to discover the main concern of participants and clarify how participants resolve that concern (Glaser, 1992). Grounded theory is particularly suitable for exploring phenomena not previously examined in depth (Patton, 2001). As a general method, it uses quantitative and qualitative data (Glaser, 2005). Holman (1996) identified grounded theory as compatible with the social work discipline's attention to marginalized populations. In addition, cross-cultural research has benefited from grounded theory's detachment from preconceived ideas and foregrounding of participant knowledge (Sheridan & Storch, 2009).

This study adopted a classic grounded theory approach for its focus on discovering a core variable in the data to generate a parsimonious and well-scoped theory. In contrast, constructivist grounded theory has a more diffuse aim of capturing multiple truths and perspectives through a relativistic epistemology (Glaser, 2002). Furthermore, Strauss' grounded theory is based on a prescriptive data analysis procedure that was incompatible with this study's emphasis on the emergence of participant concerns (Cooney, 2010).

Classic grounded theory is an inductive method of inquiry. The research problem is discovered from the perspectives of the participants to generate theory. To limit preconceived ideas,

full review of the extant literature is deferred until open and theoretical coding are near their final stages of completion (Glaser, 1998). The literature is treated as additional data to be critically analyzed and integrated into the developing theory (McCallin, 2006). Unlike verification studies, the credibility of a grounded theory is assessed by the theory's fit, relevance, workability, and modifiability (Glaser, 1978). The theory is fit if its categories match the incidents being conceptualized. It has relevance if it captures the participants' main concern. Workability refers to the theory being able to explain, predict, and interpret the substantive area under study. Finally, in light of new data, the theory should be modifiable.

### **Data Sources**

This study used a purposive convenience sample of information-rich cases, defined as English-fluent Filipino migrant workers who had worked in Taiwan for at least one year. The participants were recruited at a Catholic social services center. Large influxes of migrant workers attended mass at the center's adjacent Catholic Church. Staff at the center were trained to use a standardized verbal recruitment script to screen and recruit participants.

A total of nine participants were formally interviewed. The median age was 31, all had a high school education or above, and five were female. No participants had previously worked in any other country, with the exception of their own, and they spent a median of four years in Taiwan. The interviews ranged from 48 to 96 minutes.

In addition to in-depth interviews, informal conversations were conducted with a number of Filipino migrant workers, social workers, church staff members, brokers, and employers. I also participated in weekly mass and actively engaged with the attendees. Following the grounded theory dictum "all is data" (Glaser, 1978, p. 8), field notes from these opportunistic conversations and observations were incorporated into the theory formation.

### **Procedure**

After obtaining approval for this study from the University of Washington Human Subjects Division, interviews were conducted from June to September, 2012, in private office spaces at the Catholic social services center. Written consents were obtained prior to the interviews, and participants were informed of the nature and potential risks of the study and advised they were free to withdraw from the study at any time. Initial interviews with the participants were focused on specific questions about their migration experiences. However, these preconceived questions interrupted the emergence of theory; therefore, subsequent interviews focused on the participants' main concern and its recurrent resolution. Given the known vulnerability of the participants, the interviews were guided by strength-based techniques to divert attention from challenges, deficits, or problems (De Jong & Miller, 1995). Probes were spontaneously used to elicit depth, nuance, and vividness as well as increase theoretical saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

### **Data Analysis**

The analytical procedures of grounded theory informed the data analysis. Two types of coding procedures were used to analyze the interview data systematically: (a) substantive coding

and (b) theoretical coding. Glaser (1978) described coding as the process of “fracturing the data, then conceptually grouping it into codes that then become the theory which explains what is happening in the data” (p. 55).

Substantive coding involves open coding and selective coding. In open coding, incidents are compared with other incidents to generate categories that are further compared with new incidents to discover the properties of the categories. This constant comparative method was applied in this research through line-by-line analysis and facilitated by asking a set of questions: “What is this data a study of?”, “What category does this incident indicate?”, “What is actually happening in the data?”, “What is the main concern being faced by the participants?”, and “What accounts for the continual resolving of this concern?” (Glaser & Holton, 2004, p. 48). After a core category emerged in the data through open coding, selective coding delimited coding to incidents significantly related to the core category. Finally, theoretical codes were used to conceptualize the relationships among substantive codes (Hernandez, 2009).

Throughout the process of coding, memos were used to note emergent ideas about codes and their relationships. Sorting the concepts in the memos resulted in the final “substantive theory” (Glaser, 1978, p. 144)—a theory about a substantive area of inquiry. Memoing and coding were carried out in ATLAS.ti, a qualitative analytical program.

## Results

The main concern of the participants in this study was inequality. The substantive theory of transcending inequality emerged in the data as the pattern of behavior through which individuals can continuously resolve their experiences of inequality. Transcending inequality consists of three overlapping dimensions: (a) coping, (b) bonding, and (c) serving. The theory explains how a confluence of individual, cultural, social, and spiritual resources can be used to address inequality.

### Participants’ Main Concern

Participants’ experiences of inequality, broadly defined as the collection of problems and hardships experienced in the context of transmigration, varied. Some reported having “no problems,” whereas others stated they were treated like an “animal” or a “robot.” The frequency of reported abuses was significantly higher in the isolated environments of family-owned factories than in larger, corporate-owned factories. All participants suffered from some form of discrimination. The Catholic faith and Filipino cultures of the participants were often misunderstood or regarded with hostility and suspicion (Lan, 2000b).

Working conditions were a major source of concern. Factory work, though naturally grueling, was compounded by long working hours and verbally abusive employers who often expected workers to work overtime instead of taking a day off. Consequently, fatigue was a recurrent symptom. One participant burst into tears as she recounted working for a year without a single day off. Despite working longer hours than Taiwanese workers, migrant workers receive less pay and have fewer welfare or benefits besides their salary (Hsiao, 2013).

Another source of inequality stemmed from brokers—private intermediaries hired by employers to manage the lives of workers. Brokers were described as “harsh,” not having “any care.” Participants bemoaned excessive brokerage fees that were incommensurate to services provided. For example, inaccurate interpretation services severely hampered workplace communication. Several participants lived in overcrowded dormitory rooms with 36 occupants. The rooms were constantly “dark” to maintain a sleeping environment for multiple work shifts. Electrical devices were prohibited in the rooms, a common source of frustration. Meals did not always accommodate varying shift schedules or cultural preferences. Finally, private and leisure spaces were lacking.

## **Coping**

Coping, the first dimension of transcending inequality, consists of two strategies to deal with inequitable experiences: reframing and questioning. Coping strategies may emerge in the abrupt transition to a different culture or result from a traumatic experience, such as harsh treatment from employers or brokers.

### ***Reframing***

Reframing is the cognitive reappraisal of a situation to focus on “future wishes, hopes and aspirations” (Khawaja et al., 2008, p. 507). It discounts inequitable circumstances as having completely negative ramifications, shifting to alternative and positive interpretations. Reframing is often preceded by structural conditions that are perceived as impervious to change; instead of confronting structural causes head-on, reframing chooses to circumvent or internally adjust to the environment. The predicament of landing an unexpected job, for example, can be reevaluated as a professional development opportunity:

I was expecting that I really [work] in the laboratory in the quality control, so when I was in the production area, ‘Oh, no,’ I said to myself, ‘Oh, no!’ It’s a very, very big laboratory. Yes, it’s a very big laboratory, but I’m already here, so I have to work. . . . Maybe I can bring this experience to go along with the other people, because yes, I was a supervisor before, but I don’t have really more experience on supervising or dealing with the production worker or factory worker just like me here, so as of now, I already have to deal with them, so I don’t take, I don’t take it as negative, in negatively, so I always look forward for the positive one. (male, age 30-35)

Reframing also involves attributing circumstances to luck, fate, or divine power. Individuals may classify being separated from family, having a large sum of debt, or having an unscrupulous broker as being unlucky. Conversely, positive events and circumstances, such as receiving a contract extension, may be viewed as lucky. The framing of events as chance occurrences arises not from superstition but from the unknowability of stressors—not knowing when and where inequality appears. Thus, interpreting events as beyond one’s locus of control alleviates the burden of explaining the sudden onset (or withdrawal) of inequality. Reframing under a spiritual worldview has a similar effect. Belief in God’s supernatural provisions overlays a sense of control over the unpredictability of inequality. Anticipating the blessings of God—such as the prospect of owning property in the Philippines—provides a way to leverage future prosperity

against present suffering. By ascribing incidents to external causes, reframing accesses resources with which to surmount difficulties, as in the case of believing in divine help, or it adjusts to hardship by subscribing to the view that “fate was out of their hand” (Khawaja et al., 2008, p. 507).

### **Questioning**

Questioning interrogates inequality to circumscribe its reach. It protests the lack of basic human rights through rhetorical questioning directed at bad actors. Whether through pickets, marches, or private gatherings, questioning revolts against the unchallenged status quo of inequality. Less directly, questioning focuses on resolving inequality by eliciting sympathy, confronting individuals by asking them to imagine themselves in another’s shoes. Questioning constrains the spread of inequality if there is the possibility of change. It turns into silence if it meets indifference:

We usually said that we want electricity in every bed, but . . . some of my co-workers said, since 1994, they already ask for that, but until now, they can’t give. Every meeting we always talk about that, but nothing’s happened. (female, age 20-25)

The frequency and content of questioning may operate along a continuum that varies as a function of structural inequalities in a person’s environment. On one extreme, the absence of questioning or non-questioning signals threats to being vocal and the fear of retaliation. Brokers may threaten repatriation with impunity, as individuals lack recourse to an impartial legal system. Alternatively, in an ideal environment, non-questioning would reflect a system that proactively redresses grievances without the need for persistent inquiry.

On the other end of the continuum, one extreme may consist of constant questioning in an open environment such as a church, where there are little structural limitations on the freedom of speech; and another extreme may see a barrage of questioning rising to a form of revolting, typically when the environmental hazards and potential injury to self far outweigh the risks of speaking out. More likely, questioning occurs at meaningful junctures throughout the course of an individual’s employment; they are cautiously timed and carefully crafted to elicit an optimal level of change with minimal risk of retaliation.

### **Bonding**

The second dimension of transcending inequality is bonding—the formation and perpetuation of social relationships within and across nation-state boundaries. Putting family first orients the participants away from alienating labor toward meaningful relationships. The participants also form relations that are like family. Underlying both types of relationships is the norm of reciprocity. Bonding stretches social networks, resists exploitative relationships, and alleviates the loneliness of living abroad.

### **Family**

The family, central to Filipino culture and society, serves as “a major source of economic, social, emotional and moral support” (Miralao, 1997, p. 193). A key characteristic of Filipino

families is their size: They include relatives bilaterally, kin reckoned by rituals, and non-kin, such as close friends, who are referred to as kin (Abinales & Amoroso, 2005). These networks of care allow the sharing of hardships and happiness with family members. Distributing care across borders, individuals draw emotional strength from one another: "Okay, I'm happy, because every day, every day, I can talk to my little two children, computer webcam, every morning before I can work, I can talk to my children" (female, age 30-35).

Despite the prominence of family relationships, the strains of transnational family life can result in a balancing act between strong familial bonding and weak familial bonding. Weak familial bonding occurs when individuals are not in a position to deepen their family relationships because of physical distance or workplace barriers. This is especially true of families whose members may be dispersed across several continents or who have infrequent contact with one another. It is also true that some individuals may also elect to focus on new bonds at the expense of preexisting familial bonds. In strong familial bonding, individuals employ creative means to maintain long-distance ties, such as sending *balikbayan* (repatriate) boxes of gifts to loved ones or praying for one another. Familial bonding can be at once fraught with both weak forces and strong forces, potentially placing long-term relationships in abeyance or a state of ambiguity:

We're no longer, no longer thinking of how we care for each other, but we still care, we still care, but you don't—what are their struggles there, we don't know what are my struggles, they don't know what my struggles are, yes, because when we talk to our family back home or to other country, we always say, "We're okay, we're okay." But sometimes we're not or they're not, because they don't want or we don't want to get them worried, right? (male, age 30-35)

Bonding extends to coworkers, employers, and brokers who are not family by blood but have the potential to become family-like. Idioms of kinship signal a continuous desire to transform hostile, impersonal relations into what one participant calls *malasakit sa kapwa* (having concern for our fellowmen). The appropriation of familial terms to non-kin relations indicates that the family serves as a template or a yardstick against which other relationships are measured:

So they are very nice to them, my coworkers are very good, they treat me as family. We feel that is not that way hard to work with them so nice to work with them we feel that we have a family there to work in our company. (male, age 30-35)

The Catholic church furnishes the necessary spatial and temporal requirements for forming and sustaining family-like relationships, drawing large crowds of migrants every Sunday. On the one hand, the Church represents the reproduction of communities of origins, hence the use of such similes as "like home" and "like family." On the other hand, the church is a spiritual home by virtue of the common faith of its adherents.

The people that I [meet] every week, we just sisters, like they become your brother, sister, like Nana [mother] Sandra [pseudonym] is like our already our mother, it's like that, you can what you have in the Philippines you can also have here, it's like you can some many friends, it's like that for every week, I just want Sunday, because I'm with them. (female, age 20-25)

### **Reciprocity**

Reciprocity is the norm underlying bonding relationships. Relations of reciprocity tend to balance and transcend relations of asymmetry (Glenn, 1986). One property of reciprocity is mutuality in communication, which results in a dialogic flow: "We will share and explain us. Somebody would explain us. If we ask, they would explain, then if they ask, too, we would explain. So, it would be fine, the flow will be fine" (female, age 30-35).

Humor frequently animates mutual bonding. Transcending language barriers, it regularizes commonalities, stressing similarities over differences. It also flattens power hierarchies, allowing employees and employers to communicate horizontally on equal footing:

There's a certain camaraderie between us, it's natural that sometimes she just wants to bully me. She kick me, not kick like this, it's like in a karate class, you know. Um, this one, this part, she kicked my ass, and then I kick her too! (female, age 30-35)

A second property of reciprocity is empathic understanding. Understanding goes beyond communicating in a level plane to having knowledge of the other. Adding empathy to understanding implies a willingness to listen, to become aware, and to assume the position of the other:

I hope that they [brokers] know about us, and I hope that they know much deeper in us, deeper in us. To know what we feel, like that, and if ever, if ever we may have a problem, they depend us. (male, age 25-30)

A third property of reciprocity is equivalent exchange, which forms the basis for equality with respect to wages, benefits, and rights. This property implies that the input of labor should result in commensurate outputs—rights and freedoms in accord with labor laws—as well as wages equivalent to those of non-foreign workers. Individuals employ this logic of exchange to justify what they should receive as a function of their labor:

That's why they are unfair to us, yes, every day we working, we are hard, we are hard work, and then we don't, we don't see anything that bad or—but why only one, one, what you call this, only one, one day for this Sunday, they can't give me the chance, the opportunity to come here, to serve here. (female, age 25-30)

### **Serving**

The third dimension of transcending inequality is serving in the context of religious involvement. Serving towards people or God is motivated by opportunities to be thankful, to receive, and to give, which lead to personal and spiritual meaning. The intrinsic rewards of prosocial behaviors and the addition of spiritual resources may be protective against the effects of inequality.

### **Gratitude**

Gratitude is a recurrent expression in the religious experiences of the participants. Individuals may give thanks to God for helping with any aspect of their lives, but particularly experiences in which hardship was endured, such as overcoming the hurdles of working abroad:

For me, I'm always, because that's one is we the way to thanks, to God, giving me an opportunity to work here in Taiwan because it's very different just work in Philippines and work in abroad. The income is different. (male, age 25-30)

Indebtedness toward God may be a tactic to resisting employer demands, because it dislocates the power that employers have over their employees. Employers may, for instance, dissuade employees from attending church in order to work overtime. However, by continuously asserting a belief in God, individuals may extricate themselves from a controlling order and, in turn, channel their gratefulness into sharing: "That's why I'm sharing to others, you have a time to go to church, why it is, very nice do it just praise thank the Lord blessing, all call just grace good healthy work" (male, age 25-30).

### **Ministering**

Ministering is the act of giving, sharing, and serving others at church. Voluntary ministering involves serving behaviors on the Sabbath, when duties such as serving as commentators, choir members, or ushers are engaged in without obligation or impediments from the workplace. As a form of voluntary overtime service at church, ministering contrasts sharply and thereby resists overtime labor at work:

Filipinos are generous people you can see. You can see, in the church, there are a lot of—they are generous with their time, right? Actually, the volunteers here in the church, they work six or seven days a week; every Sunday they still find time to serve and give and go to church. Not just go to church, some of them just came from night shift. They work volunteer then stay here for a lot of several hours. (male, age 25-30)

Involuntary ministering is the co-occurrence of the desire to minister and the imperative to work overtime. While the intention to minister remains voluntary, the context in which ministering takes place is involuntarily shaped by a powerful and opposing force. Involuntary ministering therefore lacks the freedom and latitude that voluntary ministering possesses. Moreover, while houses of worship are beyond the locus of control of employers, employers may manufacture on-site worship and prayer centers to control and impose surveillance upon ministering behaviors. Employer demands to work on a day of rest may succeed in securing capital-driven labor, abbreviate the length and quality of ministering, or it may provoke the prioritizing of faith-driven labor as a leverage for maintaining rights:

Oh, it's Sunday. I don't want to have OT [overtime], because I will going to church. 'Oh, it's okay,' something like my leader said, 'Ah, it's okay.' They already know that every Sunday, I don't want to OT, something like that they understand. (female, age 20-25)

Conscious ministering refers to serving behaviors that are responsive to environmental and structural problems. Ministering in this sense is not only voluntary but consciously focuses on

issues that are relevant to the plight of migrant work. Unlike consciousness-raising and activism, conscious ministering tends to favor spiritualizing rather than politicizing the causes and solutions to social issues. The vehicles of spirituality may include praying or fellowshiping with one's brethren, while the vehicles of politics may include rallying for change or educating others on local laws:

Because my ministry here is focused also on the rights of migrant workers here, so I had some idea like the labor laws here in Taiwan, so whenever some random Filipino worker has some questions, and if I know something about it, I can share. (female, age 30-35)

### **Meaning**

Serving behaviors are meaningful because of their protective influence against such behaviors as wasting money, wasting time, drinking, and smoking. Besides the Catholic Church, migrant workers have very few community spaces where they truly belong. As Huang and Douglass (2008) observed, the community life of migrant workers is marked by spatial and social exclusion with limited recreational options. Within this contested geography, the church is a site in which meaning can be sought after, as one participant stated:

Yes, instead of going out and wasting my money, my time in the outside world, why is it not going here and that's my own thinking, why is it, because I can, I can see that we are in need of more volunteers here, so I present myself to be a volunteer here, because I know I have a lot of things to do here than to have our, than to go outside and then waste money, waste time, then going home, sleep, just like toxic, just toxic. Yeah, because it's only Sunday, it's only that day that we can offer to Him, to God. (male, 30-35)

Serving behaviors may cultivate character traits and such competencies as leadership, patience, honesty, camaraderie, and public speaking skills. As a "training ground," the church has the potential to increase the preexisting assets of the participants; it builds on strengths seldom acknowledged in the limiting environments outside of the church setting. In contrast with the demoralizing effects of inequality, which invoke feelings of resentment and dissatisfaction, serving uplifts an individual through service to others: "That's why Nana [mother] Sandra [pseudonym] told me, oh you're different now, you're different now, because before, my first three months, three or four months, I was, maybe I was, my face was so negative" (male, age 30-35).

Serving behaviors may lead to the reduction of stress, happiness, satisfaction, fulfillment, and renewal. Therefore, it transcends both the contexts and consequences of inequality. Serving includes the properties of bonding ("to serve other family"), spiritual influence and reframing ("God is there for me"), and engagement in activities of high personal interest ("I love what I'm doing"):

Wow! When we get here [church], we are very happy, we forget my six days working day, time is gone like that, I felt that it's a brand new day again when I go back to my house, because it's a remove my stress and renew here, and I feel that we have so many friends there, make you laugh, then have some fun together. (male, age 30-35)

## Discussion

The dimensions of coping, bonding, and—to a lesser extent—serving have been discussed in prior studies on Filipino factory workers in Taiwan. The strategy of coping is consistent with research on the resistance and empowerment strategies of Filipino migrant workers (Wu, 2002). The protective influence of Filipino family relations has also been well documented in the literature (Aguilar, 2009). Further, “quasi-family” (Cohen, 1991, p. 201) relations have been found to mitigate work stress through material and emotional exchanges, though a caveat to this finding is that domestic workers are often expected to perform extra duties without additional pay when they are considered family members (Ayalon & Shiovitz-Ezra, 2010). The absence of this contradiction in this present study is likely because of factory workers’ clearer demarcation of employer-employee relations, unlike domestic workers who often live with their employers. For both types of migrant workers, there is clear evidence of the strains and costs of family separation (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997). The challenges of transnational Filipino parental practices can render the family into “a deep source of stress and alienation” (Wolf, 2002, p. 347). A seldom discussed aspect of migrant workers’ social relations is the norm of reciprocity, an ancient Filipino value of historical significance (Hollnsteiner, 1973). Lan (2002, 2003) and Guevarra (2009) have shown that the Filipino value of *utang na loob* (debt of gratitude) explains migrant workers’ ties of reciprocity and obligation. Their findings may explain the link between indebtedness and the dimensions of bonding and serving.

Several studies have investigated the role of religion in the lives of Filipino migrant workers (Fresnoza-Flot, 2010). Such focus on religion is not surprising, given that more than 80% of the Philippine population identify as Roman Catholic (Abinales & Amoroso, 2005). Across the world, Catholic churches have become popular sites of information and social exchange (Hathaway & Pargament, 1991). Many provide targeted social services, including shelters for trafficked or abused workers (Wei, 2010). However, grassroots-level change has not been typically associated with the Catholic church (Cruz, 2006, 2010). On one hand, social activists have criticized migrants’ overly “dependent” (Kung, 2005, p. 197) relationships with the Church. On the other hand, Nakonz (2009) has argued that the “very high self-esteem and sense of dignity” associated with religious involvement should not warrant a “disempowered reading” (p. 34). Consistent with the latter interpretation is the concept of serving in this study. Serving exemplifies churches as “a context for building competencies in their members” (Hathaway & Pargament, 1991, p. 84), in which the skills and talents of migrant workers are recognized and developed. Helping others may have increased participants’ ability to cope with their own hardships (Lietz, 2011). Furthermore, serving was motivated by and engaged for spiritual meaning. Previous studies tended to neglect the transcendent nature of spirituality in favor of the social or organizational qualities of religion (Henery, 2003; Zinnbauer et al., 1999).

## Contribution to Extant Research

The notion of transcending is a new concept in the literature. Productive of a sense of movement, it captures Filipino factory workers’ desire to overcome situations of subordination via an ecology of individual, social, cultural, and spiritual assets. Its purchase as a concept lies in its groundedness in the language of the participants. Bonding, for instance, calls for an expanded

understanding of family as a template for relating to all people, irrespective of blood ties. Attending to these strengths and nuances can sensitize researchers and practitioners to ways to increase the preexisting capacities of migrant workers. Transcending is also a paradoxical concept, situated within the constant movement, fluidity, and hybridity of transmigration. The most salient paradox is that not all participants “transcend” their struggles by directly challenging or combating inequality. Congruent with this observation, Constable (1999) found that Filipino domestic workers were “both complicit in, and express[ed] resistance toward, various forms of control” (p. 553). Furthermore, Lee (1995) and Wu (1997, 2002) investigated why Filipino factory workers abstained from action when faced with injustice.

How useful, then, is the theory of transcending inequality if it tends to ignore the underlying causes of inequality? Here I consider a strength-based approach in conjunction with critical realism’s “concern with broader social structures” (Oliver, 2012, p. 378). From these perspectives, transcending can be said to constitute a set of practices that disavow the “logic” of inequality—the dialectics of coping and escaping, bonding and alienation, and serving and servitude. Although this logic is not always named, it is, nevertheless, suggestive of power and structure: the “absences, silences, hidden positions and structural discourses echoing through individual accounts” (Oliver, 2012, p. 382). In this sense, transcending approximates resistance, which Foucault (1991) defined as largely consisting of “alternative readings [and] typically avoid[s] any direct symbolic confrontation with authority or with elite norms” (as cited in Yeoh & Huang, 1998, p. 595). It differs from resistance, however, because it is centered on the participants’ potentialities and possibilities, the “core conditions of change” (Saleebey, 2000, p. 130). By honoring broader social structure and individual agency, it is thus possible to locate participant strengths without dislodging the importance of radical social change (Saleebey, 1996; Wang, 2006).

This theory also contributes a spiritual layer of reading of Filipino mobility within larger sociopolitical contexts. Several studies have discussed the political economy of Filipino migration, such as the “power-geometry” of First World countries to control the communication practices of migrant workers (Parreñas, 2005, p. 330), but these studies have not investigated how spiritual practices can subvert such control. For example, the dimension of ministering was shown as a tactic for resisting overtime work during the Sabbath. Class also plays an important role in Filipino migration because of its effect on the type of work that migrant workers can choose from, but oftentimes class is treated as a unidimensional variable that remains fixed or upward mobility is perceived primarily through an economical lens (Fresnoza-Flot, 2010). This theory proposes that serving behaviors can increase the education of migrant workers, potentially affecting their social status and return migration outcomes. The multidimensional training that comes with ministering at church also goes beyond the simple calculus of increased social standing as a function of wealth and assets. Thus, the process of transcending implies that migrant workers’ human, social, and cultural capital are malleable and modifiable for positive increases. Finally, this theory can add to our understanding of gender differences in Filipino migration. As the behaviors of coping, bonding, and serving that were uncovered in this study were based on observations of migrants of both genders, it is likely that some of the predicted benefits of this theory are applicable all individuals, irrespective of their gender. Constable (1997) observed that work uniforms for migrant workers “negate the gender identity of the wearer” (p. 550), so it is significant that a sizeable portion of

this theory discusses the dynamics and behaviors of migrant workers on off-days, when uniforms are no longer required. Ministering at church is not without its own set of attires, worn uniformly by both males and females, but their effect likely operates in the opposite direction: increasing the solidarity of male and female congregants. Despite these intriguing observations, a limitation of this study is that the small sample precluded a more theoretically saturated investigation of differences by gender.

### **Implications for Practice and Policy**

The findings in this research are relevant for organizations and agencies interested in enhancing the welfare of Filipino factory workers, including the Taiwanese social work profession; NGOs and faith-based organizations; social activists; and national, municipal, and private agencies that oversee and manage the labor migration process. Three implications are discussed: (a) the significance of local and transnational community life, (b) the significance of religious and spiritual practices, and (c) the strength-based approach.

#### ***Significance of Local and Transnational Community Life***

Bonding emerged in this study as a source of strength. Maintaining family ties and developing new social relations are important protective factors in migrant workers' lives. One implication of this finding is the need to increase access to spaces for local community life (Yeoh & Huang, 1998). As the participants noted, their dormitories were dark and overcrowded, lacking leisure and recreational spaces. Ancillary to this situation is the need to recognize migrant workers' legitimate use of public spaces. Migrant workers' spatial rights have often been curtailed or have met with local resistance, such as the closure of a migrant worker community center (Wu, 2010) and restrictions on migrant workers' freedom to gather at the Taipei Railway Station (Lok-sin, 2012a, 2012b). These incidents indicate the importance of promoting community spaces and also developing multicultural policies aimed at both minority and majority groups to "achieve an open-minded attitude to cultural differences" (Wang, 2003, p. 249).

A second implication is the need to improve channels of communication between migrants and separated family members (Parreñas, 2002). Factory workers in this study were prohibited from using electrical outlets in their dormitory rooms, thereby preventing them from using communication devices to connect with family members abroad. These policies should be revised to recognize migrants' transnational communities—a critical system of social networks that provides "defense mechanisms for coping with situations of vulnerability" (Canales & Armas, 2007, p. 234). Ideally, migrant workers should have annual leave to return home or, as is the case in Italy, the option to bring family members abroad (Parreñas, 2002), either within the terms of a contract or through channels for permanent citizenship (Lan, 2006).

#### ***Significance of Religious and Spiritual Practices***

The religious freedom of migrant workers should be respected and understood. Even though the Labor Standards Act guarantees one day off for factory workers, workers are often coerced into working overtime in lieu of attending church. Education should be provided to employers so they understand the importance of religion. Creating private or meditation spaces at the dor-

mitory complex may also lead to more religious freedom for the migrant workers. This theory also suggests that changing the status quo, such as the Labor Standards Act, is an important step in overcoming structural inequalities. For example, there is a manifest need to include domestic workers in the Labor Standards Act so that they can enjoy the same privileges of factory workers. According to the International Religious Freedom Report for 2012 on Taiwan, religious leaders and NGOs raised concerns that the law does not guarantee a day off for domestic workers and caregivers, thus limiting their ability to practice fully their religion (U.S. Department of State, 2012). Modifying the existing law to expand the accommodation of religious beliefs is therefore a pressing need.

### ***Strength-Based Approach***

This study's findings indicated that Filipino factory workers are highly resilient in the midst of adversity, warranting a strength-based approach for practice. Practitioners should recognize migrant workers as competent and resilient (Fraser et al., 1999; Saleebey, 1996; Wong & Song, 2008) and attend to the possibility of resistance and rebellion as additional sources of strengths (Guo & Tsui, 2010). A strength-based approach also incorporates client perspectives. For example, the participants of this study have an intrinsic desire to serve their own communities, a natural alignment with community organizing and bottom-up empowerment efforts. Furthermore, the strength-based approach can be encouraged by integrating cultural or multicultural competence into Taiwan's social work education and code of ethics (Hung et al., 2010). Finally, implementing a transnational wraparound model would call attention to migrant workers' families and children, as well as resources in both sending and receiving countries (Furman et al., 2008, p. 500).

### **Conclusion**

The theory of transcending inequality has several implications for practice, policy, and research. Prior research, both within and outside of Taiwan, was focused on the plight of domestic workers, therefore this research provides insight into the relatively neglected migrant factory worker population. A limitation of this study is that the small sample size limited the density and saturation of the study's categories. Future research could verify the hypotheses in this study or develop additional substantive-level theories to add nuance to this study's findings. Results from this study also suggest that policy can strengthen family ties by improving lines of communications or providing for family reunification. Further, social support networks among migrant workers can be nurtured through increased public, communal, and religious spaces. For practitioners, the findings should encourage a strength-based approach, a critically needed counterbalance to the problematizing discourse pervading both the literature and public media's depictions of migrant workers. To coordinate service delivery, social workers could serve as bridges between organizations and nation-states. Finally, this study indicates the need to further the professional knowledge base for multicultural practice with migrant workers.

### **References**

- Abinales, P. N., & Amoroso, D. J. (2005). *State and Society in the Philippines*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Aguilar, F. V., Jr. (2009). Labour migration and ties of relatedness: Diasporic houses and investments in memory in a rural Philippine village. *Thesis Eleven*, 98(1), 88–114. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0725513609105485>
- Ayalon, L., & Shiovitz-Ezra, S. (2010). The experience of loneliness among live-in Filipino homecare workers in Israel: Implications for social workers. *British Journal of Social Work*, 40(8), 2538–2559. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcq050>
- Canales, A. I., & Armas, I. M. (2007). A world without borders? Mexican immigration, new boundaries and transnationalism in the United States. In A. Pécoud & P. de Guchteneire (Eds.), *Migration without Borders: Essays on the Free Movement of People*. UNESCO Publishing.
- Chen, A. S., Lin, Y., & Sawangpattanakul, A. (2011). The relationship between cultural intelligence and performance with the mediating effect of culture shock: A case from Philippine laborers in Taiwan. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 35(2), 246–258. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2010.09.005>
- Cohen, R. (1991). Women of color in white households: Coping strategies of live-in domestic workers. *Qualitative Sociology*, 14(2), 197–215. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00992194>
- Cooney, A. (2010). Choosing between Glaser and Strauss: An example. *Nurse Researcher*, 17(4), 18–28.
- Council of Labor Affairs. (2012). *Foreign Workers Statistics*. [http://www.cla.gov.tw/cgi-bin/siteMaker/SM\\_theme?page=49c05774](http://www.cla.gov.tw/cgi-bin/siteMaker/SM_theme?page=49c05774)
- Constable, N. (1997). Sexuality and discipline among Filipina domestic workers in Hong Kong. *American Ethnologist*, 24(3), 539–558. <https://doi.org/10.1525/ae.1997.24.3.539>
- Cruz, G. T. (2006). Faith on the edge: Religion and women in the context of migration. *Feminist Theology: The Journal of the Britain & Ireland School of Feminist Theology*, 15(1).
- Cruz, G. T. (2010). Chapter two: It cuts both ways: Religion and Filipina domestic workers in Hong Kong. In G. T. Bonifacio & V. S. M. Angeles (Eds.), *Gender, Religion, and Migration: Pathways of Integration*. Lexington Books.
- De Jong, P., & Miller, S. (1995). How to interview for client strengths. *Social Work*, 40(6), 729–736.
- Fraser, M. W., Galinsky, M. J., & Richman, J. M. (1999). Risk, protection, and resilience: Toward a conceptual framework for social work practice. *Social Work Research*, 23(3), 131–143. <https://doi.org/10.1093/swr/23.3.131>

- Fresnoza-Flot, A. (2010). The Catholic church in the lives of irregular migrant Filipinas in France: Identity formation, empowerment and social control. *Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*, 11(3), 345–361.
- Furman, R., Negi, N., Schatz, M. C. S., & Jones, S. (2008). Transnational social work: Using a wraparound model. *Global Networks*, 8(4), 496–503.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-0374.2008.00236.x>
- Glaser, B. G. (1978). *Theoretical sensitivity: Advances in the methodology of grounded theory*. Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B. G. (1992). *Basics of grounded theory analysis*. Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B. G. (1998). *Doing grounded theory: Issues and discussions*. Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B. G. (2002). Constructivist grounded theory? *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 3(3).  
<http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/825>
- Glaser, B. G. (2005). Staying open: The use of theoretical codes in grounded theory. *The Grounded Theory Review*, 5(1), 1–20.
- Glaser, B. G., & Holton, J. (2004). Remodeling grounded theory. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 5(2). <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/607>
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Aldine Transaction.
- Glenn, E. N. (1986). *Issei, Nisei, war bride: Three generations of Japanese American women in domestic service*. Temple University Press.
- Guevarra, A. R. (2009). *Marketing dreams, manufacturing heroes: The transnational labor brokering of Filipino workers*. Rutgers University Press.
- Guo, W., & Tsui, M. (2010). From resilience to resistance: A reconstruction of the strengths perspective in social work practice. *International Social Work*, 53(2), 233–245.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0020872809355391>
- Hathaway, W. L., & Pargament, K. I. (1991). The religious dimensions of coping: Implications for prevention and promotion. The coping process; Religion and the process of coping; Summary; Religious coping and prevention. *Prevention in Human Services*, 9(2), 65.
- Henery, N. (2003). The reality of visions: Contemporary theories of spirituality in social work. *The British Journal of Social Work*, 33(8), 1105–1113.
- Hernandez, C. A. (2009). Theoretical coding in grounded theory methodology. *The Grounded Theory Review*, 8(3), 51–59.

- Hollnsteiner, M. R. (1973). Reciprocity in the Lowland Philippines. In F. Lynch & A. de Guzman II (Eds.), *Four readings on Philippine values* (4th ed.). Ateneo de Manila University Press.
- Holman, W. D. (1996). In their words: Mainland Puerto Rican poetry, grounded theory, and the generation of culturally sensitive social work knowledge. *Journal of Multicultural Social Work*, 4(3), 69–79. [https://doi.org/10.1300/J285v04n03\\_05](https://doi.org/10.1300/J285v04n03_05)
- Hondagneu-Sotelo, P., & Avila, E. (1997). "I'm Here, but I'm There": The meanings of Latina transnational motherhood. *Gender and Society*, 11(5), 548–571.
- Hsiao, H.-H. M. (2013). Precarious work in Taiwan: A profile. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 57(3), 373–389. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764212466243>
- Huang, L., & Douglass, M. (2008). Foreign workers and spaces for community life: Taipei's Little Philippines. In M. Douglass & A. Daniere (Eds.), *The politics of civic space in Asia: Building urban communities* (pp. 51–71). Routledge.
- Hung, S.-C., Yang, W.-S., & Yen, P.-C. (2010). More than lost in translation? An exploratory study of social workers' experiences working with Vietnamese wives in Taiwan. *International Social Work*, 53(3), 327–338. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020872809359749>
- Khawaja, N. G., White, K. M., Schweitzer, R., & Greenslade, J. (2008). Difficulties and coping strategies of Sudanese refugees: A qualitative approach. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 45(3), 489–512. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1363461508094678>
- Kung, L. (2005). From We-group to He-group: My journal with the migrants. *Research in Applied Psychology*, 26, 189–216.
- Lai, C.-M. (2012). Public administration and consultation for foreign blue-collar Workers: The case of central Taiwan. *Taiwan Labour Review*, 4(1), 89–135.
- Lan, P.-C. (2000a). Bargaining with patriarchy: Taiwanese women hiring migrant domestic workers. *Anthropology of Work Review*, 21(3), 9–14. <https://doi.org/10.1525/awr.2000.21.3.9>
- Lan, P.-C. (2000b). *Global divisions, local identities: Filipina migrant domestic workers and Taiwanese employers* [Doctoral dissertation]. Northwestern University.
- Lan, P.-C. (2002). A transnational topography for the migration and identification of Filipina migrant domestic workers. *Taiwan: A Radical Quarterly in Social Studies*, 48, 11–59.
- Lan, P.-C. (2003). Maid or madam? Filipina migrant workers and the continuity of domestic labor. *Gender and Society*, 17(2), 187–208.
- Lan, P.-C. (2006). Legal servitude and free illegality: Control and exit of migrant workers. *Taiwan: A Radical Quarterly in Social Studies*, 64, 107–150.

- Lee, Y. K. (1995). *Why don't they take action: Research on the differences of the action strategies of migrant workers* [Unpublished master's thesis, Fu Jen Catholic University].  
<http://ndltd.ncl.edu.tw/cgi-bin/gs32/gswweb.cgi?o=dncldr&s=id=%22083FJU00501009%22.&searchmode=basic>
- Liao, H.-C. (2011). The analysis of fatal occupational accidents of foreign workers in Taiwan. *Journal of Occupational Safety and Health, 19*, 30–42.
- Lietz, C. A. (2011). Empathic action and family resilience: A narrative examination of the benefits of helping others. *Journal of Social Service Research, 37*(3), 254–265.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01488376.2011.564035>
- Lok-sin, L. (2012a, September). *Local community petitions foreign workers to leave*. Taipei Times.  
<http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2012/09/20/2003543198>
- Lok-sin, L. (2012b, September 17). *Workers protest station measure*. Taipei Times.  
<http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2012/09/17/2003542976>
- Loveband, A. (2004). Positioning the product: Indonesian migrant women workers in Taiwan. *Journal of Contemporary Asia, 34*(3), 336–348.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00472330480000141>
- Lu, C.-Y. (2000). Politics of foreign labor policy in Taiwan. *Journal of Asian and African Studies, 35*(1), 113–131. <https://doi.org/10.1163/156852100512176>
- McCallin, A. M. (2006). Methodological issues: Have we forgotten the place of thinking here? *The Grounded Theory Review, 5*(2/3), 51–57.
- Miralao, V. A. (1997). The family, traditional values and the sociocultural transformation of Philippine society. *Philippine Sociological Review, 45*(1/4), 189–215.
- Nakonz, J., & Shik, A. (2009). And all your problems are gone: Religious coping strategies among Philippine migrant workers in Hong Kong. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture, 12*(1), 25–38. rzh.
- Oliver, C. (2012). Critical realist grounded theory: A new approach for social work research. *British Journal of Social Work, 42*(2), 371–387. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcr064>
- Pan, S.-M., & Yang, J.-T. (2012). Outsiders in the family: Abuse of migrant domestic workers in Taiwan. *Asian Journal of Women's Studies, 18*(1), 87–117.
- Parreñas, R. S. (2002). Human sacrifices: What happens when women migrate and leave families behind? The case of the Philippines raises some troubling questions. *The Women's Review of Books, 19*(5), 16.
- Parreñas, R. S. (2005). Long distance intimacy: Class, gender and intergenerational relations between mothers and children in Filipino transnational families. *Global Networks, 5*(4), 317–336. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-0374.2005.00122.x>

- Patton, M. Q. (2001). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Saleebey, D. (1996). The strengths perspective in social work practice: Extensions and cautions. *Social Work, 41*(3), 296–305.
- Saleebey, D. (2000). Power in the people: Strengths and hope. *Advances in Social Work, 1*(2), 127–136.
- Sassen, S. (2002). Global cities and diasporic networks: Microsites in global civil society. In G. Marlies, M. Kaldor, & H. Anheier (Eds.), *Global civil society*. Oxford University Press.
- Sheridan, V., & Storch, K. (2009). Linking the intercultural and grounded theory: Methodological issues in migration research. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 10*(1). <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1217>
- Sheu, H. (2007). *Culture in the borderlands: "Stories" of southeast Asian domestic workers in Taiwan* [Doctoral dissertation]. Heidelberg University.
- Tierney, R. (2007). The guest labor system in Taiwan. *Critical Asian Studies, 39*(2), 205–228. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14672710701339410>
- U.S. Department of State. (2012). *International religious freedom report for 2012*. <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm>
- Wang, F. T. Y. (2006). Encounter with culture study. *Taiwan: A Radical Quarterly in Social Studies, 62*, 279–282.
- Wang, L. (2003). *Towards multiculturalism? Identity, difference and citizenship in cultural policy in Taiwan (1949-2002)* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Warwick]. <http://webcat.warwick.ac.uk/record=b1667541~S15>
- Wei, W. (2010). The social services offered by the Catholic church to migrant workers. *Community Development Journal Quarterly, 130*, 171–184.
- Wolf, D. (2002). *At home in the world?: Filipinos in global migrations* (F. V. Aguilar Jr., Ed.). Philippine migration research network and Philippine social science council.
- Wong, D. F. K., & Song, H. X. (2008). The resilience of migrant workers in Shanghai China: The roles of migration stress and meaning of migration. *International Journal of Social Psychiatry, 54*(2), 131–143. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020764007083877>
- Wu, S.-C. (2006). The trapped labor: An analysis of the working conditions and employee-employer relations of foreign domestic workers and the examination of foreign labor policies in Taiwan. *Social Policy & Social Work, 10*(2), 1–48.
- Wu, T.-F. (1997). *On the process of cultural struggle of unfree migrant labours Sunday lives* [Unpublished master's thesis, Tunghai University Department of Sociology].

<http://ndltd.ncl.edu.tw/cgi-bin/gs32/gsweb.cgi?o=dnclcdr&s=id=%22085THU00208003%22.&searchmode=basic>

Wu, T.-F. (2002). The resistance and adaptation of foreign workers in Taiwan in the 1990s-Sunday lives as a battlefield. *Hong Kong Journal of Social Sciences*, 23, 103–150.

Wu, Y.-Y. (2010). HOMEless: A case study of private/public inversion and the temporal-spatial exclusion faced by migrant domestic workers (J. Y.-C. Chang, Trans.). *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 11(3), 325–354. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649373.2010.484170>

Yeoh, B. S. A., & Huang, S. (1998). Negotiating public space: Strategies and styles of migrant female domestic workers in Singapore. *Urban Studies*, 35(3), 583–602. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0042098984925>

Zinnbauer, B. J., Pargament, K. I., & Scott, A. B. (1999). The emerging meanings of religiousness and spirituality: Problems and prospects. *Journal of Personality*, 67(6), 889–919. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6494.00077>

**Declaration of Conflicting Interests:** The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

**Funding:** The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

## **Theory of Flowing: Going with the Flow of the Ups-and-Downs of Recovering from an Ordeal**

By Alan Kim-Lok Oh, MCounsPsy, KB, PA

### **Abstract**

This article outlines the theory of flowing. Flowing is an intervention strategy that ordinary people implement in order to go with the flow of the ups-and-downs of recovering from an ordeal. It ensures that they continue to progress in recovering from their ordeal. Ordinary people experience ups-and-downs when they are recovering from their ordeal in the following domains: functioning, symptoms, energy, support, connection and progress in recovery. These ups-and-downs lead the person to perpetually struggle with uncertainty and feel increasingly insecure and distressed. Recovering from an ordeal is a process of getting better where the distressing ups-and-downs are gradually stabilized where the person intervenes the downward trends of regression, rises up and maintains their upward trends of recovery; and the ordeal is progressively resolved. *Flowing* consists of the following intervention strategies: recognizing the ordeal and associated symptoms; alleviating symptoms; activating and nourishing; self-caring; staying open and aware of progress; seeking caring support and connections; becoming a caring support and connection; and staying grateful. This mid-range theory of flowing was discovered by conceptualizing data that were sourced from people who are experiencing the ups-and-downs of recovering from ordeals that are triggered by COVID-19 (Coronavirus disease). Thus, this data represents a slice of data from a broader population of ordinary people who are experiencing the ups-and-downs of recovering from their ordeal. This study has implications in how data could be used to discover theories, coaching of people to overcome their ordeals in life and how to manage life and health as we approach COVID-19 endemicity.

**Keywords:** flowing, intervention strategy, recovery, grounded theory, overcoming ordeals

### **Introduction**

Ups and downs in recovering from an ordeal in life are common among ordinary people. For example, COVID-19 (Coronavirus disease) that no one can escape from had triggered many ordeals in people's lives. No one in this world had not been affected by COVID-19 and its effects. As a result, many people in the world are recovering from their ordeal due to COVID-19 and its effects. The ordeal has deeply changed who they are in their respective lives. The fluctuation that a person experiences when recovering from

their ordeal shows that they go through a stream of events which come in a wave of gains and losses that affects their day-to-day responsibilities and functions at work, home etc. This makes recovering from the ordeal hard to bear because the person needs to undergo transiency in their life because impermanency is a phenomenon that many people could not tolerate as they could not bear losing what they have had previously, and having regained them, they lose them again. The ordeal that a person experiences is marked by this impermanency.

The purpose of this study is to examine the ups-and-downs of ordinary people when they recover from their ordeal in life by using data from personal stories of people who are recovering from ordeals triggered by COVID-19. As no one in this world had not experienced recovery from their ordeal caused by COVID-19 and its effects before, this data represents a slice of data from a broader population of ordinary people who are recovering from their ordeal. This data were used to discover a mid-range theory of *flowing*. This mid-range theory hypothesizes the ups-and-downs of ordinary people who are recovering from an ordeal and how they are resolved.

### **Methodology**

The classic grounded theory methodology is used to discover a theory from data of personal stories of recovering COVID-19 patients collected from the internet. All these data are primarily from the personal stories in the COVID-19 recovery collective website ([www.covid19-recovery.org/stories-category/stories/](http://www.covid19-recovery.org/stories-category/stories/)). These personal stories were collected for another study carried out in the United Kingdom. Classic grounded theory methodology allows “the research strategy of secondary analysis – the study of specific problems through analysis of existing data which were collected for other purposes” (Glaser, 1963, p. 11). Theoretical sampling was carried out on the data “to provide as broad and diverse range of theoretical ideas” (Glaser, 1978, p. 150). Together with the constant comparative method (Glaser, 1998) and memoing where “memos track the growth of conceptual ideas as they emerged” (Glaser, 2014, p. 60), new codes emerged. By staying open, the emergent new codes and ideas in this present study are independent from a previous and related research regarding the theory of securing (Oh, 2021). When substantive coding is carried out, two questions are constantly in mind – (a) what is the major concern and (b) how is it resolved (Glaser, 1978). From the data, people were discovered and conceptualized to be experiencing *ups-and-downs* when recovering from their ordeals (that are triggered by COVID-19) as their major concern. The emergence of this conceptualization proposes that the data from these personal stories of COVID-19 recovery represents a slice of data of the *ups-and-downs* of a broader population of ordinary people who are recovering from an ordeal. With the emergence of the concept--*ups-and-downs*, the core category--*flowing* emerged.

Outlines of the full theoretical framework were constantly written in memos to sort-out and connect codes, integrate new concepts and ideas that emerge. Insights were obtained from these memos which led to new ideas and codes to emerge. Theoretical sampling was stopped when theoretical saturation of the data was achieved. When theoretical saturation was achieved, a total of 35 personal stories from the Covid-19 Recovery Collective website had contributed to the research data of this study. Memos were sorted, theoretical codes were identified, the theory was written-up and a mid-range theory of *flowing* emerged. The theoretical framework was later compared with the theory of securing (Oh, 2021) to include relevant concepts from the theory as illustrations of this new mid-range theory of flowing. Passages from selected personal

stories from the Covid-19 Recovery Collective website were used as illustrations in the theory.

### **Theory of flowing**

#### **Major Concern: Ups-and-Downs in Recovering from an ordeal**

One of the major concerns of ordinary people is the experience of *ups-and-downs* in their life commencing from starting and recognizing an ordeal and throughout the recovering from the ordeal. An ordeal refers to a painful and trying experience owing to a substantial loss and deficiency especially in the person's functioning when symptoms and loss of energy appears as part of the person's ordeal. The person's ordeal is commonly triggered by experiences and events that endanger them to lose their *self* i.e., who they are in their lives. This loss is also related to their existence in the world around them. Oh (2021) conceptualized the following:

Their selfhood . . . expresses their identity, existence and potential. Their identity refers to who they are; their existence, their life, and potential--what they could possibly achieve and who they could possibly become. (p. 92)

Thus, the person's functioning specifies their self in the world around them. Any losses and deficiencies in their functioning marked by the appearance of symptoms and loss of energy will lead them to lose their *self* and thus feel insecure. Losses and deficiencies in functioning that are undergone by the person could include threats, and perceived and real experiences of being deprived. Louise (n.d.) reported:

At 7 months I am left with pleurisy pain, arthritis, earache, lactic acid in my arms, short term memory loss, elevated heart rate on exercise and fatigue. I tell people it is like living a half-life. I can function but can't do what I used to. If I go out for a walk it means I have no energy for anything else. I teach adults and have been working from home but in November I go back into the classroom. I ask myself can I do it? (n.p.)

Ordinary people experience ups-and-downs when they are recovering from their ordeal in the following domains: functioning, symptoms, energy, support, connection and progress in recovery. They undergo a mix of these ups-and-downs in these domains when they are recovering from their ordeal as time passes. Each of the ups-and-downs in these domains reinforces one another.

#### **Functioning**

The substantial loss and deficiency in the person's functioning is often related to their day-to-day functioning and with the person's functioning in their specific roles in life such as in their occupational, professional, entrepreneurial, educational, family and social life. These roles are a substantial part of their *self* affected by the ordeal. As their functioning determines their *self*, a loss and deficiency in functioning would mean a loss of their *self*. Their ability which largely contributes to their functioning diminishes gradually or drastically as they suffer for their ordeal. The person also loses power over themselves when their functioning is compromised. Oh (2021) conceptualized power as "their capacity to direct and regulate themselves and influence others" (p. 92). They become incapacitated. Jake (n.d.) shared: "the following 7 weeks I was incapacitated" (n.p.). Esme (n.d.): stated: I am unable to work as a physiotherapist, have had to

postpone finishing my MSc and find normal life exhausting. Gradually, they may regain their abilities but these abilities are limited. Claire (n.d.) shared: "Slowly it improved but has never returned to my fitness levels before Covid" (n.p.).

### **Symptoms**

Symptoms are adverse experiences and effects that mark the loss of and deficiency in functioning. These adverse experiences are largely featured in the form of physical, mental, emotional, relational and behavioral signs of distress. Jacqueline (n.d.) shared:

Initially, I was fearful, unusually emotional and over-reactive, all of which were not unexpected, given what I had gone through. . . . I am frequently apologizing for my verbal and mental stumbling and asking my listener for patience while I gather my thoughts and the ability to express them. . . . I was speaking to a friend on the telephone when I became incapable of saying 'envelope' or otherwise describing that sealable thing you might put a piece of paper in. I became flustered and abruptly ended the call. Then I remembered the words 'brain damage' being used in conjunction with the Coronavirus and I stacked that on top of my fear that I would contract early-onset Alzheimer's just like my grandfather did. In short order, I was in full-blown panic attack Number 2, called 9-1-1 because I thought I was (again) having a stroke and was transported to the ER. Again, I was diagnosed with a panic attack like no other (except, of course, the other one) . . . you begin to recover physically but soon learn that your disease has emotional and neurological components which no one anticipated; . . . and then your hair falls out. THAT's telogen effluvium. (n.p.)

Thus, these adverse experiences and effects make the ordeal hard to bear and distressing. The person suffers for varying (from light to worsening) levels of symptoms of their ordeal. While some symptoms are alleviated as time passes, some symptoms that appear could be new, random, acute and persistent, and a relapse. Barbara (n.d.) stated: "Nearly 3 months have passed since, and here I am again, in bed with fever, chills, burning chest, and muscles aches, every other week" (n.p.).

Pre-existing conditions would worsen by the current ordeal. A pre-existing condition are symptoms and loss of energy that are underlying and not related to the current ordeal. These symptoms could be from another earlier ordeal. Doug (n.d.) reported: "my diabetes is back under control although I now need more insulin than previously" (n.p.). And the symptoms of the current ordeal could also be confused with a pre-existing condition. John (n.d.) a cancer patient who had chemotherapy shared:

My diagnosis and realisation of my symptoms was somewhat mixed in with some intensive chemotherapy I was undertaking at the time for a bone marrow cancer called Myeloma. I spent around 3 1/2 weeks in an isolation room where my immune system was essentially killed (neutropenic) due to the high dose chemotherapy I was receiving. This process alone gives a substantial kicking to the body where I felt absolutely exhausted, nauseous and very weak . . . . I am unsure how long these issues may continue and have become aware of possible heart damage as being another post covid issue, with atrial fibrillation and family heart issues it all adds to the mix. (n.p.)

### **Energy**

Another mark of loss and deficiency in functioning is the loss of energy. The loss of energy could be in the form of physical and emotional fatigue, and loss of motivation (i.e. willingness and drive) to carry out day-to-day functions. While their energy returns, at times they experience sudden loss of energy and thus their functioning becomes limited. Loss of energy could also be episodic. Darren (n.d.) stated:

But after 3 months of being back to work I noticed the fatigue would come in waves. Once every week or 2 weeks, I would have a 24 hour period of intense fatigue that was not triggered by anything I could identify, and was self-limiting. I would get home, not eat and just go to bed and the next day felt able to go to work again. This episodic fatigue was worrying however. So I started taking food supplements (Full spectrum curcummin) to try help. It didn't. I wondered if it reduced the severity of fatigue, but what actually started happening was the fatigue was becoming more present every day. I was struggling to be motivated to cook food at home, I was too tired to prepare breakfasts or lunch to take to work. I was just coping to get through the day, and was spending all my rest days doing nothing but watching TV in pyjamas. (n.p.)

### **Support**

The person could experience indifferent support that set them back in recovering from their ordeal. Support could largely come from (a) professionals, and (b) connections--family, friends and peers. They may go to and from their support whom they expect to help them with the ordeal. Support that is indifferent would commonly lack knowledge and urgency, presumptuous, absent, overwhelmed, uncertain, and denying and giving-up on the person. The indifferent support would deny by normalizing, rejecting and minimizing the ordeal of the person. In short, indifferent support invalidates the person's experiences. Thiago (n.d.) stated: "I was bad, almost dying for 4 months . . . without medical assistance. My doctor did a CT scan but said I had nothing despite feeling all the symptoms" (n.p.). However, there are times that the person would receive caring support but the support would be limited. Mary (n.d.) a nurse reported:

Mid May after much to-ing and fro-ing spoke to GP. He stated that I had definitely had Covid and arranged for me to be seen at Hub. He also prescribed antibiotics and steroids as cough was still evident and persistent. Told I was fit to [return to work] RTW about week later. Contacted line manager and was told I would have to shield due to having had steroids more than once in last year. Advised to get GP to issue letter to state this as per shielding guidelines. He refused as he said I did not come into any of the shielding categories. Explained this to line manager who said she would contact [occupational health] OH and do risk assessment. After completing the requisite time period for shielding I again contacted line manager about RTW. She appeared to have forgotten anything she had said in our conversations. Completed a Risk assessment over phone and returned to work doing only x1 short shift at beginning of August. (n.p.)

### **Connection**

Related to support that the person engages during their ordeal is their connections. Connections not only serve as a support to the person's recovery but also part of the person's functioning. Thus, losing connections by the person signifies a loss of support in recovering from their ordeal and loss and deficiency in their functioning. The

person would isolate themselves or limit their interactions due to the ordeal. Their isolation is usually triggered by externalised forces. However, at times they enjoy limited connections with others but impaired and feeling insecure. Darren (n.d.) stated: "I started to leave the house more, and my parents came to visit. I found that being around people was too cognitively stimulating and caused extreme fatigue" (n.p.). Coty (n.d.) shared:

I started to isolate myself in my home away from anybody as I believed I'd become the person no one would want to be around as I was always complaining of being in pain, it caused a lot of emotional distress. (n.p.)

### **Progress in Recovery**

While the person progresses in the recovery from their ordeal there are remaining residuals of their ordeal that could lead them to regress. This is because recovering from an ordeal follows this trajectory:

The process starts when the person recognizes the ordeal and its symptoms after experiencing a loss and deficiency in their functioning when symptoms and energy loss appear, and their suspicion validated.

Next, the process is non-linear. As Naomi (n.d.) stated: "by end of April, I was a bit better, although things were up and down—I realised that recovery wasn't linear" (n.p.). The ups-and-downs in the process consist of downwards and upwards trends. A downward trend signalling a regress where the person experiences light to worsening symptoms and loss of energy marking their loss and deficiency in functioning. Thus, making them lose their *self* and feel hopeless. An upward trend shows that the person is progressing with the interventions strategies that they have implemented where their symptoms are well managed (i.e., symptoms had disappeared and reduced, and no new symptoms had appeared). They also feel more energetic than before which signifies gain in functioning. They are able to function better than before, making them increasingly gain their self and feel more hopeful. Progress will also see the ups-and-downs stabilizing.

Appearances of symptoms and energy losses are episodic and will bring the person downwards in their recovery from the ordeal. Without intervention, downward trends will be sharp and drastic. However, with intervention, the person will steadily rise up in the upward trend but after a period of time of progress, recovery gains will diminish. Furthermore, there will be residuals of the ordeal. Doug (n.d.) shared: "I simply can't do what I was able to do prior to the virus. Progress seems to have plateaued" (n.p.). These residuals refer to unknown, atypical, relapsing and persistent symptoms and sudden energy losses that signify losses and deficiencies in functioning that are yet to be gained and including those losses and deficiencies in functioning that could not be gained. They include the loss of *self* prior to the ordeal that is to be gained and could not be gained; and new functioning that specifies the *self*. A sudden appearance of a symptom and substantial energy loss marking a loss and deficiency in functioning after a period of progress and stability (where symptoms are well-managed and energy and functioning are returning) will signal a regress and brings feelings of insecurity and fear of relapse and regress. Peter (n.d.) reported:

So I can't say I felt great in March but was well enough to do most things. Then in April I suddenly hit another dip. Tight chest; extreme fatigue; IBS and viral

rash on my back. Also that bitter taste at the back of my mouth that I again was sure was from my sinus. One Sunday morning I came at breakfast. I couldn't raise my arms to hold my knife and fork. My wife had to feed me. I burst into tears- it was really scary. I didn't know what was wrong with me – the fatigue was awful. (n.p.)

However, it alarms the person to intervene in order to prevent regress in the recovery process. Pat (n.d.), a retired general practitioner shared:

It's now 5 months and I feel that I am virtually back to normal although occasionally I feel slightly breathless and am unsure whether this is residual disease, pollen counts, air quality or perhaps anxiety. I test myself by seeing whether I can run up and down stairs – so far so good! (n.p.)

All these ups-and-downs as indicated above make recovering from an ordeal unknown, uncertain and unpredictable. These ups-and-downs fluctuate like waves and are cyclical. Thus, these ups-and-downs lead the person to perpetually struggle with uncertainty where the person vacillates between (1) gain and sudden loss and deficiency in functioning marked by the disappearance and sudden appearance of symptoms, and gain and sudden loss of energy; (2) gain and loss of their *self*; and (3) feelings of security (in the form of hope) and insecurity (in the form of hopelessness). As a result, they increasingly are at a loss of who they are i.e., their *self*, feel insecure and distressful. Oh (2021) conceptualized feelings of insecurity as follow:

Feelings of insecurity are a person's distressful feelings of being unassured and vulnerable. They are comprised of a mix of the feelings of (1) inadequacy, not good enough and lesser; (2) un-belongingness, alone, unaccepted and unloved; (3) unsafety, unprotected; (4) worthlessness, low self-esteem; (5) emptiness, aimless; and (6) hopelessness, uselessness and powerlessness. Manifesting from these feelings are (7) distressful emotions and physical sensations. Common distressful emotions that a person experiences are shame, guilt, fear, anxiety, depression, resentment and anger. Together with these emotions, the person experiences aroused and tense physical sensations. These physical sensations are also part of the physical distress that the person experiences. (p. 94)

Claire (n.d.) shared:

I am nearly 12 weeks now with three symptoms and don't feel any better, it's so hard getting up each day hoping and wishing when you open your eyes you will feel good with no symptoms just for a day. Each day gets harder I feel so low at the moment and don't feel people understand, you get the feeling people think your putting these symptoms on or exaggerating them. I can guarantee I'm not. I just [want] to feel normal again and feel healthy and happy. (n.p.)

Jacqueline (n.d.) reported:

What I expected was an overwhelming feeling of gratitude for having survived, for having been given a "new lease on life." What I actually experienced was paralyzing fear and palpable anxiety. I felt there was danger everywhere. I was afraid to leave my house. I was afraid to get into my car. The thought of going into a public building was dreadful. I was experiencing depression and loneliness. It suddenly occurred to me what I had just experienced: I had been blind-sided

by a novel virus about which very little was known; I had no idea how I had contracted the virus; I had survived by a very narrow margin. (n.p.)

## Flowing

Flowing is an intervention strategy that a person implements to go with the flow of the ups-and-downs of recovering from an ordeal. It ensures that the person continues to progress in recovering from their ordeal. Recovering from an ordeal is a process of getting better where the (1) distressing ups-and-downs in recovering from an ordeal are gradually stabilized by the person (a) intervening in the downward trend of regression in their recovery, (b) steering, rising up and maintaining the upward trend of progression in their recovery; and (2) the ordeal is progressively resolved a moment at a time. A downward trend of regression in the person's recovery is marked by the loss and deficiency in their functioning when their symptoms and loss of energy appeared and a loss of their self, while an upward trend of progression in their recovery is signified by the gaining of functioning when their symptoms are increasingly alleviated and energy and ability is progressively gained, and increasingly gain their self. As an outcome of this process, the person continuously and incrementally gains the functioning they have lost or are deficient for. They also serendipitously obtain new functioning in the process of gaining what they have lost or deficient for. As a result, they increasingly gain their *self* and feel more secure. Oh (2021) conceptualized the following:

When the person increasingly feels secure, they experience a mix of feelings of (1) adequacy; good enough and satisfied; (2) belongingness, loved and accepted; (3) safety, being protected (4) worthiness, self-acceptance; (5) wholeness, purposeful; and (6) hopefulness, empowered. Manifesting from these feelings are (7) joyful emotions and physical sensations. A common joyful emotion that a person experiences is happiness with its warm and activated or relaxed physical sensations...These feelings of security are also usually experienced as peace, contentment, positivity, and balance by the person while they are still working on their feelings of insecurity. (p. 102)

As a process, recovering from an ordeal is energised by the person's hope in gaining the functioning that they had lost and are deficient in and who they were i.e their *self*, prior to the ordeal. Donovan (n.d.) stated: "I still long to be the person I was before all this started" (n.p.). However, recovering from an ordeal as a process of getting better is asymptotic. The person could gain the best functioning that they could and the best of their *self* at any one time. They could be the best they could as there are residuals of the ordeal to be resolved from time to time. Oh (2021) conceptualized that:

As a result of this process, the person continuously realizes a better version of themselves . . . [as the] recovering process is asymptotic where the person feels the most secure and could be the best version of themselves as they could in any one time. (p.102)

However, the person will feel insecure with these residuals as they fear the loss and deficiency in their functioning, appearance of symptoms and loss of energy, and loss of their *self*. Jacqueline (n.d.) shared:

All this post-Covid aftermath is frightening on so many levels. What's really disconcerting is that these symptoms manifested months after my physical recovery, which begs the questions: Will my symptoms get worse? Will they ever

fully resolve? Will new after-effects emerge? Are my symptoms even Covid-related? (n.p.)

Flowing consists of the following intervention strategies: recognizing the ordeal and associated symptoms, alleviating symptoms, activating and nourishing, self-caring, staying open and aware of progress, seeking caring support and connections, becoming a caring support and connection, and staying grateful. These intervention strategies are inter-related and they reinforce one another.

### **Recognizing the Ordeal and Associated Symptoms**

Recognizing the ordeal and its associated symptoms consists of identifying and learning about the ordeal. Failure in recognizing the ordeal and its associated symptoms will lead the person to continue on a downward trend of their ordeal and regress during their recovery from their ordeal. Failure in recognizing the ordeal and its associated symptoms could be in the form of delays, denial, complacency, absence of boundaries, false beliefs, uncertainty and resignation to the ordeal. This failure could be due to the lack and absence of available knowledge and resources which consist of lack and absence of support and solutions, existence of pre-existing conditions, absence of confirmation, and inconclusive, atypical and unknown nature of the ordeal. John (n.d.), a cancer patient shared:

As I was recovering from some industrial chemotherapy I assumed everything I was experiencing was due to my cancer treatment...My failure was to be able to unpick covid symptoms away from cancer recover symptoms...not blaming anyone but I was immunocompromised at the time, so I put this down to bad timing. (n.p.)

The person's failure to recognize their ordeal and its associated symptoms could stem from indifferent support who fail to recognize the ordeal and invalidate the person's experiences despite the person's suspicion and suffering of loss and deficiency in their functioning. As a result, the person goes mostly downwards in their ordeal and recovery until their condition is finally recognized and confirmed. Miriam (n.d.) went through an ordeal and finally got a confirmation of her condition shared:

Many things over the following months led to me question whether what I had was Covid or not, but following ongoing symptoms in July I was officially registered as 'likely Covid' by the NHS. I will still never know for sure, as the antibody test I had done >6 months after the infection was negative, but the symptoms and ongoing signs of 'long Covid' leave with with a high certainty that I had it . . . . I was referred for a 'post-covid' assessment through the hospital and listed as 'likely covid'. In a way this was a huge relief—it was hard to reconcile the feeling of having something before the world said it was circulating, knowing deep down that I did but could never prove it . . . . Obviously, if I had known then I would have acted differently. (n.p.)

### **Alleviating Symptoms**

The person gains relief for the symptoms of their ordeal. Gabrielle (n.d.) shared:

I finally started feeling better! I went to see a Respiratory Consultant who said I have airway inflammation & pleurisy. He prescribed an inhaler to help with the

inflammation, suggested buying a wheat herbal bag which can be heated in the microwave. It really helped! (n.p.)

Although symptom reduction is beneficial, the relief could be temporary. An excessive use of symptom reduction for temporary relief would lead the person to be increasingly on a downward trend of their recovery in the near future. Darren (n.d.) reported:

To get through work I was having to consume more coffee than normal. Usually I have one coffee in the morning and rarely a 2nd in the afternoon. But now the fatigue affecting me so much, I would have a double espresso before I left the house, plus an Americano before I got to work. The another coffee at 11:00am and at lunch. And sometimes before I left work. I even reached having 6 coffees per day, and I was masking the fatigue I was experiencing. I could not socialise, meet friends or family, be the partner I wanted to be, or do meaningful activities. I was literally just working and surviving on coffee. I wanted to do fun things again, so one weekend my partner and I went for a long walk on the Saturday (10km). On the Sunday we went cycled 17km. On Tuesday it was a really busy day at work that was physically, cognitively and emotionally exerting. By Wednesday I crashed. (n.p.)

### **Activating and Nourishing**

Thus, the person energises themselves by activating and nourishing themselves to gain more energy, functioning and their *self*. These activities could bring a more upward trend in the person's recovery at a longer term. Darren (n.d.) shared:

At the start of week 5 however, it was like a switch had been reset, and suddenly the brain-fog started to lift, the fatigue started to melt away, I had energy to do things. I couldn't figure out why, but the only thing that really had changed was starting Q10 4 weeks before. I did some reading of the literature and apparently it can take 4-8 weeks for it to take effect. (n.p.)

### **Self-Caring**

The person practices self-care by disciplining themselves in activating and nourishing themselves. Tammy (n.d.) stated: "I am taking multivitamins, folic acid, B-12, cod liver oil, Vit D, CoQ10 and turmeric religiously in an attempt to try and help myself" (n.p.).

They would activate boundaries that help them in their recovery so that they could implement a suitable type, quantity and intensity of activities that alleviate their symptoms and activate and nourish themselves without going into excess and bringing them to a downward trend in their ordeal and recovery. They accept their limitations that arise due to the functioning that they currently possess and the losses and deficiency in functioning that they had experienced in the ordeal. Gabrielle (n.d.) shared:

As a usually active person, this was so frustrating. It was quite difficult to concentrate & remain focussed. To overcome this, I learnt the importance of energy preservation and had to take more breaks than usual to get through a day of work. (n.p.)

### **Staying Open and Aware of Progress**

Next, the person stays open and aware of their progress. Oh (2021) conceptualized openness as follows: “the openness of the person . . . is commonly expressed as open-mindedness, presence, awareness, willingness, spontaneity, humility, and being reachable and teachable” (p. 101). The person is open to trying out novel means of care and support to augment their symptom alleviation and activating and nourishing activities in order to sustain their progress in recovering from their ordeal. Melanie (n.d.) shared:

At this stage I’m willing to try anything. I don’t play video games normally but I went on and found what I think were similar games using escape room/puzzle and repetitive retrieval concepts. I’m not advocating this as a cure but the results for me personally have been so dramatic that I almost can’t believe it. After 2 days of these games my brain felt like it was waking up and starting to process thoughts logically again. My physical fatigue is also receding. (n.p.)

They are also open and aware of the current status of them recovering from their ordeal in order to track their progress. This is so that they could decide on and implement new and existing symptom alleviation, activating and nourishing activities; and acquire further caring support and connection for their ordeal. Roger (n.d.) reported:

Because I wear a Fitbit I was able to inform the Dr. of my heart rate and as I am normally at a resting rate of 62 my then current rate of resting was 74 and I was having some high heart rates of around 120 to 130 when just moving around the house they agreed that they would in fact see me in person with full C19 PPE gear implementation. (n.p.)

Darren (n.d.) shared:

I was given advice by colleagues to stop, rest and pace. I started to record my symptoms in app, factors that were involved in my day and other relevant info. By week 3, I had bought a walking stick that provided sitting to rest and pacing (called a FlipStick). This meant I could leave my flat. But I live in a 2nd floor flat with no lift, so stairs were a real problem. I noticed I was having tachycardia with minimal exertion, where my heart rate would jump from 60 to 180 my walking around the flat. (n.p.)

### **Seeking Caring Support and Connections**

Caring support and connections could largely come from (a) professionals, and (b) connections--family, friends, and peers. Caring support and connections validate the person’s experiences of their ordeal. The person seeks and receives caring support and connection in order to be supported in carrying out their intervention strategies. A caring support and connection would be assuring, prompt, compassionate, accurate, and knowledgeable so that they could provide emotional, relational and functional support and guidance to the person. They could provide emotional, relational and functional support and guidance in terms of advice other than supporting the person in their day-to-day functional needs. Esme (n.d.) shared:

My [general practitioner] GP has been very supportive and has listened to my symptom list and concerns. I have had blood tests which showed low Vit B12 and folate and I have had a course of injections to replace the B12 and am taking folic acid. (n.p.)

Naomi (n.d.) stated: "At times I have felt disbelieved and alone, but joining online support groups has helped a lot, and my partner taking over the household tasks has allowed me to stay in work" (n.p.). Darren (n.d.) reported: "My partner and my family have been rocks. Without them, I would not have coped" (n.p.).

### **Becoming a Caring Support and Connection**

As part of flowing with the ups-and-downs in recovering from the ordeal, some of them had become caring support and connection to others who suffered for the similar ordeal that they are going through. The person's experience and knowledge make them suitable candidates of being a caring support and connection that are assuring, prompt, compassionate, accurate and knowledgeable so that they could provide emotional, relational and functional support to sufferers like themselves. Jacqueline (n.d.) shared:

My hope is that by sharing my Covid experience, I could help even just one survivor navigate the Covid fallout about which we are all learning in real time. If I could also convince one mask-averse person to cover his mouth, even better. (n.p.)

Nanda (n.d.) reported:

I have compiled my stories throughout the weeks in what I call my "Corona Chronicles". If you are interested to read more on how I cope, you can find it at [www.livingmytruth.se/corona-chronicles](http://www.livingmytruth.se/corona-chronicles). I hope that you who reading this do not have to go through what I went through. I want to do whatever I can in order to raise awareness for the long-term effects of covid-19, which is why I hereby submit my story to you. (n.p.)

### **Staying Grateful**

The person reminds themselves to stay grateful for what they still possess and gain despite the losses and deficiency in functioning they experience. They might face the fact that they may not be able to gain what they had lost or deficient for and be their *self*, prior to the ordeal i.e., who they were before. Instead, they will continue to implement the intervention strategies to progressively gain more functioning and continuously be the best of their *self*. Oh (2021) conceptualized that they "aim to be a better version of themselves" (p. 102). Nanda (n.d.) stated: "This experience is teaching me a lot about life and living, for that I am quite grateful (how strange it might sound)" (n.p.). Jackie (n.d.) shared:

I still try to do as much as I can and have managed to increase my daily walk but I have now accepted that my mind can no longer dictate to my body and I need to listen to it more carefully. Now when I worry about recovery, I just remind myself of all the people who didn't make it through this terrible virus and consider myself and my family blessed to have survived. (n.p.)

### **Limitations of Study**

The study was carried out by using data from people who are recovering from ordeals due to COVID-19 to represent a slice of data of ordinary people who are recovering from their ordeal in life. Although COVID-19 had caused ordeals that are experienced by ordinary people across the globe, the theory generated in this study could be benefitted by more data (when and if available and accessible freely) from different types of ordeals experienced by people. Any new data that are relevant will modify the theory if they are relevant to create more fit but will not invalidate it.

### **Discussion**

The concepts in this theory of flowing are discussed in relation to the theory of securing (Oh, 2021). In the following paragraphs are similarities and dissimilarities that explain the process of change and recovery a person goes through and how the concepts from both theories could build on each other especially in the area of recovery.

In the related theory of securing (Oh, 2021), it was proposed that ordinary people get trapped in a vicious cycle when they are feeling increasingly insecure and subsequently engaging in instantaneous relieving. Through honesting a person frees themselves from this vicious cycle in order to support their recovery. While in this current theory, recovery is given attention where ordinary people were identified to be trapped in a wave of ups and downs when they are recovering from an ordeal. Simply put, the theory of securing conceptualizes the major concern and actions of ordinary people pre-recovery.

Next, according to the theory of securing, people largely continue to cycle viciously in their distress because of their own instantaneous relieving actions. And it is through deciding to implement honesting that brings the person into recovery. However, with this current theory, getting into a wave of ups and downs in recovery is inevitable. The person either goes with the flow to stay afloat or sink. Staying afloat would need them to go with the flow and intervene when we sink. Metaphorically, white water river rafting would be imagined to depict the ups and downs that are experienced during recovery. Thus, the people that the person has with them on the raft is crucial. Both theories (securing and flowing) recommend people that are supportive for recovery. Supportive people will energise the person with motivation and skills. Indifferent ones will serve as dead weights, and worse, would still cause the person to get stuck or sink because indifferent people are either not rowing or rowing not in tandem with the person. It is hard and nearly impossible to be alone in the raft to survive the current of the white water. There is a need for the person to choose who could be their support, and be open to changes. This will be a continuous effort as the journey on the white waters (e.g. of COVID-19) is still long and unpredictable.

Both theories (securing and flowing) recognized the role of self as a precursor and outcome to change. Our functioning in our lives specifies who we are in our lives. In the theory of securing (Oh, 2021), the person's selfhood is specified by the combination of security attributes that the person has. These attributes determine their functioning. The perception of lack and losses in these attributes will trigger their feelings of insecurity and change who they are. Thus, as an outcome of recovery, these attributes are acquired to re-gain who they are but who they are could not be the same as before. Both theories identify that person will not be the same person they were before the loss and ordeal. There are always residuals left over that will appear in the future for further work however distressing they are. Recovery does not mean that they gain everything

that they have lost. Losing is part of change. When there is loss, there is also gain. Some gains happen only when the person loses. It is part of a life process. For example, a loss of our health due to sickness makes the person gain the value of well-being and their life. This was experienced by Nanda (n.d.). Steps will be taken to improve health and change in lifestyle for the better in order to manage a condition better. This change may not happen if not for the loss of health. However, there are also instances of gaining something different following a loss. For example, Nanda (n.d.) gained a new passion of educating people about COVID-19 in the process of gaining what she had lost. Through this understanding of gain and loss a person has the opportunity to develop themselves (by increasing their abilities) and continuously be a better version of who they are (Oh, 2021).

### **Implication of this Study**

The conceptualization power of classic grounded theory methodology had managed to raise the theory to be able to explain how ordinary people coped with the ups-and-downs of recovering from their ordeals with data from people who are recovering from ordeals due to COVID-19. Thus, this study had proposed how available data could be used beyond its initial goal (for example, to discover a theory in a specific population i.e., COVID-19 recovery) to achieve a higher goal (that is to discover a theory broader population, for example ordinary people who are recovering from their ordeal). As a result, a more general substantive theory was discovered instead of a substantive theory. By doing so, the application of the theory could potentially extend to a bigger population and thus benefit more people. Furthermore, this is especially relevant when it is not feasible to obtain data for all forms of ordeals faced by ordinary people.

Next, this theory could be used by professionals (such as medical practitioners, psychologists, educators, coaches, managers etc.) to coach their patients, clients, students, employees and groups to cope with their ordeals (i.e., losses and deficiencies) in their life. These ordeals could include COVID-19 and hardships in areas such as health, relationships, work, business etc when recovery from ups-and-downs are also experienced and observed in these areas.

Lastly, as the world is still grappling with health risks and chronic disabilities (for example long COVID), the theory can be used as a guide by ordinary people to manage their lifestyle, interactions, activities, and health as we approach COVID-19 endemicity. It could also be used by health and mental health professionals (e.g. health promotion counselors and health psychologists) to instill good health behaviors (relating to sleep, physical activity and diet and nutrition) among community members as a means of prevention, recovery and to be healthy and stay healthy.

### **References**

- Barbara. (n.d.). *Barbara's story*. Covid-19 recovery collective. <https://covid19-recovery.org/stories/barbaras-story/>
- Claire. (n.d.). *Claire's story*. Covid-19 recovery collective. <https://covid19-recovery.org/stories/claires-story/>

- Coty. (n.d.). *Coty's story*. Covid-19 recovery collective. <https://covid19-recovery.org/stories/cotys-story/>
- Darren. (n.d.). *Darren's story*. Covid-19 recovery collective. <https://covid19-recovery.org/stories/darrens-story/>
- Donovan. (n.d.). *Donovan's story*. Covid-19 recovery collective. <https://covid19-recovery.org/stories/donovans-story/>
- Doug. (n.d.). *Doug's story*. Covid-19 recovery collective. <https://covid19-recovery.org/stories/dougs-story/>
- Esme. (n.d.). *Esme's story*. Covid-19 recovery collective. <https://covid19-recovery.org/stories/esmes-story/>
- Gabrielle. (n.d.). *Gabrielle's story*. Covid-19 recovery collective. <https://covid19-recovery.org/stories/gabrielles-story/>
- Glaser, B. G. (1963). Retreading research materials: The use of secondary analysis by the independent researcher. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 6(10), 11–14. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000276426300601003>
- Glaser, B. G. (1978). *Theoretical sensitivity: Advances in the methodology of grounded theory*. Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B. G. (1998). *Doing grounded theory: Issues and discussions*. Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B.G. (2014). *Stop, write: Writing grounded theory*. Sociology Press.
- Jackie. (n.d.). *Jackie's story*. Covid-19 recovery collective. <https://covid19-recovery.org/stories/jackies-story/>
- Jacqueline. (n.d.). *Jacqueline's story*. Covid-19 recovery collective. <https://covid19-recovery.org/stories/jacquelines-story/>
- Jake. (n.d.). *Jake's story*. Covid-19 recovery collective. <https://covid19-recovery.org/stories/jakes-story/>
- John. (n.d.). *John's story*. Covid-19 recovery collective. <https://covid19-recovery.org/stories/johns-story-2/>
- Louise. (n.d.). *Louise's story*. Covid-19 recovery collective. <https://covid19-recovery.org/stories/louises-story/>
- Mary. (n.d.). *Mary's story*. Covid-19 recovery collective. <https://covid19-recovery.org/stories/marys-story-3/>
- Melanie. (n.d.). *Melanie's story*. Covid-19 recovery collective. <https://covid19-recovery.org/stories/melanies-story-2/>
- Miriam. (n.d.). *Miriam's story*. Covid-19 recovery collective. <https://covid19-recovery.org/stories/miriams-story/>
- Naomi. (n.d.). *Naomi's story*. Covid-19 recovery collective. <https://covid19-recovery.org/stories/naomis-story/>

Oh, A.K. (2021). Theory of securing. *Grounded Theory Review*, 20(2), 90-106.

Pat. (n.d.). *Pat's story*. Covid-19 recovery collective. <https://covid19-recovery.org/stories/pats-story/>

Peter. (n.d.). *Peter's story*. Covid-19 recovery collective. <https://covid19-recovery.org/stories/peters-story-2/>

Roger. (n.d.). *Roger's story*. Covid-19 recovery collective. <https://covid19-recovery.org/stories/rogers-story/>

Tammy. (n.d.). *Tammy's story*. Covid-19 recovery collective. <https://covid19-recovery.org/stories/tammys-story/>

Thiago. (n.d.). *Thiago's story*. Covid-19 recovery collective. <https://covid19-recovery.org/stories/thiagos-story/>

## Getting On-The-Same-Page

Ali J. M. Sumner, Cert Grad Mngt, MBL, PhD

### Abstract

Work teams are intrinsic to how 21<sup>st</sup> century organizations operate. For several decades, business research has therefore focused on work team performance. De Bono thinking tools have also been used extensively by work teams, for several decades. However, there is a paucity of research on the correct use of de Bono thinking tools in business organizations. The getting on-the-same-page classic grounded theory is therefore a new theory explaining what happens when work teams utilize these tools. The research problem was the main concern of people using de Bono thinking tools in this substantive area. The study revealed their concern is resolved with a three-stage process of change in personal cognitive capability. This process is fragile and can cease at any time. When it continues however, there are three stages of emergent change: tooling-up, tensing and enabling. Discovery of this process contributes to work team theory and praxis, particularly in the area of work team processes and effectiveness.

**Keywords:** classic grounded theory, de Bono thinking tools, work teams, business organizations, cognitive capability.

### Introduction

With an estimated 25 million meetings each day in the USA alone, work team meetings have become ubiquitous in 21<sup>st</sup> century business organizations (Allen et al., 2015; Beneshick & Lazzarra, 2019). Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, with online video services, workplace meetings have also become more pervasive (Carroll & Conboy, 2020; Soni, 2020). By April 2020, over 300 million people worldwide were holding regular work-related meetings via the Zoom on-line meeting platform (Wiederhold, 2020).

Work team research identifies meetings, discussions and conversations as "work team occasions." These occasions have become a major feature of business operations, therefore interest in work teams has significantly increased, with research paying particular attention to improving work team performance (Kozlowski, 2018; Tannenbaum & Salas, 2020).

Every year since the mid-1990s thousands of adults, worldwide, have been trained in the correct use of de Bono thinking tools in a work team context (D'Angelo Fisher, 2006; Dudgeon, 2001; Walter, 2017). While there is a significant number of anecdotal claims about the positive impact de Bono thinking tools have on work team performance, in contrast to extensive research

in the area of work teams per se, there is a paucity of rigorous research focusing on work teams using these particular thinking tools (Burgh, 2014; D'Angelo Fisher, 2006; Hartnett, 2016; Merrotsy, 2017; Puccio & Cabra, 2010).

Getting on-the-same-page is therefore a new theory helping to address a significant gap in knowledge regarding, work team performance.

### **De Bono Thinking Tools**

With a background in physiology and medicine, Dr. Edward de Bono was researching and teaching at Oxford, Cambridge, London, and Harvard Universities in the early-1960s, when he started focusing on the need for new thinking, to counteract what he considered to be inefficiencies in how the human brain processes information (D'Angelo Fisher, 2006; Dudgeon, 2001). After the publication of *The Use of Lateral Thinking* in 1967 and an ongoing invention of a raft of new thinking tools, Dr. de Bono is now widely acknowledged as the inventor of the term and tools of lateral thinking, designer of the CoRT program for the teaching of thinking in schools and inventor of the Six Thinking Hats, a methodology that has proliferated through educational systems and business organizations across the world since the mid-1980s (D'Angelo Fisher, 2006; Dingli, 2009; Merrotsy, 2017; Puccio et al., 2010; Walter, 2017).

### **Correct Utilization of de Bono Thinking Tools**

The term "utilize" is defined as the act of using something in an effective way (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022). If a work tool, such as a hammer for example, is not correctly utilized in accordance with how it was designed for practical use, this causes problems for the user. Similarly, if a de Bono thinking tool is not used correctly the cognitive outcome it was intended to achieve will not eventuate (de Bono, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c).

In the 1990s, a global network of organizations responsible for certifying instructors to deliver de Bono authorized training, was established to ensure thinking tools invented by de Bono are applied by adults as intended. By 2020, 700 certified instructors were working in 74 countries, delivering training for adults to correctly utilize de Bono thinking tools in a business context (de Bono, n.d.).

### **Study Organizations and Participants**

Six organizations were involved in the study such as government agencies, not-for-profit organizations, and social enterprises ranging in size from 12 to 1300 employees. Seventy-nine people were involved, with 73 people in nine work teams ranging from strategic planning teams, to operational and task specific teams. Participating teams were observed, utilizing de Bono thinking tools, for 386 hours. Experience using the tools within a work team context ranged from 15 years, to no experience prior to being involved in the study.

All participants used tools as prescribed by Edward de Bono's Six Thinking Hats<sup>®</sup>: Tools for Parallel Thinking<sup>®</sup> (de Bono, 2009c); several, if not all tools, as prescribed by Edward de Bono's The Power of Perception<sup>™</sup>: Ten Thinking Tools for Making Better Business Decisions (de Bono, 2009b); Purpose Focus and several other, if not all tools, prescribed by Edward de Bono's

Lateral Thinking: Fast Track to Creativity (de Bono, 2009a). Many participants also utilised TEC, a thinking tool originating from CoRT (Devine Media, n.d.).

Interviews were held with 29 people, 24 of whom were members of work teams involved in the study. The six interviewees not involved with these teams had extensive experience utilizing de Bono thinking tools in a work team context, ranging from eight to 20 years.

Throughout the study de Bono thinking tools were referred to as "the tools" and study participants were referred to as "prospective users," "users" or "enabling users," these being people utilizing the tools during the last stage of getting-on-the-same-page.

### **Methodology**

The study was conducted in accordance with the tenets and procedures of classic grounded theory (GT) methodology, as prescribed by Glaser (1978, 1992, 1998, 2001, 2003, 2005), Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Holton (2007, 2008). This methodology was chosen because of the flexibility afforded a classic GT researcher to conduct research within any philosophical paradigm. It was also selected because of the methodological objective, unique to classic GT, to protect the process of emergence and generate theory as an emergent phenomenon (Glaser, 1978, 1992, 1994, 2001, 2005b), this objective being highly compatible with the researcher's complexity-based philosophical perspective. Furthermore, as Glaser (1978, 1998) pointed out, new theory that is generated from an issue of concern to people participating in everyday activities, provides a valuable theoretical foundation for bringing about change and improvements in practice. This aspect of classic GT was highly compatible with the researcher's motivation to help contribute to the improvement of work team productivity in 21<sup>st</sup> century business organizations.

Data included field notes and interview transcripts. Field notes were written during, or shortly after, weekly or fortnightly sessions in the field with work teams that utilized the tools for periods of no less than 14 weeks. Decisions as to which group to engage with and subsequently which members of a team to interview, or other individuals to interview during the study, were made in accordance with theoretical sampling procedures prescribed by Glaser (1978), Glaser and Holton (2004) and Glaser and Strauss (1967), in particular.

As proscribed by Holton and Walsh (2017), forcing the data was mitigated by starting every interview with a grand tour question: What do you experience when a work team you are involved with, uses de Bono's tools. After the main concern of people who utilize de Bono thinking tools in a work team context emerged, a second grand tour question was included with all interviews: "What do you experience when a work team you are involved with, doesn't use de Bono's tools.

Glaser (2013) warned researchers about problems associated with taping interviews. However, as doctoral (PhD) research, the study had to conform with Human Ethics Committee requirements to record and transcribe interviews. To help ameliorate problems identified by Glaser, all interviews were conducted using a non-intrusive Livescribe Smart Pen with an inbuilt recording facility. As recommended by Glaser (2002, 2005) and Glaser and Holton (2004), all coding was undertaken manually by the researcher, without using computer software.

Constant comparison analysis of data collected during the open coding stage of the study resulted in the generation of 192 codes, with most being conceptual rather than descriptive. Delimiting categories during saturation, writing copious memos on possible theoretical codes, choosing theoretical codes and then abandoning them as saturation progressed, commencing memo sorting, going back to check empirical data, re-sorting memos, writing and sorting new memos with several different perspectives regarding the overall theoretical framework and constantly making changes to the emerging framework, progressed to the stage when the theory was written up. During this advanced stage of the study the generation of new theoretical memos and on-going constant comparison, initiated subtle adjustments to the theory.

### **Main Concern of People who Utilise de Bono Tools in Business Organisations**

With the very first interview, and subsequently throughout the study, "on-the-same-page" was a term consistently used when study participants talked about their experiences utilizing de Bono thinking tools during work team occasions. As a colloquial term "on the same page" is commonly understood as people being in harmony and without disagreement. However, study participants specifically used this term to differentiate work team occasions when the tools are utilized, from those when the tools are not utilized.

People who utilise the tools during work team occasions feel stressed, frustrated, concerned, or at the very least annoyed, when they are involved with a work team occasion where they believe no-one is on-the-same-page, because no-one is utilizing the tools:

If everyone in my organisation used de Bono's tools it would be my dream world because I would never have to go into another meeting with a dreadful sinking feeling that I'm going to totally waste another hour of my life.

Therefore, the main concern of people who utilize de Bono thinking tools within the substantive area of work teams operating in business organizations, is the emotional stress they feel when they perceive what they consider to be a major problem in all business organizations. This problem being, the types of cognitive interplay that occur when no-one uses de Bono thinking tools during work team occasions. "Cognitive interplay" being the convenient descriptor adopted by the study, for the complex mix of personal cognition and interpersonal behaviours that occurs during work team meetings, discussions or conversations.

The types of cognitive interplay a user perceives as always occurring during work team occasions when the tools are not used, indicates to them a work team is not-on-the-same-page.

"The not-on-the-same-page problem" is the convenient descriptor adopted by the study, for what causes this main concern.

Because the use of de Bono thinking tools is not ubiquitous in business organizations, in addition to this problem impacting significantly on their personal ability to be productive, users also worry about their role in perpetuating a problem, which they perceive as "plaguing" all business organizations, when the tools are not utilised by work teams.

Successfully resolving their concern does not occur however, immediately a user is introduced to the tools. Firstly, they have no experience utilizing the tools and therefore perceive

the cognitive interplay during work team occasions when the tools are not utilized, as being normal. Secondly, it is only after particular changes in their cognitive capability have emerged, as a result of utilising the tools during work team occasions, that they perceive this cognitive interplay as being a problem for themselves; work teams and organizations per se.

**Getting On-The-Same-Page**

Getting on-the-same-page is a complex multivariate theory. As the core category of the theory, getting-on-the-same-page is a process of change in personal cognitive capability. This process is fragile and given particular conditions and consequences, can cease at any time. When the process continues however, it consists of three cumulative stages of change. These sub-core categories are conceptualised as tooling-up, tensing and enabling.

Each of the sub-core categories of the theory, also have several properties. These properties are listed in Figure 1.

Figure 1. List of Getting on-the-same-page theory Conceptual Categories

LIST OF GETTING ON-THE-SAME-PAGE THEORY CONCEPTUAL CATEGORIES		
CORE CATEGORY		
<i>Getting-on-the-same-page cognitive capability process.</i>		
SUB-CORE CATEGORIES		
TOOLING-UP (Stage One)	TENSING (Stage Two)	ENABLING (Stage Three)
Properties	Properties	Properties
Structuring	Distinguishing	Taking-it-On
Straining	Structuring	Structuring
Suppressing	Regulating	Regulating
Bettering	Bettering	Bettering
Blocking	Suppressing	Suppressing
Closing Down	Straining	Straining
Regulating	Angst-ing	Tooled Strategising
	Fiddling	No-Wavering
	Rationalising	
	Closing Down	

**Tooling-Up: Stage 1 of the Getting-On-The-Same-Page Process**

The getting-on-the-same-page processes commences immediately a prospective user is introduced to de Bono thinking tools by a more knowledgeable other--someone who has capability with a cognitive skill and guides a less capable person to develop that skill within the Zone of Proximal Development, which is the difference between what a learner can do with and without help, from a more knowledgeable other (Allal & Ducry, 2000; Vygotsky, 1978). In the context of the study, a more knowledgeable other was someone who utilized de Bono thinking tools correctly, such as authorised instructors delivering off-the-job training, professional facilitators skilled in the utilisation of the tools, or other members of a study participant's organisation who had learned how to utilise these tools correctly during work team occasions.

### **Structuring**

Structuring characterises particular changes in a user's cognitive capability that start occurring immediately they start utilising a de Bono thinking tool. Structuring is complicated, with several phases, dimensions and elements emerging during different stages of the getting-on-the-same-page process. Some of these elements also have particular aspects that emerge during different stages. Structuring also occurs within a thinking space, with this context having different dimensions that emerge during tooling-up, tensing or enabling.

Structuring new thinking commences, as soon as a prospective user of de Bono thinking tools attempts to use one of these tools. Having never encountered the tools before, this experience is very unfamiliar: "the tools are different from usual thinking, different, it's new thinking". This unfamiliarity is characterised with the cognitive languaging, cognitive disciplining, cognitive focusing, cognitive levelling elements of structuring.

With cognitive languaging during tooling-up, a user is introduced to new and unfamiliar terminology which they are expected to use for active thinking, rather than passive description:

I've had to build the skill of thinking and talking in the language at the same time, the names and the language (for example) of what all the Hats are that I'm using, then I'm really using them to actively think about things, not just talking about the Hats.

With cognitive disciplining during tooling-up, when they utilize the tools, a user experiences a shift from never consciously being disciplined with their thinking, to thinking about issues in a restrained and prescribed way. They experience a change from being, what one user described as "free-wheeling with my thinking," to being very orderly with their thinking when they utilize the tools: "I don't waver, it's deliberate, nothing's careless about it."

With cognitive focusing a user experiences a particular shift in the way they deal with an issue when they specifically use de Bono Purpose Focus or Area Focus tools. These tools are integral to all de Bono tool sets for utilization by adults in a work group context (de Bono, 2009a, 2009b, 2009e). Purpose Focus is utilized by a user to define what they need to achieve with their thinking, about any issue, problem or task they need or want to deal with (de Bono, 2009a). For prospective users, this is an unfamiliar shift, from being issue-centric, to concentrating on determining the objective of their thinking. Being issue-centric described by one user as being "totally immersed in a problem, not seeing the wood for the trees."

With cognitive focusing during tooling-up, a user also starts to perceive their ability to define a Purpose Focus as a necessary capability that enables them to be a better thinker: "you focus only on the purpose focus you've now got for your thinking, it stops you going down all these little rabbit holes with your thinking."

### ***Straining***

Straining is the confluence of emotional discomfort and utilization of a de Bono thinking tool. It occurs at the time a prospective user is introduced to the tools, and when the tools are utilized at any time after this introduction. When they are introduced to the tools, prospective users always react with some level of discomfort. This can range from mild uneasiness to feeling very distressed, as illustrated by comments such as "it made my head hurt;" "it was doing my head in;" "ouch, hard on my head;" and "I was stressing big time."

There are at least three reasons straining emerges. First, a prospective user is completely un-used to complying with the cognitive tasks associated with correct use of the tools. Second, while they often perceive being introduced to the tools as an opportunity to gain some kind of personal benefit, they have to respond to this opportunity by immersing themselves in unspecified cognitive skill-building. There is no guarantee they will gain any benefits from changing the way they think and this is disturbing: "What was I getting into? What was I going to get out of it? What changes was I going to have to make, what was learning these tools going to do for me? That made it uncomfortable, difficult."

Third, having to change the way they think also effects a user's confidence. They have always taken for granted that the way they think is adequate. As cognitive languaging, cognitive disciplining, and cognitive focusing emerge during tooling-up, they start to feel they may not be as "smart" as they had assumed and falter in their confidence about being an "OK thinker."

### ***Suppressing***

Suppressing is the self-induced tempering of straining. When a prospective user is introduced to the tools and continues to utilize them, they are constantly controlling any discomfort arising from the requirement to use them correctly: "there's always this need to dampen down any angst you feel, keeping a lid on it, so you can get on and keep using the tools." With robust suppressing, a user adopts various strategies which enable them to handle any discomfort they are feeling, for example: "I've been really trying, like to forget, put aside my niggles about not getting it with the tools . . . it makes me keep going with it, without giving up 'cos I'm too angst'."

Suppressing only occurs however if strong or mild bettering is present at the time a prospective user is introduced to the tools by a more knowledgeable other.

### ***Bettering***

Bettering characterises the disposition a prospective user of de Bono thinking tools has towards learning. A disposition towards learning is an individual's tendency towards putting emotional and cognitive effort into engaging with learning, further to this, as a tendency, an individual's learning disposition is a default response to indeterminate learning opportunities (Claxton & Carr, 2004; Crick & Goldspink, 2014).

With strong bettering a prospective user has an unwavering belief that making an effort to learn is always necessary and valuable. Therefore, when they are introduced to the tools by someone who is skilled at using them correctly, suppressing tempers any discomfort they feel and the not-on-the-same-page process commences, as illustrated by the following comment:

I realised there are ways you have to think with the tools and it's unfamiliar, the thinking is very unfamiliar, but I just had to try and deal with that, if I didn't, well then I wasn't going to know what I was going to miss out on, what I could learn.

### ***Blocking and Closing Down***

If there is no bettering when a prospective user is introduced to the tools, blocking occurs and the getting-on-the-same-page process doesn't commence. With no bettering a prospective user believes there is no need to learn anything more than what they already know or feel comfortable with. Therefore, from their perspective there is no value in making an effort to learn how to use unfamiliar thinking tools; they intentionally avoid any utilization of any de Bono thinking tool and stonewall any efforts from a more knowledgeable other to help them use the tools with their thinking.

Unlike blocking, closing down only occurs after someone has started utilising the tools and only occurs if mild bettering is present at the time a prospective user is introduced to the tools. With mild bettering a prospective user believes learning is useful, however, only up to the time when it gets too difficult for them to justify the effort it requires. If the discomfort they feel with structuring new thinking escalates with nil-suppressing, a tipping point occurs and closing down emerges. With closing down, the getting-on-the-same-page process is terminated, because a user makes a definitive decision not to use the tools, unless they are required to by a work manager or supervisor: "mostly I just avoid using the tools, even though I know the basics of how to use the Hats etc. etc."

However, when the process continues unabated during tooling-up, suppressing causes more structuring and over time, relative to each user, this causes regulating.

### ***Regulating***

With developmental psychology and cognitive education, a person's self-management of their thinking is referred to as metacognition, meaning higher-order or second order thinking (Flavell, 1997; Hussain, 2015). Flavell (1997) specifically defined metacognition "as an individual's ability to consciously monitor and control their thinking" (p. 906).

Regulating characterises the self-initiated metacognitive guidance of a user's personal thinking when they utilise de Bono thinking tools. Prior to being introduced to the tools, users seek actionable solutions to problems as quickly as possible, as this is what is expected of them in an organisational environment. However, the more they "mechanically" adhere to the principles and rules associated with the tools, the more their thinking slows down and they start to deliberately pay attention to the thinking they are doing about a problem or issue.

When a user continues to utilize the tools, they continue to experience changes with their cognitive capability, as characterized by the elements of structuring. This causes more regulating, which causes more structuring.

When the getting-on-the-same-page process is un-interrupted, over time a system of reinforcing feedback loops emerges between particular dimensions, elements and/or aspects of structuring, bettering, straining, suppressing and regulating, this causes distinguishing. When distinguishing emerges tensing commences.

### **Tensing: Stage 2 of the Getting-On-The-Same-Page Process**

With distinguishing, a user of de Bono thinking tools starts to "separate out" work team occasions when de Bono thinking tools are used from occasions when these tools are not used. Therefore there are two dimensions of distinguishing: distinguishing-on-the-same-page when the tools are utilized by a work team; distinguishing-not-on-the-same-page when the tools are not utilized, as illustrated by the following comment: "I started to get it after a while, like when the tools are in play, the team's just generally operating differently, the way everyone operates with each other it's very different from normal teamwork."

Furthermore, distinguishing-on-the-same-page occurs within the in-mind-in-relationship context of structuring. This context is very different from the context of structuring prior to the emergence of distinguishing, this being conceptualized as an in-mind context.

With the in-mind context of structuring, when they utilize the tools without being involved with anyone else, a user feels they are thinking in a "personal mind space." This is a personal cognitive context, specific to their private utilization of the tools. They put all of their attention into using the tools with their thinking and perceive this as being distinctly different from "mixing thinking with everything else I'm doing." They deliberately get into "a quiet thinking space" where they privately utilize the tools in their own mind.

In comparison, the in-mind-in-relationship context of structuring only emerges when a user starts utilizing de Bono thinking tools privately during a work team occasion, while everyone else involved are also privately utilizing the tools, described by one user as "a private thinking space" within a "collective thinking environment."

### ***Distinguishing-Not-On-The-Same-Page***

The more a user utilizes de Bono thinking tools with other people during work team occasions, the more structuring occurs within the in-mind-in-relationship-context and a user starts to differentiate types of cognitive interplay they consider indicate a work team is not on-the-same-page because these tools are not being utilized. These particular types of cognitive interplay are characterized as polarizing, powering, holding back or bouncing around.

With polarizing a user perceives one or more people placing their thoughts, ideas, comments or points of view, in direct opposition to each other during work team occasions when the tools aren't utilized. They identify a variety of adversarial communication styles, ranging from people being very polite while judging and counteracting someone else's ideas, through to being

overtly argumentative or aggressive. Users also perceive little or no willingness, to abandon polarizing: "sooooo much time wasting with no thinking together."

With powering a user perceives one or more people who are participating in a work team occasion when the tools are not utilized, positioning their point of view as being more legitimate, more valuable, or more correct than everyone else involved. They consider this way of operating, as a form of hierarchical cognitive interplay where one or more members of a work team considers their ideas are more legitimate than the ideas of others, often because they are managerially superior, as illustrated by a comment from a user:

From my experience it tends to be very hierarchical, thought processes are based on someone's position. So, if an executive manager has a thought on the way things are done, most of the time people are expected to, and do, toe the line on that.

With holding-back, a user perceives people who are participating in work team occasions when the tools are not utilized as refraining from sharing their thoughts or opinions, because they are not confident in their ability to make a worthwhile contribution.

With bouncing around however, users don't perceive any of the characteristics of polarizing, powering or holding-back. Nevertheless, perceiving bouncing around when the tools aren't utilized, still indicates to them a work team is not on-the-same-page, because from their perspective the team has no purpose or direction with their collective thinking, as illustrated by the comment:

When there's no tools being used and no proper Focus for anyone to hold onto, more often than not the meeting is directionless, thought is unfocused, so you can jump around from one topic to another and find at the end of the meeting that you've not resolved anything.

### ***Distinguishing-On-The-Same-Page***

In contrast to distinguishing not-on-the-same-page, when the tools are utilized, a user perceives distinctly different types of cognitive interplay which indicate to them a work team is on-the-same-page. These types of cognitive interplay are characterized as collective purposing, collective aligning and collective equalizing.

With collective purposing, a user perceives everyone during a work team occasion putting their energy into using the same Purpose Focus: "you get to do group work, all together around what's the Purpose Focus for what we are trying to do, so you spend time on problem definition in a different way than normal."

When they use the tools with other people users also adhere to parallel thinking, this being a fundamental process underpinning the use of de Bono thinking tools by groups (de Bono, 1994, 1997a, 1999a, 1999c, 1999d). With Parallel thinking, rather than paying any attention to what might be right or wrong about the thinking that's going on, everyone concentrates on contributing to the group's thinking about an issue, by constantly adding their thoughts to the thoughts of others. Therefore, with collective equalizing a user perceives work team occasions when parallel thinking is adopted, as a distinctly different kind of work team environment from occasions when the tools aren't used.

### ***Cognitive Levelling***

When a user continues to utilize de Bono thinking tools within the in-mind-in-relationship context, cognitive levelling emerges as an additional element of structuring. With cognitive leveling a user changes their personal cognitive modus operandi when they utilize the tools with other people. These changes are characterized by specific aspects of cognitive levelling: focused levelling and levelled forwarding.

With focused levelling, a user experiences their thinking about the issues a work team wants to deal with, being confined to a shared Purpose Focus, rather than “thinking about anything and everything.” There may be several shared Purpose Focuses during a work team occasion and a work team may define these themselves or be given Purpose Focuses that are defined by, a more knowledgeable other, or one or more members of the work team. Regardless of how a Purpose Focus originates however, when the tools are utilized, a user focuses their attention on what needs to be achieved with a work team’s collective thinking about an issue, as defined by the team’s shared Purpose Focus.

With levelled forwarding a user’s intent during a work team occasion when the tools are utilized, changes from their normal habit of evaluating other people’s thinking, to building on the thinking of others, as explained by a user:

If you are using the tools, everyone’s views that come from using the same tool, are put down one after the other no matter what they are, you just have to keep thinking with an ‘and’, not a ‘but’ and just keep adding your own ideas, not contrasting them with anyone else’s, that’s what you have to do to help us all get where we want to go with our thinking as a group, you know achieve our Purpose Focus.

### ***Angst-ing, Fiddling, Rationalizing, Closing Down, and Taking-It-On***

The more a user perceives collective purposing, collective aligning and collective equalizing when a work team utilizes de Bono thinking tools, the more they perceive polarizing, powering, holding-back or bouncing around when the tools are not used, and angst-ing emerges.

Angst-ing characterizes the level of emotional stressing a user experiences when they encounter polarizing, powering, holding-back or bouncing around, as illustrated by the comment: “I’m starting to get fed up with meetings where the tools aren’t used, everyone’s thinking’s all over the place, it’s awful.”

Because they consistently perceive these types of cognitive interplay when de Bono thinking tools are not utilized, mild angst-ing persists and this causes fiddling. Fiddling characterizes a user’s early attempts to get a work team on-the-same-page. At first fiddling is informal, a user makes spontaneous, reactive attempts to stop polarizing, powering, holding back or bouncing around from occurring, as illustrated by a comment from a user explaining her reaction during a meeting when no-one was using the tools: “I suddenly started on about Hats to stop the arguing.”

However, as users continue to use the tools with others during work team occasions, over time relative to each user, mild angst-ing transitions to extreme angst-ing: “No-one is

on-the-same-page, everyone's all over the place with their thinking when the tools aren't used and it, well to be honest, it completely drives me bonkers."

For a user with mild bettering, extreme angst-ing eventually causes rationalizing. Their belief learning is useful until it gets too difficult to justify the effort, counteracts fiddling until a tipping point occurs; closing down emerges and the getting-on-the-same-page process is terminated. For a user with strong bettering however, as extreme angst-ing escalates, informal fiddling transitions to formal fiddling. Their attempts to prevent polarizing, powering, holding back or bouncing around become pre-mediated rather than reactionary. With emotional stress still increasing when they experience the not-on-the-same-page problem, eventually a user with strong bettering stops "fiddling around at the edges," a tipping point occurs and taking-it-on emerges.

With taking-it-on a user with strong bettering, commits to helping other people to get on-the-same-page during work team occasions when the tools are not utilized and the third stage of the getting-on-the-same-page process commences.

### **Enabling: Stage 3 of the Getting-On-The-Same-Page Process**

With taking-it-on a user's rationale for introducing de Bono thinking tools to other people, as characterized by fiddling, starts to change. In addition to looking after their own wellbeing, they start contemplating how introducing the tools to work teams might impact on the people involved: "I had to think about the consequences, the more longer-term impact of them getting to use de Bono's tools not just have me zip in with a few new tools and then zip out again, leaving them stranded."

They consider their role as someone who has working knowledge of how to use de Bono thinking tools and what difference they can make to another person's working life by introducing them to de Bono's tools. Taking-it-on causes more structuring and cognitive listening emerges as a new aspect of structuring, as a user with strong betting gets to be an enabling user.

### ***Cognitive Listening: An element of Structuring Emerging During Enabling***

By the time enabling commences as the third stage of the getting-on-the-same-page process, changes in cognitive capability that first emerged during stage one and characterized as particular elements of structuring (cognitive languaging; cognitive disciplining; cognitive focusing and cognitive levelling), are always consistent and therefore always stable. This causes cognitive listening, the last element of structuring, to emerge during enabling.

With cognitive listening, an enabling user comprehends another person's thinking when they articulate their thinking while using a de Bono thinking tool. More specifically, there are two aspects of cognitive listening: hearing operative thinking and hearing general thinking.

When an enabling user engages in hearing operative thinking, they gauge whether someone who is using the tools has adopted the practice of operacy. Operacy is a construct created by Dr de Bono to indicate the integration of thinking with practical action, for improving thinking in practical everyday life (de Bono, 1990; Perkins, 1995).

With hearing operative thinking, enabling users get adept at hearing the practical and precise application of a de Bono thinking tool, as illustrated by the following comment: "After using the tools quite a long time with my own thinking, I know the difference between the outcomes of someone's thinking if they've used de Bono's tools properly and the outcomes if they haven't."

With hearing general thinking an enabling user comprehends the flow, preciseness and clarity of someone's thinking when they are utilizing de Bono thinking tools. They get adept at hearing someone jumping to conclusions or solutions too soon, analyzing an issue at an inappropriate time, making hasty decisions or rambling with their thinking.

When an enabling user continues to utilize the tools, the stabilized changes in their cognitive capability, engendered by the utilization of the tools during tooling-up; then tensing, and the emergence of cognitive listening during enabling, causes tooled strategizing.

### ***Tooled Strategizing***

With tooled strategizing an enabling user proactively utilizes the tools to create and respond to opportunities to help people in business organizations use de Bono thinking tools during work team occasions. By the time tooled strategizing emerges, they are adept at utilizing the tools to deal with a wide range of issues. Devising strategies to introduce other people to the tools, is now perceived by them in the same way as any another issue with which they need to deal:

Whenever I introduce de Bono's tools to people who don't know the tools, there's a lot of thought goes into it, I put a lot of thought into how and what I'm going to do to introduce the tools and of course I use the tools with my own thinking to work out what to do.

Tooled strategizing causes more structuring and this causes no wavering.

### ***No Wavering***

With no wavering an enabling user adopts a decisive position regarding the utilization of de Bono's tools during work team occasions. They no longer vacillate about the value of the tools with their personal utilization, or the utilization of the tools during work team occasions involving one or more other people. Therefore, they totally commit to resolving the not-on-the-same-page problem, as the cause of their main concern.

This proactive, self-initiated commitment to resolving this problem causes more tooled strategizing; this causes strong structuring to transition to robust structuring and maturing tooling transitions to nuanced tooling. Nuanced tooling characterizes the nature of an enabling user's cognitive capability when the getting-on-the-same-page process has advanced to the enabling stage. This dimension of tooling, as a higher-order sub-core category of getting-on-the-same-page, is conceptualized as a system of feedback loops between strong structuring/strong regulating yielding strong structuring/strong bettering/robust suppressing/minimum straining.

This system of feedback loops maintains an enabling user's commitment to solving the not-on-the-same-page problem ad infinitum: "The time I stop using the tools and trying to help others with them, that's when I'll no longer be here."

### **Discussion**

With a paucity of research focusing on the correct utilisation of de Bono thinking tools by work teams the getting on-the-same-page, classic grounded theory is a benchmark study. It provides clarity for decision makers in business organisations regarding what to expect when work teams utilize de Bono thinking tools. For people who utilise the tools it provides a framework to monitor their own praxis. It also contributes to work team theory.

A major research interest with business studies has been team processes, as primary factors contributing to team effectiveness (Kozlowski, 2018; Rico et al., 2011). These processes include team member cognition, with work team studies the focus is on this cognitive activity being "shared mental models" (Fernandez et al., 2018, Kozlowski, 2018).

Shared mental models are conceptualised as stable cognitive structures and described mostly as mental representations of knowledge that members of a work team share (Fernandez et al., 2018; Wildman et al., 2014). Extant literature considers the presence of shared mental models, as indicating each person in a work team has the same understanding about selected phenomena external to each of them; this shared perception is an emergent outcome of static individual cognition.

With the getting on-the-same-page theory, structuring within an in-mind-in-relationship context, is a dynamic process of collective cognitive capability because everyone involved adheres to parallel thinking. This is a fundamentally different kind of shared cognition than a work team having the same knowledge about phenomena external to everyone involved, as proposed by extant literature focusing on shared mental models. The theory therefore explains cognitive functions, not previously explained or explored by work team effectiveness studies.

There is also a difference between the getting-on-the-same-page theory and extant research focusing on work team cohesion and more specifically, work team conflict.

Work team conflict is a core predictor of work team success and productivity and productive teamwork is critical for organizational effectiveness (Humphrey et al., 2017; Maltarich et al., 2018). General definitions of conflict vary considerably, however there is a general understanding as to what constitutes interpersonal conflict (Barki & Hartwick, 2004) pointed out there is considerable research linking interpersonal conflict to "behaviours such as debate and argumentation" (pp. 232-234) and consider interpersonal conflict as a construct that incorporates the simultaneous presence of cognitions, emotions and behaviours relevant to conflict contexts.

The getting-on-the-same-page theory makes a theoretical contribution in the area of work team conflict resolution, because it provides a new perspective on the role of conflict during work team occasions, and the relationship between interpersonal conflict and work team productivity.

The types of cognitive interplay perceived by users when distinguishing-not-on-the-same-page emerges, align with definitions and characteristics of interpersonal conflict, as explicated in the literature. However, there is no similarity regarding strategies to prevent conflict, regardless of how mild or disruptive it may be, as discovered with getting on-the-same-page theory. Further to this, the theory challenges the normative position taken in the literature, that some form of conflict during work team occasions is beneficial.

### Limitations

The getting on-the-same-page classic grounded theory is a substantive theory because it emerged and developed within a specific setting. Furthermore, because the core phenomena of the theory, is concerned with the utilization of de Bono thinking tools, it cannot evolve with further data collection to formal theory, because this would require the getting-on-the-same-page process of change in cognitive capability to be applicable to all groups of people, not only people who utilise de Bono thinking tools.

However, as a substantive theory it meets the criteria for a quality classic grounded theory, these being: fit, workability, relevance, modifiability (Glaser, 1992). The theory was discovered through diligent application of the classic grounded theory constant comparative method. It was also conducted with extensive time in the field gathering data to ensure saturation of concepts. As recommended by Glaser (1978), the study also involved top informants. Feedback on the appropriateness of the concepts to people who were regularly utilising de Bono thinking tools, was diligently collected. During the study several top informants started using terminology associated with the theory and discussed their personal utilisation of the tools, in alignment with the three stages of the getting-on-the-same-page process. This demonstrated the 'grab' of the theory, for users and particularly enabling users of Edward de Bono thinking tools.

Limited resources did impact on the study however, and while the researcher is confident all categories of the theory were saturated, further data collection could possibly discover additional properties that would more comprehensively explain what causes the continuation or discontinuation of the process, other than bettering.

### References

- Allal, L., & Ducrey G., P. (2000). Assessment of- or in: The Zone of Proximal Development. *Learning and Instruction, 10*(2), 137-152, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0959-4752\(99\)00025-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0959-4752(99)00025-0)
- Allen, Joseph A., Nale Lehmann-Willenbrock, & Steven G., Rogelberg. (2015). An introduction to the Cambridge handbook of meeting science: Why now? In Joseph, A., Allen, Lehmann-Willenbrock, N., & Rogelberg, S. G. (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of meeting science*. (pp. 21-37). Cambridge University Press.
- Barki, H., & Hartwick, J. (2004). Conceptualizing the construct of interpersonal conflict. *International Journal of Conflict Management, 15*(3), 216-244. <http://doi.org/10.1108/eb022913>

- Benishek, L., E., & Lazzara, H., E. (2019). Teams in a new era: Some considerations and implication. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10 (Article 1006). 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.01006>.
- Burgh, G. (2014). Creative and lateral thinking: Edward de Bono. In Phillips, D., C. (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Educational Theory and Philosophy*. (pp 187-189). SAGE Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483346229.n86>.
- Cambridge Dictionary. (2022). <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/utilize>
- Carroll, N., & Conboy, K. (2020). Normalising the 'new normal': Changing tech-driven work practices under pandemic time pressure. *International Journal of Information Management*, 55, 1-6. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2020.102186>
- Claxton, G., & Carr, M. (2004). A framework for teaching learning: The dynamics of disposition. *Early Years*, 24(1), 87-97. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09575140320001790898>
- Crick, R., D., & Goldspink, C. (2014). Learning dispositions, self-theories and student engagement. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 62(1), 19-3, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00071005.2014.904038>
- D'Angelo Fisher, L. (2006). *Rethink: The story of Edward de Bono in Australia*. Wiley.
- de Bono, E. (1990). *I am right you are wrong: From this to the new renaissance: From rock logic to water logic*. Viking.
- de Bono, E. (1992). *Serious creativity: Using the power of lateral thinking to create new ideas*. HarperCollins Publishers.
- de Bono, E. (1994). *Parallel thinking: From Socratic thinking to de Bono thinking*. Viking.
- de Bono, E. (1997). *Edward de Bono's DATT™: Direct attention thinking tools certified instructor's Manual*. APTT.
- de Bono, E. (1999). *Edward de Bono's Six thinking hats® in detail: Tools for parallel thinking®*. APTT.
- de Bono, E. (2009a). *Edward de Bono's lateral thinking: Fast track to creativity*. de Bono Thinking Systems.
- de Bono, E. (2009b). *Edward de Bono's the power of perception™: Ten thinking tools for making better business decisions*. de Bono Thinking Systems®.
- de Bono, E. (2009c). *Edward de Bono's Six thinking hats®: Tools for parallel thinking® Advanced Course*. de Bono Thinking Systems.
- de Bono, E. (2009d). *Think! before it's too late*. Vermillion.
- de Bono, E. (n.d). Training and facilitation. <https://www.debono.com>

- Devine Media. n.d. *CoRTthinking.com*. Retrieved October 8, 2019 from <http://www.cortthinking.com>
- Dingli, S. (2009). Thinking outside the box: Edward de Bono's lateral thinking. In Rickards, T., Runco, M., A., & Moger, S. (Eds.), *The routledge companion to creativity* (pp. 338-350). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203888841>
- Dudgeon, P. (2001). *Breaking out of the box: The biography of Edward de Bono, the man Who created the concept of lateral thinking*. Headline.
- Fernandez, R., Shah, S., Rosebanman, E., D., Koslowski, S., W., J., Parker S., H., & Grand, J., A. (2018). Developing team cognition: A code for simutation. *Simul Health, 12*(2), 96-103. <https://doi.10.1097/SIH.0000000000000200>
- Flavell, J., H. (1979). Metacognition and cognitive monitoring: A new area of cognitive-development inquiry. *American Psychologist, 34*(10), 906-91. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.34.10.906>
- Glaser, B., G. (1978). *Theoretical sensitivity: Advances in the methodology of grounded theory*. Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B., G. (1992). *Basics of grounded theory analysis: Emergence versus forcing*. Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B., G. (1998). *Doing grounded theory: Issues and discussions*. Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B., G. (2001). *The grounded theory perspective: Conceptualization contrasted with description*. Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B., G. (2002). Conceptualization: On theory and theorizing using grounded theory. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 1*(2), 23-38. <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690200100203>
- Glaser, B., G. (2003). *The grounded theory perspective II: Description's remodeling of grounded theory methodology*. Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B., G. (2013). Introduction: Free style memoing. *Grounded Theory Review, 12*(1), <http://groundedtheoryreview.com/2013/12/22/introduction-free-style-memoing/>
- Glaser, B., G. & Holton, J. (2004). Remodelling grounded theory *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 5*(2), Art. 4. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17169/fqs-5.2.607>
- Glaser, B., G., & Strauss, A., L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Adeline de Gruyer.
- Hartnett, J. (2016). Exploring creative information literary practices via divergent thinking. *The Journal of Literary Library Practices, April 2016*, <https://creativelibrarypractice.org/?s=Hartnett>

- Holton, J., A. (2007). The coding process and its challenges. In Bryant, A., & Charmaz, K. (Eds.), *The sage handbook of grounded theory* (pp 265-289). SAGE Publications.  
<https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781848607941>
- Holton, J. A. (2008). Grounded theory as general research method. *Grounded Theory Review*, 7, (2). [http://groundedtheoryreview.com/category/vol\\_07/2008-06/](http://groundedtheoryreview.com/category/vol_07/2008-06/)
- Holton, J., A., & Walsh, I. (2017) *Classic grounded theory: Applications with qualitative and quantitative data*. Sage Publications.
- Humphrey, S., E., Aime, F., Cushenbery, L., Hill, A., D., & Fairchild, J. (2017). Team conflict dynamics: Implications of a dyadic view of conflict for team performance. *Organizational Behaviour and Human Decision Processes*, 142 (September), 58-70.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2017.08.002>
- Hussain, D. (2015). Meta-cognition in mindfulness: A conceptual analysis. *Psychological Thought*, 8(2), 132-142. <https://doi.org/10.5964/psyct.v8i2.139>
- Kivunja, C. (2015). Using de Bono's six thinking hats model to teach critical thinking and problem solving skills essential for success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy. *Creative Education*, 6(3), 380-391. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ce.2015.63037>
- Kozlowski, S., W., J. (2018). Enhancing the effectiveness of work groups and teams: A reflection. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 13(2), 205-212.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1745697078>
- Maltarich, M., A., Kukenberger, M., Reilly G., & Mathieu. J. (2018). Conflict in teams: Modelling early and late conflict states and the interactive effects of conflict processes. *Group and Organization Management*, 43(1), 6-37. <http://doi.org/10.1177/1059601116681127>
- Merrotsy, P. (2017). *Pedagogy for creative problem solving*. Routledge.
- Perkins, D. (1995). *Outsmarting IQ: The emerging science of learnable intelligence*. Free Press.
- Puccio, G., J., & Cabra, J., F. (2010). In Kaufman, J., C. & Sternberg, R., J. (Eds.), *Organizational creativity: A systems approach* (pp 145-173). The Cambridge Handbook of Creativity. Cambridge University Press.
- Puccio, G., J., Cabra, J., F, Fox, M., & Cahen, H. (2010). Creativity on demand: Historical approaches and future trends. *Artificial Intelligence for Engineering Design, Analysis and Manufacturing*, 24(2), 153-159. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0890060410000028>
- Rico, R., Alcover de la Hera, M., R., & Tabernero, C. (2011). Work team effectiveness, a review of Research from the last decade (1999-2009). *Psychology in Spain*, 15(1), 57-79.  
<http://www.psychologyinspain.com/content/full/2011/15006.pdf>
- Soni, V., D. (2020). Information technologies: Shaping the world Under the pandemic Covid-19. *Journal of Engineering Sciences*, 11(6), 771-776. <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3634361>

- Tannenbaum, S., & Salas, E. (). *Teams that work: The seven drivers of team effectiveness*. Oxford University Press.
- Wiederhold, B., K. (2020). Connecting through technology during Coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic: Avoiding 'Zoom fatigue'. *Cyberpsychology, Behaviour, and Social Networking* 23(7), 437-438. <https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2020.29188.bkw>
- Wildman, J., L., Salas, E., & Scott, C., P., R. (2014). Measuring cognition in teams: A cross-domain review. *Human Factors*, 56(5), 911-941. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0018720813515907>
- Vygotsky, L., S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. In Cole, M., John-Steiner, V., Scriber, S., & Souberman, E. (Eds.). Harvard University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvjf9vz4>

**Declaration of Conflicting Interests:** The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

**Funding:** The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

## **The Behavioural Motivations of Police Officers Engaged in Domestic Abuse Incident Work**

Daniel P. Ash, University of Gloucestershire

### **Abstract**

This paper explores domestic abuse police work by considering the behavioural motivations of officers. It is underpinned by a study using classic grounded theory to examine how officers behave when carrying out police incident work in England. This study identifies that the motivating driver of officers engaged in domestic abuse incident work viz. their main concern, is the continual management of threats to their social identity. Officers seek to understand whether a particular incident's circumstances provide them with an opportunity to behave like an archetypal British police officer. Upholding archetypal identity is their main concern, and officers resolve their main concern by balancing value and effort (the core-category in this study). The main concern and core category, as a theoretical framework, provide a grounded theory through which officer interactions can be understood as a continuum of behaviours, conceptualised as identity retreat and identity deconstruction. Officers alternate between these behaviour types when seeking to uphold their archetypal identity as they manage incident outcomes. This study has implications for police practitioners and policymakers seeking to understand the motivation of officers when engaged in domestic abuse work and its impact on incident outcomes and officer behaviours.

**Keywords:** classic grounded theory, police officers, domestic abuse, archetypal identity

### **Introduction**

Domestic abuse is increasingly being recognised by policymakers as a serious, pervasive, and significant issue that "ruins lives, breaks up families and has a lasting impact [on communities]" (Starmer, 2011). In England and Wales, the UK Government defines domestic abuse as "any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members. . ." (Home Office, 2018). The police have primacy when intervening in domestic abuse incidents. Hence, their ability to effectively tackle domestic abuse has come to the fore in the past decade with policymakers reporting that "[t]he overall police response to victims of domestic abuse is not good enough" (HMIC, 2014, p. 6). In more recent years, this landmark assessment by HMIC has created an "impetus for dramatic changes in the policy structures and recommended practices of police officers" (Robinson et al., 2018, p. 189). Yet, despite changes to police practice, the way that individual police officers carry out incident work continues to be problematic for many police forces, victims and families because officers can sometimes

conduct incident work outside of policy requirements or in ways that are not, ostensibly, victim-focussed (HMIC, 2015, 2017; Myhill, 2019), and there is a lack of theoretically developed work that can satisfactorily explain this problem.

Officer behaviour can affect incident outcomes (Huff, 2021) and social context has a significant impact on officer behaviour and interactions (Shjarback et al., 2018). Therefore, uncovering mechanisms that link social context to behaviours is an important part of understanding incident work. During interactions, officers have significant discretion in the ways that they interact with members of the public. They can often behave in ways that fall outside of policy, legal and organisational expectations (Reiner, 2010), and their decision making can be affected by biases (Nowacki, 2011).

The concept of "police culture" has been offered as one theoretical explanation for these often-biased discretionary practices of police officers (Cockcroft, 2012). However, there is little agreement among scholars as to which conceptual practice, or behavioural or social context factors should be incorporated within any model of police culture (Paoline, 2003). One of the problems with police culture models has been an over-reliance on conceptual frameworks that might be described as rigid, static and deterministic in their outlook (Reuss-Ianni & Ianni, 1983). Such approaches include officer typologies, where officers are believed to display attitudes that gravitate towards particular styles of policing (Brown, 1988; Paoline, 2004). Or, "ideal types" where officers share a specific, fixed set of personality traits, developed when they socialise into the police service, and dependent on the social environment they are policing (Reiner, 2010). These ways of conceptualising officer behaviour are problematic because they are not flexible enough to account for the different policing roles that exist within and between police forces (Chan, 1996) and fail to offer precise mechanisms for explaining officer behaviours in continually changing and varied circumstances.

Attempts have been made to advance the development of theory in domestic abuse policing research beyond that of police culture. For example, Hoyle (1998) suggested that a set of specific factors were influential in officer decision making during police interactions, e.g. the levels of cooperation from the victim and suspect, affecting officer perceptions. However, while this study detailed many empirically derived examples of officer behaviours, the models it produced were restricted to a limited set of officer decisions and specific incident outcomes (such as whether a suspect would be arrested or not) and an abstract set of concepts that centered on working rules, but without further theoretical development as to the underlying mechanism of those rules. Other studies have developed the concept of police behaviour to more flexibly account for different practice behaviours, with scholars arguing that officer behaviour can be thought of as being governed by a set of cultural tools or resources that officers use to manage policing situations (Campeau, 2015; Herbert, 1998). Despite these advances, the behaviour of police officers remains an area of knowledge that is theoretically underdeveloped.

This article proposes an alternative theoretical development of officer behaviour by reporting the outcome of a classic grounded theory (GT) study (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This study of police patrol behaviour is underpinned by research conducted within an English county police force between 2019 and 2020 (Ash, 2021). The study explores officer interactions during domestic abuse incident work. GT studies do not use a pre-defined theoretical framework, derived from existing scholarship, to determine the analytic focus of the study. Hence, this research begins with only a broad research aim:

to understand police behaviour and interactions by observing officers during incident work, and speaking to them about their practice. From this study, social identity (McLean, 2017) has emerged as a central theoretical concept that helps to explain officer practice motivations and behaviours. This article explores that emergent concept and its relationship to police incident work by explaining how social identity affects police behaviour.

## **Method**

### **Data collection**

The site for this study was a county police force in England consisting of a mix of urban and rural policing areas. The data collected and analyzed for this study was video footage from body-worn video (BWV) cameras (n=40) capturing police incident work (median footage length 1 hour), and semi-structured interviews with police patrol officers (n=26) who attend incidents as part of their primary policing role. Data collection and participant recruitment were an open sample and the decision to focus on domestic abuse incidents was partly because the selected police force considered domestic abuse to be their most problematic area of patrol work; it was also the only area of policing that had a mandatory requirement for officers to use BWV cameras when deployed to incidents (therefore maximizing the availability of data for this study).

Ethical approval for this research study was given by the author's university ethics board and all ethical decisions and agreements were made in conjunction with the hosting police force, enshrined in an information sharing agreement and a memorandum of understanding.

### **Body-worn video**

Within the police force being researched, patrol officers attend police incidents and are routinely required to wear personal-issue video cameras—body-worn video (BWV)—whenever they attend domestic abuse incidents. The BWV footage samples selected for this study have been obtained from a police database containing the footage that officers download onto police servers following their attendance at a domestic abuse incident.

Footage covers officer attendance at domestic abuse incidents across urban and rural areas of an English county, covering a range of policing activities that include recording crimes, collecting evidence (including taking witness accounts), arresting suspects and dispute resolution, among others. All incidents follow a similar path of progression; beginning with either single or multiple officers attending an incident scene following a call for service from a member of the public; the information collection phase where officers interact with alleged victims, offenders, and other witnesses or persons present; and then a decision and resolution phase whereby officers decide on an incident outcome and seek to implement that decision.

### **Officer interviews**

Officer interviews were conducted with uniformed police patrol officers on active police duty as an open sample. The officers being interviewed were all on duty at the time of their interviews, which took place after reading and signing research consent

information. Interviews were not audio-recorded; instead, they were recorded in researcher field notes that were finalised immediately after each interview concluded.

An agreement was created between the researcher and the police professional standards department whereby officers were assured that any disclosures made during research interviews of misconduct or unsatisfactory performance, by themselves or another officer, did not need to be disclosed to the professional standards department, and the officers would not be the subject of any disciplinary action resulting from any such disclosures. This agreement was in place to encourage honest responses from officers when questioned about their behaviour and decision making at incidents. The agreement also allowed for the use of BWV footage that covered problematic officer behaviours. During the interviews, officers were asked questions about their incident experiences and understanding of police practice.

### **Analytic procedure**

The classic GT method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was used to collect and analyse data and develop a substantive theory of police behaviour. The method begins with the collection and coding of data that relates to social behaviour that is ostensibly problematic for the research participants (Glaser, 2001). The researcher sought to understand what is the main concern of the participants and how they go about resolving that concern through their practice.

Data are conceptualized using the GT method according to the open, selective and theoretical coding three-step scheme set out by Glaser (1978) using analytic memo-taking to explore theoretical connections between codes and data (Glaser, 1998). This approach supports the development of an explanatory theory of observed practice based on incomplete data about the research subject. Theoretical coding generates a multivariate, abstract theory that helps to explain practice (Glaser, 2005). As such, GT is a departure from other types of research that seek to produce a detailed, thick description or complete coverage of the substantive area being researched (such as ethnography). Instead, the GT method will often model social processes and actions (Breckenridge, 2014), providing probability statements that link theoretical concepts to explain those observations (Glaser, 1978). A GT is a best-fit social theory that helps to explain practice, which is then checked with practitioners and later cross-referenced against the literature to ensure fit and relevance to the practice being observed. If the GT method has been closely followed, then the production of a "successful" theory should be the outcome (Glaser, 1978), and whether a GT has been successful can be understood by examining and using the final product itself—the grounded theory—to explore the practice. As such, the validity and reliability of a GT are not determined by the standard tests used for natural science theories, such as falsifiability, validity and reliability. Instead, as Glaser (1998) explained,

the proof is in the outcome. Does the theory **work** to explain relevant behaviour in the substantive area of the research? Does it have **relevance** to the people in the substantive field? Does the theory **fit** the substantive area? Is it readily **modifiable** as new data emerge? [emphasis in the original]. (p. 17)

A GT is not a deterministic model of behaviour. It provides a rigorously derived theoretical framework in which social behaviours can be understood and, in some cases,

predicted. If this study was to be replicated with police officers operating in a similar occupational environment and circumstances, most would be found to behave in ways that align with what the theory predicts (Glaser, 1978). However, there will always be exceptions because of the probabilistic nature of the proposed model; a GT is a 'best fit' model for use by practitioners to improve their practice (Ash, 2022).

## **The Grounded Theory of Balancing Value and Effort**

### **Overview**

This study identifies the motivating behavioural driver of officers engaged in domestic abuse incident work, which is their need to continually manage threats to their social identity ("upholding archetypal identity" is their main concern).

Social identity is a way for an individual to perceive and assess their personal identity relative to other individuals and social groups they belong to (Tyler & Bladen, 2003). The social identity of officers in this study is an emergent outcome of their socialisation into their occupational role within the British police (as a member of the group of British patrolling police officers). Officer identities are formed through socialisation (via interpersonal contact, media, etc.) into their wider, extra-occupational communities e.g. family, friends, etc. (Brewer & Yuki, 2007; Reiner, 2010). A social identity, shared by many within a group, could be described as archetypal because of the patterns that arise in the interactions of those sharing that identity. The concept of the identity archetype being used in this study was described by Carl Jung in his archetype theory, which offers a framework that explains the behavioural patterns observed during social interactions, including the responses of individuals to the behaviour of others (Jung, 1964, 1968). Archetypes might be described as internalised mental models that people within social groups hold of themselves and others belonging to that group, which are both ideal and imagined—an amalgam identity that is not completely based in reality, which influences how they behave.

For delimiting the discussion in this paper, I have focussed on the nature of occupational socialization in the formation of archetypal identity among police officers (which is the strongest emerging pattern affecting identity formation, within this study).

### **The archetypal officer**

It can be argued that occupational socialisation generates "an identification with a collective, depersonalized [sic] identity based on group membership" (Islam, 2014, p. 1781). The identity of members of a group will be linked to their social role, and group members will continually seek to uphold their identity during social interactions by only behaving in ways that they deem appropriate for that role (Stets & Burke, 2000) that provide positive psychological rewards (Islam, 2014). In this study, officers have developed their sense of social identity by comparing themselves to both the other officers they work with, and also against an imagined ideal of how they think members of the group of patrol officers should behave—an archetypal identity (Jung, 1968). Their social identity is therefore anchored in a belief about what they would be doing at an incident if they were to embody and reify this archetype.

Officers believe that the archetype should only ever police in circumstances that are archetypal. An archetypal incident might be defined as one that allows officers to behave archetypally through social interactions with other incident participants. If an

incident is deemed by officers to be archetypal, then they class this type of incident as high value. Therefore, in pursuit of upholding their archetypal identity, officers will aspire to police at high value incidents because the social interactions during those incidents help to reinforce their social identity (Stets & Burke, 2000). Unfortunately, as will be discussed, most policing incidents cannot be classified as high value/archetypal. Officers, therefore, seek to address this problem of policing low value incidents and the mechanism through which they achieve this is modelled by this grounded theory (balancing value and effort).

### **Upholding archetypal identity (the main concern)**

The realities of incident policing often fall short of any notion of archetypal circumstances, and officers cannot always “pick and choose” their work because they are expected to deal with any incident to which they are deployed. This is problematic for officers because when they are not doing archetypal incident work, their social identity is threatened and they experience an embodied sense of frustration (a form of psychological stress), which they then act to avoid, often in dysfunctional ways (dysfunctional because their behavioural response will often breach police policy or behavioural standards). Their behaviour is being driven by a need to uphold their archetypal identity.

### **The archetypal incident**

In simple terms, for officers, the archetypal incident can be conceptualised as a practice situation that, in their view, is serious enough for them (as an aspiring archetypal officer) to expend any effort to resolve, involving people who are “worthy” of their help. Whether an officer believes that an incident is archetypal is determined by officer perceptions of the circumstances of the incident and the behaviour of the participants. Officers evaluate incident circumstances by considering the seriousness of the criminal offence being reported and the social worth of the participants. Similarly, they consider the behaviour of the participants by determining how cooperative they are with the police. Therefore, incident value (how archetypal the incident is perceived to be) is a function of three concepts: offence seriousness, social worth, and participant cooperation (these concepts are explained in more detail, in subsequent sections here).

### **Offence seriousness**

Officers perceive that an incident involving a “serious” offence is evidence of an archetypal (high value) incident. Incident value increases significantly for officers policing at incidents involving serious crime because this is the work that officers believe an archetypal officer should be doing; this is work that is worthy of their time and effort. By engaging in such work, they are upholding their archetypal identity. Contrariwise, doing non-serious work at incidents is considered by officers to be a threat to their social identity because when dealing with such incidents, they are not behaving congruently with their vision of the archetypal identity.

When arriving at incidents, officers quickly seek to understand whether an incident involves “serious” police work by trying to establish whether the incident circumstances involve those essential components that are set out within policy/legal definitions of serious crime: “When deciding whether something is a “serious” job, I ask questions to try and establish whether there have been issues involving injuries or sexual assaults etcetera” (officer interview 105:32).

As such, officers identify strongly with the rules and regulations surrounding their policing role by linking legal definitions of serious crime to their identity because officers believe that the archetypal officer would only police at incidents that are legally defined as serious.

### **Social worth**

Officers judge the social worth of incident participants with whom they socially interact. This concept of social worth is similar to the concept of social loss identified by Glaser and Strauss (1964), which affects how hospital staff make decisions about rendering help to patients in different dying contexts.

In this present study, an archetypal incident is partly defined according to the social worth of the people involved (the victim and offender). Officers perceive social worth by determining the utility of that person to society. They define the utility of an individual by considering how much of their labor, knowledge, talent, resources, time, and so forth they could potentially contribute to the successful functioning of society (this is not an exhaustive list). If officers determine the level of contribution made by an incident participant to be low, then officers view that individual as having low social worth. Sometimes, indicators of social worth are possible to observe when officers arrive at incidents. If such indicators are not obvious, officers will typically put questions to the participants to establish their social worth. For example, officers will seek information that indicates drug and alcohol dependency, unemployment, mental health problems, poverty, lack of education, being criminal, and so forth.

Officers often link low levels of social worth with the conditions of living that they observe when attending incidents: "If you go to a shitty family on a scuzzy estate, then you kind of expect them to behave in a dysfunctional way, so it's sometimes factored into how we deal with things" (officer interview 115:12).

Personal attributes of the participants, such as their department/bearing, accent, choice of words, their living environment, what they are wearing, what activities they are engaged in, whom their associates are, and so on, provide the clues that form officer perceptions of social worth. The objective social worth of a participant is irrelevant: how participants are treated at an incident depends on officer *perceptions* of social worth.

I remember a colleague saying to me, 'when you go to a job where you have a nice family and some bastard knocking his missus around; always deal with those jobs like you are helping your mum and dad—give them a gold service. (Officer interview 100:40)

Officers believe that a high value incident (one that allows them to uphold their archetypal identity) is one where victim social worth is high and offender social worth is low.

### **Participant cooperation**

The behaviour of incident participants strongly affects whether officers can uphold their archetypal identity. Officers only consider cooperative victims and uncooperative offenders to be archetypal incident participants, and officers can only uphold their archetypal identity by interacting with archetypal participants.

Officers consider cooperation to be related to both the behaviour of participants before the police arrive at an incident, as well as any actions or omissions by participants during an incident: "I know that how the victim presents at a domestic has an influence on the approach we might take. It's right that we make that assessment and that it influences our decision making" (Officer interview 114:38).

Officers judge participant cooperation by considering these key factors:

- Could the incident have been avoided if the participant had made different choices?
- Is the participant being cooperative with police instructions?
- Is the participant calm and behaving rationally?
- Is the participant voluntarily intoxicated?

Victims are deemed uncooperative if officers think they have somehow contributed to their victimhood: "The victim's response frustrates me. Most of them have a choice - they could leave if they chose to, but they don't" (officer interview 106:21).

If the police attend multiple incidents involving the same victim (a repeat victim) and officers believe that the victim could have prevented those incidents by removing themselves from the relationship or situation, then officers will consider that victim to be uncooperative. Contrariwise, if officers believe that a victim has become a victim "through no fault of their own"—in other words, there was nothing the victim could have done to prevent the incident from occurring—then that victim is considered to be cooperative and, therefore, behaving archetypally:

I don't think that victims are all the same. If you get a repeat [incident] and they are always calling us then, I shouldn't really say this, but you just don't feel like helping them because they aren't helping themselves. [officer interview 115:6].

One of the most pervasive factors that impacts officer perceptions of participant cooperation is whether a participant is voluntarily intoxicated through drink or drugs. Officers believe that voluntary intoxication contributes to a participant's inability to prevent an incident from occurring. Frequently, in the first moments of an incident, officers will seek to establish whether an incident participant is intoxicated; establishing their level of cooperation. Officers believe that a high value incident (one that allows them to uphold their archetypal identity) is one where victim cooperation is high and offender cooperation is low.

## **Summary**

Officers only want to police at archetypal incidents. Doing so allows them to uphold their archetypal identity. When incidents are not deemed to be archetypal, either by circumstance or based on the behaviour of the incident participants, then officers are left with a choice. They can police the incident according to police policy and procedure, based on the circumstances that are present (however, doing so might mean expending time and effort at an incident that does not afford them with the opportunity to uphold their archetypal identity); Or, officers can balance value and effort—changing the circumstances of the incident to make it either more archetypal (increasing incident

value), or less effortful. In this study, the majority of officers, most of the time, tried to balance value and effort in an attempt to uphold their archetypal identity, *ceteris paribus*.

Unfortunately, police incidents often have a minimum level of effort that is needed to resolve them, caused by police policy and legislation constraints. This presents as a problem for officers because many incidents that they might consider to be low value (less archetypal) often require relatively high levels of effort to resolve them, and if officers perceive imbalance between levels of incident value and effort they experience frustration with not being able to uphold their archetypal identity, which they then seek to address by balancing value and effort.

### **Balancing value and effort (the core category)**

We now consider the mechanism through which officers seek to relieve their frustration of policing at non-archetypal incidents—balancing value and effort. If we consider the three concepts that determine whether an incident is archetypal and, thus, provides an opportunity for an officer to uphold their archetypal identity—seriousness of offence; social worth; participant cooperation—it is only the cooperation of the participants (*viz.* their behaviour) that officers can practically affect. Regardless of the actions of officers at an incident, they are unable to change the seriousness of what has occurred or the social worth of the participants. These two concepts are fixed for the duration of the incident. Instead, officers must seek to change the behaviour of the participants thereby affecting their cooperation with the police *viz.* the archetypal nature of the incident. Therefore, when officers try to uphold their archetypal identity, they seek to balance value and effort, and this is undertaken by changing the behaviour of the participants, which officers do by altering their own behaviour. How officers behave when balancing value and effort, can be understood as being a binary mechanism.

Officers balance value and effort at incidents according to a two-stage process of “evaluation” and “action.” The “evaluation” stage occurs when officers are determining whether an incident is archetypal (*i.e.*, as they determine the value of the incident by assessing offence seriousness; social worth; participant cooperation). They also evaluate how much effort is needed to resolve the incident. If there is an imbalance (*e.g.* too little value for a high level of effort) then officers’ risk not being able to uphold their archetypal identity because (in their mind) they will be using too much effort at a non-archetypal incident.

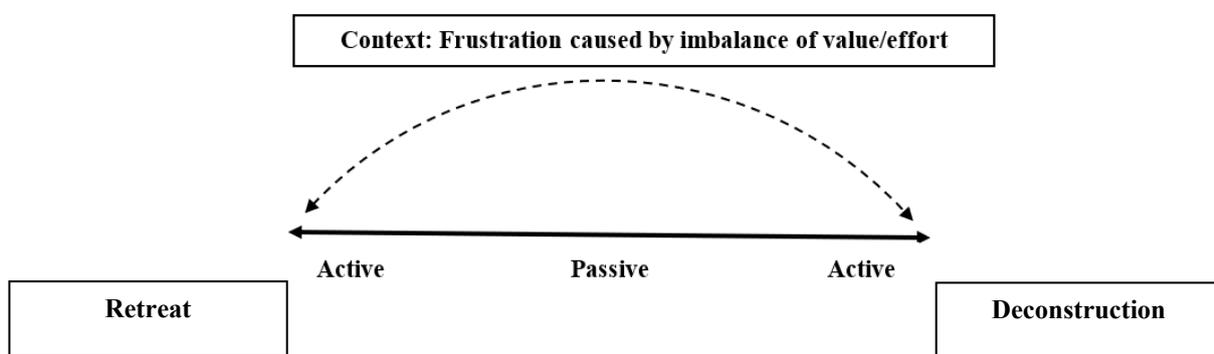
The “action” part of the balancing process is when officers act on their evaluation of incident value and effort. They are acting to balance value and effort in an effort to relieve the frustration they feel when they are unable to uphold their archetypal identity. To balance an incident, officers alter their own behaviour to influence the behaviour (specifically, the cooperation) of the incident participants.

This process of balancing is mostly an unconscious, continuous, iterative cycle of evaluation and action. If an incident is unbalanced, officers will alter their behaviour to elicit changes in the level of cooperation exhibited by the other participants. Despite all of the nuanced and varied ways that officers might be expected to behave at an incident, it is still possible to categorise any observed police behaviour, when officers balance value and effort, into one of two linked theoretical concepts: identity retreat and identity deconstruction. These concepts emerged during theoretical coding and are an adaptation of the concepts binary retreat and binary deconstruction presented by Glaser (1978). As

seen in Figure 1, these concepts are modelled on a linear continuum as two opposite poles on a single straight line, with each pole representing an opposing and opposite category (and style) of behaviour.

Identity retreat occurs whenever an officer behaves in any way that promotes the “retreat” of themselves and other incident participants into the incident-based social roles of “officer”, “victim” and “offender.” Identity deconstruction, as the opposite of identity retreat, is officer behaviour that promotes the “deconstruction” of incident-based social roles so that participants interact on a “human” level by dispensing with official incident requirements and formalities.

**Figure 1.** A diagram representing the ‘balancing’ element of the grounded theory “balancing value and effort,” modelled as a behavioural continuum.



Hence, identity retreat and Identity deconstruction behaviours are how officers balance value and effort. As explained below, these two opposite styles of behaviour will elicit changes in the behaviour of victims and offenders. This behavioural change can cause two potential outcome—either changes in the amount of officer effort needed to resolve the incident; or, changes in the level of cooperation exhibited by the participants. A more active behavioural approach leads to a higher probability that officer behaviour will influence the cooperation of the participants; whereas a subtler, more passive approach tends to cause more subtle changes in participant behaviour. Officers can be observe moving back and forth between these behavioural styles, at differing intensities, as they seek to carefully balance an incident against evolving incident circumstances.

### Identity retreat

Identity retreat includes any set of behaviours that promotes the “retreat” of incident participants into their incident or organisational roles, at that moment. When officers engage in social identity retreat, they often appeared transactional, unsympathetic, and single-minded. When interacting with victims using identity retreat behaviours, officers are usually only focused on getting the police process done rather than listening to what is being said to them. This typically truncates interactions to the bare essentials needed to resolve an incident. Officers using identity retreat often make the victim less likely to disclose significant incident details, personal information or details regarding other unreported incidents. This is because officers in identity retreat seek to control the conversation with a victim and obtain information that allows them to resolve an incident more quickly. Identity retreat creates an atmosphere that is not conducive with the victim feeling that they are important within the process, and it often

does not allow victims to feel safe in disclosing personal details: an officer in social identity retreat is behaving like an official with a process to carry out, not a supportive confidant.

[Officer is completing a witness statement with the domestic abuse victim].

The officer has just had a conversation with a colleague about the “waste of time” involved in this incident—they perceive that the victim and offender are routinely calling the police but never following through on a complaint of crime].

Victim receives a phone call on their cell phone.

Officer sounds irritated and shuffles papers,

“can you turn that [cell phone] off for the time being now, because it is quite distracting. We need to crack on.” (BWV footage 203:33)

When officers are in identity retreat, they often jargonize to obfuscate, and patronize or condescend. From an incident resolution perspective, identity retreat is an efficient way to service practice and process requirements.

Officers in identity retreat routinely use the collection of personal information from participants, known among officers in this study as “taking details,” a behavioural device that they sometimes utilize to interrupt and distract a participant from either elaborating on incident circumstances or from providing a long and detailed personal history. In doing so, an officer can delimit an incident to the bare essentials:

Officer 1 is “taking details.”

The victim continues to look at the injuries on her arms and is crying. The victim is continuing to talk to the officer about her relationship with her son and appears distressed.

Officer 1 interrupts the victim mid-flow: “what’s your date of birth?” (BWV footage 214:20)

When officers disrupt a victim’s account, a victim’s affective state can often be observed to gradually change from emotional to that of low emotional arousal as they respond to questions. This means that identity retreat behaviours can change the nature of interaction from emotionally charged to an efficient, unemotional exchange of essential information. An officer in identity retreat will often use leading questions or comments, to push a victim towards a specific incident outcome, reducing the amount of effort needed to resolve the incident. This approach occurs when incidents are viewed by officers as being low value: “[Before the victim has given an account of what has happened, one of the officers interrupts her, suggesting how the incident might be resolved]: ‘if it was just a verbal altercation, then that’s fine.’” (BWV footage 201:20)

For victims, the chance of them cooperating diminishes because of identity retreat usage. This reduces the likelihood that they will provide a detailed account of what has happened, or pursue a criminal case: they are being actively discouraged from doing so through the use of identity retreat behaviours. By using identity retreat with a victim, an

officer is balancing value and effort by reducing the level of effort they must use to resolve the incident.

Identity retreat is also used by officers when they were dealing with offenders. In doing so, officers will often become authoritarian, punctilious and officious. This typically leads to verbal and physical conflict. Therefore, identity retreat makes it more likely that an offender will react and become less cooperative because officers, through identity retreat, will often appear to be unyielding and antagonistic:

Officer 1 says to the offender: "Unfortunately, you don't dictate to the police how this goes; we dictate to you. This is how it's going to be . . . please don't talk over me!" (BWV footage 202:105).

In doing so, officers can provoke a response from the suspect, which makes confrontation and arrest more likely:

Officer 1 seems agitated—determined to wind up the offender who is refusing the officer entry into a dwelling house.

Officer 1 [shouting]: Hello. Can you let us in, please.

Female offender: I can't open the door.

Officer 1: Well there's a key somewhere, I know there is, cause I heard you lock it and told us to fuck off [very assertive voice]. So either we come in through the window or you get the key and unlock it.

Female offender: You'll have to come through the window. (BWV footage 209:5)

Identity retreat with offenders increases the level of effort required to resolve an incident by eliciting low offender cooperation - often triggering incident activities that require more effort to complete, such as violent arrests: "Things were a bit different if you got there and the offender, usually the man, was up for a scrap [ . . . ] it wouldn't take much for him to get locked up" (Officer interview 101:62). The use of Identity retreat also raises incident value because officers are creating a situation where the offender becomes uncooperative and, therefore, more archetypal.

### **Identity deconstruction**

Identity deconstruction is behaviour that promotes the "deconstruction" of incident participant roles; the removal of the interpersonal barriers that identity roles can create. Deconstruction is where incident participants interact on a human level rather than as an officer, victim or offender. When police officers engage in identity deconstruction, they often appear empathetic, friendly, supportive or even permissive. With victims, officers often dispense with procedure or process and will just sit and listen, which encourages victims to provide a more comprehensive account. This will often make it more likely that a victim will disclose that they have been a victim of crime, provide a witness statement and agree to attend court.

Female victim is talking to officer 1 [The officers are trying to encourage the victim to make a complaint].

Female victim [staring at officer 1 with a look of suspicion]: "No, you just don't look like you trust me. I don't want to speak to you, sorry".

Officer 1: "That's fine. You can speak to my colleague if you like" [friendly tone]. (BWV footage 213:83)

When officers use identity deconstruction with victims they are encouraging the victim to be more cooperative, thus, to behave more archetypally, which significantly increases incident value.

When identity deconstruction is used with offenders, officers will often appear friendly, understanding and respectful, giving wide latitude to an offender who is argumentative or aggressive:

"Female offender and female 2 are now arguing and the female offender is passive-aggressive and swearing. Officer 2 tries to calm things down and still has a happy, light, conciliatory tone." (BWV footage 209:77)

Identity deconstruction is often used by officers to reduce tensions with an offender when they first arrive at an incident. If an offender believes that police involvement might lead to their arrest, this will often create a tense incident atmosphere and volatile and unpredictable offender behaviours. If officers are seeking to reduce this type of offender behaviour, they use identity deconstruction. Officers will typically communicate with an offender in a friendly or jocular way to indicate that they are not at risk of arrest or sanction: "Come out, mate. There has been some sort of domestic and you're both making allegations. What I don't want to do is start having a fight with you. So, come out and have a chat with us" (BWV footage 213: 33).

There are occasions during incidents when officers have already decided on an incident outcome that does not include arresting the offender because they are trying to reduce the effort they need to use to resolve an ostensibly low value incident, yet the offender is so aggressive or argumentative that an arrest becomes almost inevitable (leading to unplanned and unwanted imbalance between incident value and effort). In these instances, officers can be observed using active and purposeful identity deconstruction behaviours, to the extreme, as they try to prevent the arrest from occurring.

When using identity deconstruction with offenders, an officer is seeking to reduce the level of effort required to resolve an incident by increasing the cooperation of the offender, as part of their attempt to balance value and effort.

## **Discussion**

In line with the classic grounded theory method, this discussion is written with reference to existing scholarship, which was introduced into the study through the constant comparison process to help check for fit and relevance of the emergent grounded theory (Glaser, 1998). In this article, I have explained the emergence of the grounded theory of balancing value and effort. At the core of this theory is the notion of an archetypal, social identity, shared among officers, which drives their behavioural choices during practice situations. Their behaviour is aimed at influencing the behaviour of the victim and offender. Officers are trying to make these participants behave like

archetypal victims and offenders because social interaction with such archetypes allows officers to reify their own archetypal identity.

It is not difficult to understand how such a shared identity might have emerged among officers if we consider that police officers typically work within clearly defined groups such as within a police team, within a specific police station, and as part of a wider policing organization and community. Officers are therefore members of several layered and interconnected occupational groups, and are socialised into these groups. They take on the history, symbols and icons of these groups as their own, as they identify themselves as British police officers (Mawby, 2002). An officer's sense of identity is, in part, formed as they compare themselves and their values to the other members of the groups to which they belong (Tajfel, 1978; Tyler & Bladen, 2003). Officers alter their behaviour to align with their group memberships (Ashford & Mael, 1989). Upholding archetypal identity can be considered as a central, moderating concept that influences how individuals behave as they try and "fit in" as a member of a particular social group. When seeking to maintain one's membership of a social group, behaviour patterns emerge among group members, mediated by social identity (Brewer & Yuki, 2007), with identity and social interaction being dialectically linked through an iterative, circular process that combines evaluation of circumstances and subsequent social action to manage social identity threats (Breakwell, 1986).

This proposed grounded theory may explain why, within other police behaviour studies, there is so much variation observed between officer behaviours or attitudes, while at the same time, broader behavioural patterns, between officers in different places and times, continue to emerge: there are socially derived, archetypal identities that underpin and drive the generation of behavioural patterns among similar group members. When motivated by social identity, behaviour is being focused towards a common goal of upholding that identity. Hence, patterns inevitably emerge even when incident circumstances, time and place all differ. We might, therefore, consider the act of upholding archetypal identity as being a normative influence on individual behaviour when people view themselves as belonging to a specific social group.

The stability of a socially derived archetypal identity is strengthened by the fact that it is culturally derived (Reicher, 2004), constituted from imagined and ideal identity elements. Being idealized, the constructed archetype is an amalgam of traditional-historical, symbolic and broader cultural components (Roesler, 2012), constituted and sustained by tradition and nostalgia as officers are socialised into the police service (Loader & Mulcahy, 2003).

### **Identity retreat and identity deconstruction as indicators of officer motivation**

The conceptual categories of interaction styles—identity retreat and identity deconstruction—may, on the surface, appear to be a way of categorising behaviour, but they are perhaps more usefully thought of as a method of categorising motivation: a conceptualization of the main concern. Viewed in this way, we are freed from the problem that is identified in so many police behaviour studies, where individual officer behaviours become difficult to categorise because they do not conform to some fixed model linking behaviour directly with circumstance or social structure. Instead, if we argue that most officer behaviours, within incident social structures and defined through interactions, are mediated by officer attempts to address their main concern, then the social identity associated with a particular policing role, place or time could be identified

and then used to understand observed behaviour i.e. if we can establish the nature of the archetype driving behaviour in any particular population then the grounded theory of balancing value and effort could help us to better understand practice in that context.

The proposed grounded theory in this paper is not monolithic. While social identities are generally resistant to change, the theory indicates that depending on the groups an officer belongs to, their archetypal social identity will likely differ. For example, patrol officers in different geographical locations, across different times and countries are likely to have different archetypal identities. Likewise, detectives, police supervisors and other roles are all likely to have their own different archetypal identities. Therefore, existing police studies that have found evidence of ideal officer types, officer typologies, and “working personalities” are all still consistent with the grounded theory being proposed in this paper. By conceptualising a specific archetypal identity-based theory for explaining how officers evaluate incidents and adapt their behaviour to alter incident outcomes when upholding their archetypal identity, we are provided with a continuum of observable behaviours that can be more simply categorised as one of two types. This binary continuum approach therefore offers a theoretical way of understanding officer behaviour without relying on a simple cause and effect static model and hypothesis that links situational determinants and incident outcomes.

### Conclusion

This study has presented a grounded theory that could be used to model police officer behaviour by considering social archetypal identity as a mediating component of the complex social practice environment. A social identity approach predicts changes in officer behaviour according to the needs of identity threat management whenever officers feel that their identity is being challenged when policing in non-archetypal circumstances. Discovering the archetypal identities of officers in other roles or places, and exploring their impact on behaviour using this grounded theory would likely be a fruitful area of future research.

### References

- Alpert, G. P., & Dunham, R. G. (2004). *Understanding police use of force: Officers, suspects, and reciprocity*. Cambridge University Press.
- Ash, D. P. (2021). *Balancing value and effort: a classic grounded theory of frontline police practice* (Doctoral dissertation, Keele University).  
<https://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?uin=uk.bl.ethos.829531>
- Ash, D. P. (2022). The Importance of Epistemology When Defending a Doctoral Thesis: The Research Philosophical Nature of Classic Grounded Theory. *Grounded Theory Review: An International Journal*, 21(1). <https://groundedtheoryreview.com>
- Breckenridge, J. (2014). Doing classic grounded theory: The data analysis process. In *SAGE Research Methods Cases*.  
<https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/978144627305014527673>
- Breakwell, G. M. (1986). *Coping with threatened identities*. Psychology Press.

- Brewer, M. B., & Yuki, M. (2007). Culture and social identity. In Kitayama, S., & Cohen, D. (Eds.), *Handbook of cultural psychology* (pp. 307-322). The Guilford Press.
- Brown, M. (1988). *Working on the street: Police discretion and the dilemmas of reform*. Russell Sage Foundation.
- Campeau, H. (2015). 'Police culture' at work: Making sense of police oversight. *British journal of criminology*, 55(4), 669-687. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azu093>
- Cockcroft, T. (2012). *Police culture: Themes and concepts*. Routledge.
- Dawson, M., & Hotton, T. (2014). Police charging practices for incidents of intimate partner violence in Canada. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 51(5), 655-683. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022427814523787>
- Demirkol, I. C., & Nalla, M. K. (2020). Police culture: An empirical appraisal of the phenomenon. *Criminology & Criminal Justice*, 20(3), 319-338. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1748895818823832>
- Glaser, B. (1978). *Theoretical sensitivity: Advances in the methodology of grounded theory*. Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B. (1998). *Doing grounded theory: Issues and discussions*. Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B. (2003). *The grounded theory perspective II: Description's remodeling of grounded theory methodology*. Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B. (2005). *The grounded theory perspective III: Theoretical coding*. Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B.G., & Strauss, A. L., 1964. The social loss of dying patients. *The American Journal of Nursing*, 64(6), pp.119-121.
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L., (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Aldine Transaction.
- Gonzalez, A. E. J., Cordoza, M. L., & Chapman, M. G. (1976). The just world hypothesis and the attribution of agency to a victim. *The Greek Review of Social Research*, 26(26-27), 157. <https://doi.org/10.12681/grsr.220>
- Herbert, S. (1998). Police subculture reconsidered. *Criminology*, 36(2), 343-370. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-9125.1998.tb01251.x>
- HMIC. (2014) Everyone's business: Improving the police response to domestic abuse. <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/improving-the-police-response-to-domestic-abuse.pdf>
- HMIC. (2015). Increasingly everyone's business: a progress report on the police response to domestic abuse. <http://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/wp-content/uploads/increasingly-everyones-business-domestic-abuseprogress-report.pdf>
- HMICFRS. (2017). State of policing: The annual assessment of policing in England and Wales 2016. Part 2: Our inspections.

- <https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmic/publications/state-of-policing-the-annual-assessmentof-policing-in-england-and-wales-2015/>
- Hoyle, C. (1998). *Negotiating domestic violence: Police, criminal justice, and victims*. Oxford University Press.
- Huff, J. (2021). Understanding police decisions to arrest: The impact of situational, officer, and neighborhood characteristics on police discretion. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 75. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2021.101829>
- Home Office. (2018). New definition of domestic violence. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-definition-of-domestic-violence>
- Islam, G. (2014). Social identity theory. *Journal of personality and Social Psychology*, 67, 741-763. <https://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/psp>
- Jonathan-Zamir, T., Mastrofski, S. D., & Moyal, S. (2015). Measuring procedural justice in police-citizen encounters, *Justice Quarterly*, 32(5), 845-871. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07418825.2013.845677>
- Jung, C. G. (1964). *Approaching the unconscious*. In C. Jung & M. L. Franz (Eds.), *Man and his symbols* (pp. 18-104). Aldus.
- Jung, C. G. (1968). *The archetypes and the collective unconscious* (R. Hull, Trans.) (2nd ed.). Princeton University Press.
- Kochel, T. R., Wilson, D. B., & Mastrofski, S. D. (2011). Effect of suspect race on officers' arrest decisions. *Criminology: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 49(2), 473-512. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-9125.2011.00230.x>
- Lerner, M.J., & Simmons, C. H. (1966). Observer's reaction to the "innocent victim": Compassion or rejection? *Journal of Personality and social Psychology*, 4(2), 203. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0023562>
- Loader, I., & Mulcahy, A. (2003). *Policing and the condition of England: memory, politics and culture*. Oxford University Press.
- Loftus, B. (2009). *Police culture in a changing world*. Oxford University Press.
- Manning, P. K. (2005) 'The study of policing', *Police Quarterly*, 8(1), pp. 23-43. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098611104267325>
- Marier, C. J., & Moule, R. K. (2019). Feeling blue: Officer perceptions of public antipathy predict police occupational norms. *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, 44(5), 836-857. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12103-018-9459-1>
- Mastrofski, S. D. (2004). Controlling street-level police discretion. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 593(1), 100-118. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716203262584>
- Mawby, R. C. (2002). *Policing images: Policing, communication and legitimacy*. Willan.
- Mawby, R. I., & Walklate, S. (1994). *Critical victimology: international perspectives*. Sage Publications.

- McLean, K. (2017). Ethnic identity, procedural justice, and offending: Does procedural justice work the same for everyone? *Crime & Delinquency*, 63(10), 1314–1336. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011128715620429>
- Myhill, A. (2019). Renegotiating domestic violence: Police attitudes and decisions concerning arrest. *Policing and society*, 29(1), 52–68.
- Nowacki, J. S. (2015). Organizational-level police discretion: An application for police use of lethal force. *Crime & Delinquency*, 61(5), 643–668. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011128711421857>
- O’Neill, M., & Singh, A. (2007), ‘Introduction’, in M. O’Neill, M. Marks and A. Singh (Eds.), *Police occupational culture: New debates and directions*. Elsevier.
- Paoline III, E. A. (2003) Taking stock: Toward a richer understanding of police culture. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 31(3), 199–214. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0047-2352\(03\)00002-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0047-2352(03)00002-3)
- Paoline, E. A., III, & Terrill, W. (2014). Encyclopedia of criminology and criminal justice.
- Paoline III, E. A., & Gau, J. M. (2018). Police occupational culture: Testing the monolithic model. *Justice quarterly*, 35(4), 670–698. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07418825.2017.1335764>
- Pickett, J., & Nix, J. (2019). Demeanor and police culture. *Policing: An International Journal*, 42(4), 537–555. <https://doi.org/10.1108/PIJPSM-09-2018-0133>
- Pietenpol, A. M., Morgan, M. A., Wright, J. P., Almosaed, N. F., Moghrabi, S. S., & Bashatah, F. S. (2018). The enforcement of crime and virtue: Predictors of police and Mutaween encounters in a Saudi Arabian sample of youth. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 59, 110–121. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2018.05.007>
- Reicher, S. (2004). The context of social identity: Domination, resistance, and change. *Political psychology*, 25(6), 921–945. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9221.2004.00403.x>
- Reiner, R. (2010). *The politics of the police*. Oxford University Press.
- Reuss-Ianni, E., & Ianni, F. (1983). Street cops and management cops: The two cultures of policing. *Control in the police organization*, 251–274. MIT Press.
- Robinson, A. L., Pinchevsky, G. M., & Guthrie, J. A. (2018). A small constellation: Risk factors informing police perceptions of domestic abuse. *Policing and society*, 28(2), 189–204.
- Roesler, C. (2012). Are archetypes transmitted more by culture than biology? Questions arising from conceptualizations of the archetype. *Journal of Analytical Psychology*, 57(2), 223–246. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5922.2011.01963.x>
- Schulenberg, J. L. (2015). Moving beyond arrest and reconceptualizing police discretion: an investigation into the factors affecting conversation, assistance, and criminal charges, *Police Quarterly*, 18(3), 244–271. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098611115577144>

- Shjarback, J. A., Nix, J., & Wolfe, S. E. (2018). The ecological structuring of police officers' perceptions of citizen cooperation. *Crime & Delinquency*, 64(9), 1143–1170. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011128717743779>
- Skolnick, J. H. (1966). *Justice without trial: A sociological study of law enforcement*. John Wiley and Sons, Inc.
- Stets, J.E., & Burke, P.J., 2000. Identity theory and social identity theory. *Social psychology quarterly*, 63(3), pp.224-237.
- Tajfel, H. E. (1978). *Differentiation between social groups: Studies in the social psychology of intergroup relations*. Academic Press.
- Tyler, T. R., & Blader, S. L. (2003). The group engagement model: Procedural justice, social identity, and cooperative behaviour. *Personality and social psychology review*, 7(4), 349-361. [https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327957PSPR0704\\_07](https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327957PSPR0704_07)
- Weller, M., Hope, L., & Sheridan, L. (2013). 'Police and public perceptions of stalking: The role of prior victim-offender relationship', *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 28(2), pp. 320–339. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260512454718>
- Westley, W. A. (1970). *Violence and the Police*, MIT press.
- Young, M. (1991). *An inside job: Policing and police culture in Britain*, Oxford University Press.

## **Experiencing Grounded Theory: A Review**

Kari Allen-Hammer, Institute for Research and Theory Methodologies

Lisa Goldberg, Institute for Research and Theory Methodologies, Saybrook  
University

Elizabeth Kellogg, Institute for Research and Theory Methodologies, Quincy College,  
Lesley University

Kelisa Underwood, Institute for Research and Theory Methodologies, Middle Georgia  
State University

Kara L. Vander Linden, Institute for Research and Theory Methodologies, Saybrook  
University

### **Abstract**

*Experiencing Grounded Theory* takes the reader on an enjoyable, easy-to-read journey through Simmons's 55 years of learning, doing, mentoring, teaching, and applying grounded theory. It is an engaging book written for beginner to experienced grounded theorists. It is laid out in a well-organized fashion, beginning with Simmons's introduction to grounded theory and progressing through his years of teaching the methodology. This article provides a quick overview of each chapter. While there are many books written on grounded theory, few explain the method as clearly as this one. It is a recommended read for both novice and practicing grounded theorists.

**Keywords:** classic grounded theory, grounded action, grounded therapy

*Experiencing Grounded Theory* is a book 55 years in the making. It presents Dr. Odis Simmons's journey of learning, doing, mentoring, teaching, and applying grounded theory from his first introduction to the methodology in 1967 to his experiences learning the methodology directly from Drs. Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss to his experience teaching grounded theory for over 50 years. The book also details Simmons's own

application of grounded theory in grounded action and grounded therapy. The following review will summarize each chapter and how readers may benefit from the book.

This book begins with an unorthodox approach. Simmons placed a glossary of terms preceding the first chapter rather than at the end of the book. Grounded theory has its own unique terminology, and Simmons expressed that familiarity with the terminology would aid the reader in understanding the book and methodology.

In chapter one, "My Discovery of Grounded Theory," Simmons beckoned readers into *Experiencing Grounded Theory* with his first-hand account of discovering grounded theory as an undergraduate student. Simmons wrote as a close confidant, guiding the reader through his historical journey of finding and becoming an early pupil of Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in the beginning days of grounded theory's development.

Simmons began the second chapter, "Is Grounded Theory the Methodology for You?" by situating grounded theory within the context of existing research methodologies. He presented grounded theory as a bridge for the gap between research and theory generation. Next, Simmons explored various research designs, breaking them down based on characteristics, such as inductive versus deductive properties and descriptive versus theoretical purposes. Simmons also explained the differences between classic grounded theory and constructivist grounded theory, arguing that the constructivist approach falls prey to preconception. Finally, Simmons offered an in-depth analysis of how classic grounded theory can be positioned within the theoretical schools of constructivism and objectivism. He determined that, while classic grounded theory incorporates necessary components from both and is an unparalleled methodology for theory generation, it is conceptual and may be used by researchers of any philosophical position. This chapter is informative but not instructive; it serves mainly to present classic grounded theory as an excellent choice for theory generation and clear up common misconceptions about the methodology.

In chapter three, "Dealing with Committees: Special Considerations for Classic Grounded Theory Students," Simmons identified common challenges facing students as they select and work with their dissertation or thesis committees. Simmons began this chapter by providing guidance about how to select committee members. This guidance applies to any students who are allowed to select their own committee members. He then added more specific advice on selecting committee members for a classic grounded theory study. Next, he discussed the characteristics of committee members that may support or hinder a student using the grounded theory method. Simmons also provided tips for working with committees and overcoming challenges. This chapter is directed at students preparing for their dissertation or thesis. While applicable to students forming a dissertation or thesis committee for a grounded theory study, many of the tips provided may help students select and work with their committee regardless of the methodology they have chosen. Simmons clarified that most of his experience has been with US institutions and may not reflect the norms in other countries.

In chapter four, "Learning and Doing Grounded Theory," Simmons offered the basic definitions and skills needed for learning grounded theory. This chapter is the longest and

most in-depth chapter in the book. It offers excellent opportunities for practicing what Simmons is teaching; this is the doing part of the learning. In the chapter, Simmons described the steps one should take to conduct a grounded theory study. The first step is preparing for the study, which includes developing theoretical sensitivity, suspending preconceptions, and learning to conceptualize. The second step is data collection, including interviewing, observing, using literature as data, and documenting your data. The next step is substantive coding, which involves conceptualizing and discovering the core variable/category. Memoing is the fourth step. The fifth step is theoretical coding and the creation of a theoretical outline. The final step is the theoretical write-up. It should be noted that steps 2-6 are cyclical in nature, such that one may need to add more data, code it, and analyze it. This chapter is a must-read for anyone who wants an easy-to-read overview of each step of conducting a grounded theory study and practice activities designed to build the skill needed by a grounded theorist.

In chapter five, "Grounded Action," Simmons introduced the reader to grounded action as an extension of grounded theory. Simmons developed the grounded action method after a classic grounded theory workshop participant lamented, "Glaser and Strauss said that grounded theories would give you a theoretical foothold for action, but they didn't say how to do it!" (p. 162). In response, Simmons used the tools of grounded theory to develop the process of grounded action that has an "*earned* connection" (p. 162) to the explanatory theory. This iterative process operationalizes the grounded theory and works toward an action plan that is assessed and modified as the operational theory is acted upon. Simmons illustrated grounded action by describing an unsuccessful anger management program that he modified into a successful program using the grounded action method. In describing how he transformed that program, he likewise illustrated grounded action as a particularly useful tool for program development and evaluation and as a natural next step for grounded theorists.

In chapter six, "Grounded Therapy," Simmons shared his discovery that "grounded theory is a useful model for guiding a grounded therapeutic process" (p.226). He made a convincing proposal by addressing issues and problems he discovered and experienced during his research and practice as a psychotherapist. The issues and problems Simmons addressed fall into three categories within counseling and therapy: a) preconception, b) the therapeutic culture, and c) the therapeutic relationship. In the subsequent sections of this chapter, Simmons expertly laid the framework for doing grounded therapy and provided ample case studies as examples. Presenting a practical and original approach to the therapeutic process, he contended that assuming a "grounded" approach in therapy ensures that therapists do therapy "with" rather than "on" or "to" a client, positioning the reader for a critical review of status quo therapy. Citing his research and experience as a therapist, Simmons argued for using grounded theory procedures in therapy because this results in significantly improved client outcomes due to maximized grounding. Overall, Simmons presented an enlightening approach to grounded therapy, adding significant value for those serving clients in the therapeutic fields while highlighting the practical value of applied grounded theory.

In chapter seven, "Teaching Grounded Theory," Simmons offered a succinct review of the grounded theory method with valuable teaching points. Simmons repeatedly stated

that anyone can conduct a grounded theory study, and his conversational tone reinforces this idea. In this chapter, Simmons reviewed the steps involved in conducting a grounded theory study and offered insights from his 50-plus years of experience teaching it. His sharing of these steps and his own experience make this chapter useful to both grounded theory students and teachers.

While this book does not replace reading the original book on grounded theory by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and the subsequent books by Glaser (1978, 1992, 1998, 2002), *Experiencing Grounded Theory* is the perfect place to start one's introduction to grounded theory. Glaser (2001) wrote, "My books are a bit hard to read as they are dense and too long for everyday use" (p. 3). However, Simmons's book is just the opposite. It is an engaging book written for beginner-to-experienced grounded theorists, and it is laid out in a well-organized fashion. As is Simmons's way, he wrote the book in a conversational manner, which makes reading this book very easy. At times, students and faculty may be surprised by his informal tone. Ultimately, however, Simmons's laid-back, conversational style makes the book readable and accessible. This book is sure to become a part of the essential reading list for novice and practicing grounded theorists. This team of authors strongly recommends this book as a great introduction to grounded theory, grounded action, and grounded therapy.

### References

- Glaser, B. G. (1978). *Theoretical sensitivity: Advances in the methodology of grounded theory*. Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B. G. (1992). *Basics of grounded theory analysis*. Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B. G. (1998). *Doing grounded theory: Issues and discussions*. Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B. G. (2001). *The grounded theory perspective: Conceptualization contrasted with description*. Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B. G. (2002). Conceptualization: On theory and theorizing using grounded theory. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 1(2), 23–38.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690200100203>
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Aldine.
- Simmons, O. E. (2022). *Experiencing grounded theory: A comprehensive guide to learning, doing, mentoring, teaching, and applying grounded theory*. BrownWalker Press.

## About the Authors

**Barry Chametzky** earned his Ph.D. in Education from Northcentral University with specializations in educational technology, e-learning, and classic grounded theory. He holds graduate degrees in Music (Conservatory of Music at Brooklyn College, City University of New York), French (Middlebury College), and Foreign Language education (University of Pittsburgh). Dr. Chametzky is an active researcher in the fields of andragogy, e-learning, anxiety and online foreign language acquisition, and classic grounded theory with numerous peer-reviewed publications and book chapters to his credit. He is also one of the reviewers and the copyeditor for the *Grounded Theory Review*, an international peer-reviewed journal dedicated to classic grounded theory. He is a Grounded Theory Institute Fellow who facilitates online learning with master's and doctoral students in various fields of education, and serves as a dissertation chairperson to a number of candidates.

**Alan Kim-Lok Oh**, MCounsPsy, MBA, KB, PA is a consultant psychologist, and clinician at a private hospital. He has a practice that provides consultation, behavioral health screening and assessment, counseling and psychotherapy services to adults, elders, adolescents and children in the following formats - individual, group, family, couple or a combination of these formats based on patient and client needs. Alan is also a registered counsellor in Malaysia. Together with his wife and daughter, Alan lives in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah.

**Alros (Ali) Joan Miriam Sumner**, PhD, is a Senior Consultant with BRAINPOWA, a boutique consultancy that works with Australian government agencies, for-profit and not-profit organisations and social enterprises, to help grow their thinking power to create better futures for themselves, their organisations and communities. My academic interests and on-going praxis within Australian organisations, focus on the cognitive ability of organisational leaders and work teams to handle the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, within the context of organisations being complex adaptive systems. My working life commenced with teaching, followed by work in children's services, community development and public services. After gaining a Master's Degree in Leadership and Management at Curtin University, in 2021 I gained a PhD, also at Curtin. In addition to my PhD research I have conducted classic grounded theory research exploring what happens when business entrepreneurs utilise lateral thinking tools and processes.

**Peter Sun**, MSW, is a doctoral candidate at the Brown School in Washington University in St. Louis. His research focuses on the productive engagement of older adults in rural contexts.

**Dr. Kara Vander Linden** is an interdisciplinary researcher, educator, mentor, and lifelong learner. She is the founder and president of the Institute for Research and Theory Methodologies and the Director of the Glaser Center for Grounded Theory. Dr. Kara Vander Linden also teaches research and supervises classic grounded theory dissertations at Saybrook University. She is a peer reviewer for the *Grounded Theory Review*, *BMC Nursing*, and *Nursing Open*. Dr. Vander Linden earned a doctorate in education from Fielding Graduate University (Santa Barbara, CA) with specializations in grounded theory, grounded action, and higher education leadership. She earned a master's in special education from the University of North Carolina (Charlotte, NC) and a Bachelor of Arts in mathematics from Queens University (Charlotte, NC). She has specialized training in working with learners with dyslexia. Email: [kvanderlinden@mentoringresearchers.org](mailto:kvanderlinden@mentoringresearchers.org)

**Daniel P. Ash** CertHum, DipHe, BSc (Hons), DCrim, AMIMA, FHEA; the School of Natural and Social Sciences, The University of Gloucestershire. Daniel Ash is a British criminologist, senior lecturer and research excellence framework lead for sociology at the University of Gloucestershire. Daniel is also an associate professor of practice at the University of East London. He specializes in the development and application of theory in policing, novel research methods (including the use of pure mathematics and artificial intelligence in criminology), and policing innovation (in its broadest sense). He was formerly a British police officer, serving for twenty years in a variety of multi-agency operational contexts.

**Alvita Nathaniel**, PhD, is the Editor of *The Grounded Theory Review*, an open access online journal focusing solely on classic grounded theory. Dr. Nathaniel is Professor Emerita and past department chair at West Virginia University School of Nursing. Mentored by Barney Glaser, Nathaniel continues with grounded theory initiatives. In addition to her grounded theory publications, she co-authored the nursing textbook, *Ethics & Issues in Contemporary Nursing*, which is now approaching its 6<sup>th</sup> edition. Writing the ethics textbook led to her grounded theory research on moral reckoning, which she continues to pursue along with additional scholarship focusing on the two main foci of classic grounded theory and nursing ethics. She is Fellow of the Grounded Theory Institute, Fellow of the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners, and Fellow of the West Virginia University Academy of Excellence in Teaching and Learning. Email: [anathaniel@hsc.wvu.edu](mailto:anathaniel@hsc.wvu.edu)

**Kari Allen-Hammer**, Ph.D. serves as the Advocacy Director for LiveLifeResources, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization in the United States. Additionally, she provides wellness and performance coaching in private practice, in West Sacramento, California and through tele-health services.

**Elizabeth Kellogg**, PhD, received her doctorate in Psychology with a specialization in Consciousness, Spirituality, and Integrated Health from Saybrook University. She is a clinician, DEI facilitator, and an adjunct professor in the Expressive Arts Therapy graduate program at Lesley University. Research interests include embodied cognition and justice, equity and inclusion. Email: [ekellog2@lesley.edu](mailto:ekellog2@lesley.edu)

**Dr. Lisa Goldberg** has taught for over 30 years in both the public school and as adjunct professor. She graduated from Fielding Graduate School in 2010 with a doctorate in Educational Leadership. Using Classic Grounded Theory as her research methodology, Dr. Goldberg discovered that value-based decision-making is one of the key concepts in moving on and making voluntary change in one's life. Her contribution to the field has led others to use concepts from her dissertation. Currently, Dr. Goldberg works as adjunct professor at Saybrook University where she guides and teaches dissertation students. Email: [lisakanga1@gmail.com](mailto:lisakanga1@gmail.com).

**Dr. Kelisa Underwood** received her Master of Social Work from the University of Southern California in 2013. She recently completed her PhD at Saybrook University in Psychology, with a focus on transformative social change. She continues to contribute to the social sciences through her theoretical research and publications on overcoming systemic oppression. Dr. Underwood holds licensure in the states of Georgia and Florida as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and has worked in the fields of medical social work, in-patient and out-patient therapy, non-profit management, military trauma, crisis stabilization, and forensic social work. She began teaching in 2018 with the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Mercer University in Macon, Georgia. Dr. Underwood joined Middle Georgia

State University in the Department of Teacher Education and Social Work in January of 2022.

**CHEN Yin**, Ph.D. She has earned her PhD (Applied Psychology) at Nanjing Normal University, China. Her areas of research interests cover psychology of aging, psychology of losing the sole child, community intervention. She currently works in the Student Counselling Services at Yangzhou Hospitality Institute. Dr. CHEN began her GT endeavour in 2017 and adopted GT in her doctoral research into Chinese families that have lost the sole child. She is among the first batch of researchers who have used classic GT as a full methodology in China and has recently published an article in Chinese entitled "Misuse of grounded theory and some clarification".

**FENG Yuan**, currently a pupil lawyer specialized in intellectual properties at JINCHENG TONGDA & NEAL (JT&N), a leading law firm in Beijing. She graduated from School of Humanities, China University of Political Science and Law, majoring in law culture. Her area of research interests includes law and literature. Having adopted GT in its entirety in her master's thesis, she used MO Yan's novel "*Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out*" as data and researched into the mentality that continues to influence farmers' behavior during policy changes. She is the very first researcher that has used the full classic GT package in China.

**WANG Ying**, Ph.D. currently a lecturer in the Department of Adult Nursing, School of Nursing, Fujian Medical University, China. Dr. WANG is interested in patients with hematologic tumors and their family caregivers, especially leukaemia patients and their family caregivers. She is an active researcher in improving leukaemia patients and their family caregivers' mental health and quality of life by developing interventions that provide them with informational, emotional, and psychosocial support. Dr. WANG used classic grounded theory to explore behavioral patterns of patients and family caregivers. She has published in nursing journals and has also worked as a reviewer for several journals, including Journal of Advanced Nursing and European Journal of Cancer Care. (see <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Ying-Wang-386>)

**FEI, Foster**, Ph.D. Corresponding author (email: [fosterfei@outlook.com](mailto:fosterfei@outlook.com)), Fellow at Grounded Theory Institute. He has been actively involved in teaching and mentoring novice GT researchers and defending classic GT in China. Over the years, Dr. FEI has overseen the successful completion of GT studies conducted by some highly promising researchers (Chen, 2020; Feng, 2021; Wang, 2022). He has also been working on the translation of Glaser's texts into Chinese and organising GT seminars in China.