

## From the Editor's Desk

### How to Read Classic Grounded Theory

Have you wondered how to best read and evaluate grounded theory studies? Contrary to what some people believe, grounded theories are neither stories, lists of themes, nor descriptions, rather they consist of parsimonious rigorously extracted concepts bound by inductively derived theoretical relationships. The network of concepts and theoretical relationships may be invisible to one who is unfamiliar with the method. The purpose of this editorial is to discuss some of the clues a reader might use to determine the quality of a classic grounded theory study. Grounded theory is a general method that can use either quantitative or qualitative data, however qualitative data are most often used, so this paper will focus on qualitative research.

The Grounded Theory Review focuses solely on *classic* grounded theories and methodological papers. Novice or lay readers may be unaware of the subtle elements that indicate a good classic theory. Peer reviewers, on the other hand, are experienced classic grounded theorists, who learned from Barney Glaser, co-originator of the method. The reviewers know what to expect in a classic grounded theory study and what red flags indicate a study might not have adhered to the classic grounded theory method. Here, I describe some elements to help readers know what to expect when reading each section of a classic grounded theory paper and some red flags that indicate the method was not closely followed.

#### Background Section

When reading a published classic grounded theory, you may notice that the background, research problem, literature review, and research question are very general in nature. Although familiar with the substantive area, a classic grounded theorist should not enter a study with preconceptions, biases, and prior hypotheses. Inasmuch as it is possible in an academic system, the grounded theorist should avoid in-depth previous research and conceptual/theoretical literature on the phenomenon of interest. An investigator wants to enter the study as nearly *tabula rasa* as possible. In fact, the investigator will enter the study not even knowing what phenomenon might emerge—thus a pre-investigation pertinent and focused literature review is not possible. Because classic grounded theory is a method of discovery, studies begin when an investigator becomes curious about a given aspect of a substantive area—asking simply, “What is going on” with *this* group of people in *this* situation. So, the background section of a grounded theory paper should be focused on a general discussion of the substantive area, rather than an in-depth discussion of a specific phenomenon. The in-depth literature review occurs only after the theory is discovered. The introductory section of a grounded theory paper should identify the substantive area along with what the general issue of interest.

- What to expect
  - An indication of the author's familiarity with a substantive area and unbiased curiosity about something that is not known.
- Red flags

- Explicit or implicit statements are present that indicate the author began the study with preconceived notions, received professional issues, a very specific research question, hypotheses, or other indications of bias.

### **Theoretical Perspective**

Dissertation and thesis criteria, journals' author guidelines, ethics protocols, and grant applications often require a discussion of the theoretical perspective or conceptual framework that guide research studies. These elements can present a problem for grounded theorists. As an originator of the method, Glaser stated that classic grounded theory was not developed with a specific theoretical perspective. With this idea in mind, there are three potential paths an investigator might choose when required to address the theoretical perspective of a study. Holton and Walsh (2017) implied that a grounded theorist might identify his or her own philosophical perspective, such as critical realism, as the foundation of the specific grounded theory study. The theorist would further describe that perspective guided the data gathering and analysis. Another possibility to satisfy the academic requirement for a theoretical perspective, might be to propose that a theory of the scientific method, such as that of Charles Sanders Peirce, was the foundation of a study (Nathaniel, 2011). Another alternative is to identify symbolic interactionism. Glaser acknowledged that symbolic interactionism, while not the foundation of the method itself, can be claimed to be a sensitizing element of a study. Whichever choice is made, the author should provide evidence that the choice was used to inform the data gathering and analysis.

Another issue relates to extant theories. The tenets of classic grounded theory prohibit superimposition of an extant theory on the emerging one. All concepts must earn their way into a grounded theory through a process of emergence. For example, a classic grounded theory of what's going on in the lives of people during the Covid 19 pandemic cannot be based upon the concepts of theoretical relationships of the Health Belief Model—although a comparison can appropriately be made in the discussion section after the grounded theory has emerged.

- What to expect: either
  - no discussion of the theoretical perspective of the method,
  - a general discussion of the philosophical stance of the authors,
  - a discussion of scientific method as a philosophical foundation, or
  - indication that symbolic interactionism was a sensitizing element for investigation and analysis
- Red flags would be
  - empty claims to satisfy institutional requirements that a theoretical perspective, often symbolic interactionism, was used with no evidence that that perspective was actually employed in data gathering and analysis, or
  - statements that an extant theory served as the foundation of the study.

### **Description of the Method**

The author of a grounded theory publication should clearly identify the precise method used for the research. Grounded theory was the prototype method described by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and further described by Glaser in many publications (1965, 1978, 1992, 1998, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2005a, 2005b, 2008, 2009, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2016a, 2016b).

Over the years, a number of remodeled grounded theory methods, such as those by Strauss and Corbin (1990), Charmaz (2000, 2006), and others have emerged. To differentiate from other iterations, the original method is now referred to as *classic* grounded theory.

Remodeled versions of grounded theory adopt much of the language of classic grounded theory, but also include language, theoretical perspective, and procedures specific to each. The various methods are far different and therefore incompatible, so they should never be combined in one study.

- What to expect
  - a clear statement that classic grounded theory was employed,
  - use of language and procedures specific to classic grounded theory, and
  - reference to seminal publications by Glaser and Strauss or by Glaser
- Here are some red flags:
  - citation of sources of remodeled grounded theory such as Strauss and Corbin or Charmaz in the method and/or analysis sections
  - heavy reliance on secondary sources in the method and analysis sections
  - language or procedures specific to remodeled versions such as axial coding, conditional/consequential matrix, and constructivism
  - terms more appropriate to other qualitative or quantitative methods such as *thick description*, the *structure of meaning*, the *lived experience*, *emic/etic*, *reliability*, *validity*, and so forth.

### **Participant Selection**

Glaser (1998) referred to classic grounded theory as a perspective-based methodology because each grounded theory revolves around the participants' perspectives of their main concern and how the concern is continually resolved. Therefore, the selection and recruitment of participants should center on those whose experience is the focus of interest. For instance, the experience of parenting a child with a congenital anomaly can only be described by parents in this situation. Although other data may also be collected, it is from this sample group that the theory will emerge.

- What to expect
  - data can take many forms, either qualitative and quantitative, but must be collected from sources that can lead to a perspective-based understanding of a main concern and how that concern is continually resolved.
- Red flags
  - no description of sample characteristics or size
  - a very small sample size
  - an altogether inappropriate sample

### **Data Collection**

Glaser has written about the nature of data and procedures for data collection. I will list only three here. First, the data should be collected in a way that assures it is grounded. Second, the best qualitative interview data is elicited through open-ended questions that allow participants to freely voice their own perceptions. For qualitative studies, this usually means interviews occur in a comfortable location and begin with one or two "spill questions," rather than an established interview guide with a number of pre-determined

questions. In addition, theoretical sampling, a hallmark of classic grounded theory, means that the nature of questions the interviewer asks will evolve over time as the theory begins to emerge. Third, Glaser encouraged writing field notes immediately after an interview rather than taping and transcribing. Field notes are superior because grounded theory interviews often elicit sensitive, sometimes dangerous information that might not emerge if participants are focused on a recording device. In addition, the interviewer begins the process of conceptualizing as he or she writes field notes—speeding up the analysis. Peer reviewers and other experienced grounded theorists, however, live in the real world and understand that thesis and dissertation guidelines sometimes require taping and transcribing.

- What to expect
  - a very open and general grand tour or “spill” question,
  - acknowledgement that the “raw data” consisted of field notes, rather than verbatim transcription, and
  - indication that theoretical sampling led to revised or additional interview questions as the theory began to emerge
- A red flag would be
  - an indication that data analysis relied upon responses to a survey or pre-determined interview guide with a long list of questions.

### **Analysis**

In classic grounded theory, analysis is an iterative process that begins with preconscious processing and includes writing field notes, coding the raw data word-by-word and sentence-by-sentence, fracturing the data through constant comparison, identifying incidents that indicate a concept, writing memos focusing on concepts and their indicators, identifying the relationships between concepts, theoretical sampling, and sorting memos to complete a theory. Classic grounded theory requires openness, pattern recognition, and the ability to conceptualize. These requirements cannot be accomplished by a computer program.

- What to expect
  - reference to each of the aforementioned steps
  - a short discussion of how each step was operationalized in the specific study
- Red flags
  - inadequate discussion of grounded theory procedures,
  - no detail about how the procedures were operationalized for the study,
  - use of procedures borrowed from other methods—most often axial coding, and
  - reliance on electronic programs for data analysis.

### **The Theory**

A grounded theory culminates in a *theory*, rather than *findings*. As mentioned in the introduction, grounded theories are neither stories, lists of themes, nor descriptions. They depict conceptualized patterns that emerged from constant comparison of the data. A reader should be able to identify the concepts and picture how they are linked together. Usually, a grounded theory paper will include sections dedicated to major concepts, often

referred to as categories, and paragraphs focusing on other, lower level concepts such as properties or dimensions of the major concepts. There are many ways concepts can be linked. For instance, one concept may be linked to another in time, such as one stage comes after another, or one action causes another. Glaser (1978) wrote in depth about this in his book *Theoretical Sensitivity*. Concepts and their theoretical relationships create tentative hypotheses, which interweave to form the theory. Thus, neither a story, list of themes, nor thick description can comprise a grounded theory.

An experienced reader should be able to recognize the working parts of a theory. Generally, a theory is laid out in a few sentences in or after the introduction of a paper. These sentences will include the major concepts and their theoretical relationships. The body of the paper will have sections dedicated to the major concepts with paragraphs discussing minor concepts and their relationships with each other and with the major concept. For example, a minor concept may be a property of a major concept. Classic grounded theories are not highly complex and dense. They should be easy to read, interesting, parsimonious, and delimited to only those concepts that relate to the core category. As Glaser stated, they have “grab.” Readers will also notice that unlike qualitative methods such as phenomenology, paragraphs of direct quotes are seldom used in grounded theory. Because grounded theory rises to the conceptual rather than descriptive level, only short, one or two sentence, direct quotes are offered and then only to illustrate concepts.

- What to expect
  - an interesting, parsimonious theory laid out early in a paper, and
  - concepts and theoretical relationships further explained and illustrated with short bits of data.
- Red flags
  - a list of themes,
  - no explicit theory with concepts interwoven by theoretical relationships, and
  - long direct quotes

### **Conclusion**

When I was a graduate student, a faculty member referred to an excellent qualitative thesis as “gobbly gook.” This professor proved that even seasoned researchers can fail to understand and appreciate qualitative studies. Classic grounded theory is, in fact, a rigorous method that requires a special set of cognitive abilities. While a grounded theory may be interesting to a novice, only a reader who understands the method can truly comprehend a written grounded theory. I challenge readers of the Grounded Theory Review to read the papers in this issue critically and identify the theories, their core categories, concepts, and theoretical relationships—a good evening’s socially distant work. Make special note of the reprinted chapter on theoretical writing by Glaser, which addresses many of the points above from the perspective of writing, rather than reading. We wish you a very happy new year.

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Editor

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## Theoretical Writing

**Barney G. Glaser**

Editor's note: This paper addresses common questions about the particular way in which grounded theorists should write about their classic grounded theory. This important chapter has been excerpted and lightly edited for clarity and context from chapter 8 in Glaser's *Theoretical Sensitivity* (1978).

The goal of grounded theory methodology, above all, is to offer the results to the public, usually through one or more publications. We will focus on writing for publication, which is the most frequent way that the analyst can tell how people are "buying" what really matters in sociology, or in other fields.

Both feedback on and use of publications will be the best evaluation of the analyst's grounded theory. It will be his main source of criticism, constructive critique, and frequently of career rewards. In any case, he has to write to expand his audience beyond the limited number of close colleagues and students. Unless there is a publication, his work will be relegated to limited discussion, classroom presentation, or even private fantasy. The rigor and value of grounded theory work deserves publication. And many analysts will have a stake in effecting wider publics, which makes their substantive grounded theory *count*.

The best form to publish in sociology is through a monograph. The highest rewards, in general, go for writing books, for they probably reach the most diverse public with the maximum amount of material. Journal articles, of course, run a close second. One solution which many analysts take is to write chapters into articles, while fewer combine articles into books. We shall mainly focus here on the chapter form, which is similar to the article form with minor adjustments.

In this final stage of grounded theory methodology, writing is a "write up" of piles of ideas from theoretical sorting. Writing techniques are, perhaps, not as crucial as the techniques characteristic of the previous stages, but they are still crucial. Since writing sums up all preceding stages, but they are still crucial.

Since writing sums up all the preceding work, it cannot be left uncontrolled, perhaps to scuttle it. Rather, writing must capture it. It must put into relief the conceptual work and its integration into a theoretical explanation. So very often in qualitative research, the theory is left implicit in the write-up as the analyst gets caught up in the richness of the data.

Below we shall discuss the logic of construction of shape of and conceptual style of a monograph and a chapter. Then we discuss the reworking of initial drafts, in order to sharpen the shape and style. We briefly indicate our view of uses of the literature, and close with recommendations for the analyst's theoretical pacing.

It must be underlined that the write-up of sorts is a theory of a core variable which freezes the ongoing for the moment. It is unfortunate, perhaps, that writing has this "slice of reality" character. We have covered this problem as best as possible by using concepts



and processes that have duration and are independent of time and place. We also construct a theory that is readily modifiable. The analyst should underscore these points in his writing because his writing probably will read mainly as a fixed conceptual description, not an explanation, by most readers. We are in essence stuck with this paradox.

### **Logic of Construction**

Typically, sociological monographs are constructed on the bases of a "little logic." It is the main building idea of the book, hence the ensuing chapters. The little logic usually consists of no more than a paragraph or two, and often just one long sentence. In monographs it may be stated as an interest, a general idea, a logical deprivation, a hypothesis, a finding to be explored, an explanation, a statement of purpose, and so forth. In our case a little logic states that the core variable explains a large amount of the variation in a behavior or set of behaviors. For example, in *Awareness of Dying*, we stated that awareness contexts account for much of the behavior around a dying patient in a hospital.

These little logics are found in the preface, introduction, editor's note (when the author does not state it) or appendix. Separate little logics may introduce each chapter, based on the build-up of the book. Or they may end a chapter to set up the reason for the coming chapter. Sometimes each chapter further refines the logic.

Implied in the little logic of monographs are many aspects and assumptions of its construction. It implies whether the study will be descriptive, verificational, or the focus on theory generation. The little logic for a grounded theory monograph must clearly reflect its generative intent. It also should imply the book's methodology, the book's unity as a whole, and its level of conceptualization. It brings out the model for its integration: such as in a grounded theory book, we state that the core variable will explain a behavior implying that it will be written this way as its purpose. The little logic also brings out the unsolved question or problem with its necessary dissonance, which will interest the reader in finding out how the BSP [basic social process] will process or resolve it. The little logic can be substantively coded or theoretically coded but is usually the former with the latter implied.

In most monographs, we usually find one little logic and sometimes two or none at all. The single one is all that is needed in grounded theory, for it is based on a core variable analysis. Books without any wander all over and books with two, as noted earlier, find difficulty in handling both together adequately. The promise implied in the little logic is one criterion by which to judge its success: "did he pull it off?" as the saying goes. The grounded theorist should be cautious in his promise to the reader. The modesty of his effort should be underscored, but with no apology.

Sometimes an author will over generalize his logic and spend much of his book specifying it. Others will state their logic too specifically and soon transcend and leave them behind. The reader then feels lost in trying to find the book he has been invited to read. In our case, the level of generality of the little logic is based on the core category, hence the logic is consistent with the level of conceptualization of ensuing analysis.

Implied in the above discussion is the basic assumption of grounded theory. Writing is a careful systematic “construction job.” It does not merely flow from a witty mind, no matter how much wit might help. Readers who wish to write grounded theory should look at several monographs to discover their little logics and theory properties. Such experiences give an armamentarium of ideas on how to write a monograph effectively without committing the errors of colleagues. This study is invaluable. It is not to evaluate the substantive or abstract worth of monographs; it is to learn more techniques in the construction of a book. For example, one discovery we and our students have made is that there are a number of authors who write a little logic with minimal awareness of its import. Hence, they are not or only slightly constrained in following its implications for the ensuing work. In grounded theory, a little logic is written realistically and with awareness so that it can be followed throughout the book.

### **Shape**

In grounded theory we follow the standard shaping of sociology monographs and chapters or articles. For chapters, we begin with an introduction which includes first the general problem, second the methodology (if appropriate as in an article or introduction to a book), and third, a prose outline of the coming substantive theory for the chapter sections. If the chapter is an introduction to a book, we close with the outline of the book. If it is a subsequent chapter, we close with a transition to the next. We close articles and books with general conclusions. However, we do handle this shaping in somewhat different ways than standard because of the aim of putting the substantive theory into relief.

### **Introduction**

In writing of introductions, there are several forms that we do not use. For example, authors often may derive the problem for the book or paper from a general perspective, from a literature search or general interest, or in some combination of those and with more or less synthesis and comparative work. However, in introductions we derive the problem and core variable from the grounded theory, which has been generated in the research. Existing perspective and literature are only used as supplements of contrasts, if at all.

Our approach to introducing the problem is to use a “funnel down” from a “nature discussion” to introducing the problem. The general, grounded, most relevant properties of the core variable are discussed to give the fullest meaning of its general nature. Then from these properties we select those that will be developed in the chapter in relation to the problem. Thus, typically, one discusses in a chapter or paper only one of many properties of a core category. For example, there are several dimensions upon which clients judge the performance of a professional they visit: cost, desire to help, kind of help, pace of their service, kind of clientele, references, and so forth. One study focused on the combination of cost and desire to help. The clients weighed whether the client thought the professional was most interested either in helping or in the money. This affected whether or not they returned and referred the doctor to others (Hayes-Bautista, 1975).

To set out the general nature of the core variable and then funnel it down to a theory on a specific process and problem that is associated with one property of it is very effective. The general meaning of the chapter or paper transcends its specificity, thus putting it in

general perspective. Without it the selectivity may lose general meaning and seemingly refer to a very limited study. It starts to appear unit focused. The “nature” paragraphs may have relevant literature and perspectives woven into them, as we previously said, but only as supplements or contrasts, not as sources of derivation. The source of these properties, which establish nature, is their grounding in systematic research.

Once the problem and core variable are “funneled” down to the purpose of the paper, it is appropriate to state the integrative outline established through sorting. The outline is written as cumulative build-up of how the paper will handle the promise of the purpose. More precisely, the outline discusses each section and how sections are related to each other. Then the reader knows what he can expect in the theory. This promise is fulfillable since the analyst is merely stating what he has already generated and sorted for writing.

If the analyst has not yet codified his outline, or is not sure of its integration, or indeed finds as he gets into the paper that the outline falls apart, he should write anyway. He should ask himself what he should talk about in order to write the most relevant parts of his theory. Writing can have the consequence of integrating the outline or reintegrating what has fallen apart. It is a good way out of a block in integration. If it does not fully accomplish integration, then reworking initial drafts will (discussed below).

The outline paragraph can be written or rewritten at any stage in writing. The analyst can do it first or last. It is a matter of preference. Some analysts prefer, from the beginning, to establish a tight rein on what they will write. It forces them to stick to the sorts. Others do it last when reworking drafts, after studying what they have done, in terms of their sorts, and resorts as well as perhaps license to add and subtract yet even more material. By their writing, analysts are always outgrowing their previous perspective on the data and some like to leave options open to change the integration.

Once again, it is a worthwhile exercise for the analyst to study tables of contents and chapter outlines in published work in order to develop a grounded perspective on how other authors resolve this step—if they do resolve it—or forget it or fulfill the promise of their outline.

When appropriate, a brief methodology of the chapter can be put in the introduction or relegated to an appendix.

### **Substantive Sections**

The sections, of course, simply follow from the sorts. They render visible the hard work that the analyst has done over many months thus they bring the satisfaction coming from the culmination of the work in a product. If the analyst’s pent-up demand is too great to de-burden himself of his formulations and to feel the gratification there from, then the substantive sections or chapters can be written before the introduction.

### **Ending the Paper**

We have a special view of ending a written work. First, summaries are not advised.

After all, in conceptual work the paper or chapter is in some manner its own summary. Students ask us, "How do I finish the paper? I have written the theory, what else is there to say?" A summary is redundant and an affront to those readers who have actually read the paper, and a "cop out" for those who have not read it, however useful to them. Summaries are usually forced by an editor or brought on by the analyst who does not know how to end his paper.

Writing a conclusion of recommendations can be worthwhile if the theory is relevant for practitioners. Our approach to the ending is to take the core variable, and perhaps a few of those sub-core variables that worked best and generate their use and contribution for formal theory in sociology and for other substantive realms in sociology. This can be done relatively easily by brief comparative analysis with data from experience, knowledge, and the literature, and by raising the conceptual level.

Thus, it is easy to see the general import of cultivating in a study of the cultivating of housewives by milkmen. Since it is a study of cultivating of clients for keeping business and for profit, why not also cultivating of relationships for family fun and/or recreation such as in marriage or friendships? Cultivating can be seen as occurring up and down social rank; milkmen cultivate up, doctors often down. Cultivating is a general problem in the service industries and in the professions. And so it goes; it is not difficult to bring out such general implications of the core and sub-core variables, which contribute by suggesting other substantive areas of inquiry to broaden the substantive theory as well as suggest the importance of generating a formal theory. One can also suggest theory on other aspects of the core variable not dealt with in the paper, but reviewed in the introductory "nature" paragraph. At this point the rigors of grounding can be relieved for conceptual elaborations. We believe that readers find this approach to ending a paper stimulating and transcending of the substantive content given previously.

It must be noted that the generalities of the beginning and the end sections to the paper are quite different. The beginning section is systematically generated properties from research within the substantive area. The end section is generalized properties applicable to other substantive areas and conceptually elaborated through non-research comparisons. Substance of time and place are left behind.

### **Conceptual Style**

One very frequent problem in writing grounded theory is that analysts have trouble in maintaining the conceptual level that they have worked so hard to generate. The dictum is to write conceptually, by making theoretical statements about the relationship between concepts, rather than writing descriptive statements about people. Thus, the analyst writes in such a way as to make explicit the dimensions, properties, or other theoretical codes of his theory as well as the theoretical integration of these codes.

It is quite easy to slip into excessive description when illustrating, perhaps most of us have so much experience in writing descriptively. So, descriptive writing comes naturally, conceptual writing does not. It is even easier when the data is relatively conceptually unanalyzed. The most important thing to remember is to write about concepts, not people.

Thus, one should write about cultivating or becoming, not milkmen who are cultivating or nurses who are becoming. Saying this is easier than doing it! If writing momentum is important, then don't worry, write, because the concepts can be brought out during the reworking stage. Usually initial drafts are a mix of both conceptual descriptive levels.

Indicators for the concepts, which are descriptive statements, are used only for illustration and imagery. They support the concept; they are not the story itself. They help introduce the concept, which can then be carried forward illustration free. Thus, the dosage mix for grounded theory is to minimize illustrations, using them for support purposes, so that the analyst can maximize use of concepts within the allotted space of the paper or chapter. The power of the theory resides in concepts, not in description.

The credibility of the theory should be won by its integration, relevance, and workability, not by illustration used as if it were proof. The assumption of the reader, he should be advised, is that all concepts are grounded and that this massive grounding effort could not be shown in writing. Also, that as grounded they are not proven they are only suggested. The theory is an integrated set of hypotheses, not of findings. Proofs are not the point; illustrations are only to establish imagery and understanding as vividly as possible when needed. It is not incumbent upon the analyst to provide the reader with description or information as to how each hypothesis was reached. Stating the method in the beginning or appendix is sufficient, perhaps with an example of how one went about grounding a code and a hypothesis.

As the analyst learns to maintain a conceptual level, he finds that it supports itself by becoming more dense and integrated. As he writes on this level, he should not state in so many words that he will explain some behavior. He should write the explanation of how processes actually process problems, so the reader will see that explanation as such. In short, the analyst should do theory, not tell that he is going to do it. The latter too easily leads to excesses in promise, wastes valuable space, and "cops out" by offering a thin theory. Doing a theory just presents itself as it is; a modestly dense, integrative, and explanatory theory.

Temporal distance from the data helps to maintain conceptual level. Sometimes it is best to wait months, even a year, in order to think about the data sufficiently to be able to write conceptually. Letting sorts or memos lie fallow always helps to mature the conceptualization of the data. The analyst simply forgets descriptive details from the field while his conceptual scope grows. It is easier to be conceptual sooner in secondary analysis of other's data because the analyst never experienced the field where the data was collected, hence is free of the uncollected data that lodge in the field worker's head (Glaser, 1963).

There are a few rules that will help those analysts write who have difficulty in writing. Write as one talks, not as one writes. This makes writing much easier. So does the idea that if one has two things to say, say them one at a time. Write the first draft, with no heed to English construction, so as to focus on the theory construction. The grammar can be edited later in subsequent drafts. As with memos, it should not be allowed to interfere with the ideational out-put. The reader should not underestimate this problem, many an

analyst cannot write because of concern with perfect English. Our first concern must be to put over “good” ideas, which means getting them on paper.

Also, avoid in the substantive sections the use of analogies to bring out concepts and their relationships. While apparently useful, under examination any analogy may prove otherwise. While the current analysis and the analogy (with lots of imagery such as games, drama, or machines) may have a few similar characteristics, that is often as far as the comparison goes. The difference in other characteristics between the two undermine the analysis unless analyzed away. This takes unnecessary space and time and prevents a straightforward getting on with the current analysis. For example, in some ways interaction life may be like a drama, but dramas are very different from life. Thus, other properties of drama cannot be applied to life (such as “not for keeps,” stage lights, curtain, directors, etc.). But the catchy drama analogy can take a lively-minded reader easily down the wrong line of thought as he starts over applying drama instead of doing the analysis itself. The reader is then either lost, not thinking correctly, or is forced to analyze his way back to the matter at hand, if he cares to.

### **Reworking**

The first draft usually is a delight for the analyst, but also it usually is very rough. All of its defects can only be corrected by reworking the draft. As we said, its aim was to capture the conceptualization and integration of the theory. Like memos, it was not to be burdened or blocked by the requirements of perfect English. Until an analyst is an accomplished writer, one half or more of his creativity typically occurs in reworking his initial draft.

This reworking may take many trips through the work, as the analyst solves a problem at a time. Taking on too many problems at once may prevent doing a good job for each. Writing is a division of labor process, requiring different jobs of English, conceptual and scholarly editing. Needless to say, a general property of the reworking is that as each problem is corrected, the chances are that it is likely to reveal still other previously unnoticed problems and possibilities. This phenomenon does saturate however, or in the alternative, the analyst will settle for less than perfection out of exhaustion and growing personal saturation.

There are many standard problems for which to rework the initial draft. They can be seen on two dimensions: English and professional (conceptual and scholarly) editing. The latter includes weeding out unit focus and conceptual style and other needs of sections and subsections. We shall discuss professional editing here with respect to conceptualization and scholarship. English editing can be hired or drafted from among friends.

A basic reworking tactic for conceptualization is “flip-flopping” paragraphs; that is, making the theoretical statement come first. Most of us, but beginning writers in particular, often write paragraphs that start with description and work up to the concept and general hypothesis in the last sentence. This comes naturally and also comes from the constant generating that goes on. For it to be completely a conceptual writing and to bring the conceptualization into relief, what is necessary is to put the last sentence first. Or “flip-flop”

the paragraph by starting with the concept and then illustrating it as though it originally grew in reverse. Then the concept is imagined, "out front," emphasized and usable in carry-forwards. The description is trimmed to fit the need of illustrating. The same applies to concepts buried within the paragraph if they are the main idea of it.

The carry-forward notion of concepts and the cumulative build-up of the theory care crucial in reworking. To let a concept drop may indicate its lack of relevance. And to not have sections and chapters tied together with theoretical meaning and development is to undercut grounded theory. All methods we have detailed previously to this, especially sorting, have set the writing up for an integrative build-up and the use of relevant concepts. During reworking, the analyst makes sure these two facets of theory generation are there.

In the heat of writing the initial draft it is easy to not tie sections and chapters together sufficiently. Now the analyst writes and rewrites these transitions. He makes sure of the directions of his explanations and brings into relief why and how each chapter goes in the direction it does. As he reworks, he sees clearly that a concept which has been dropped can be worked usefully in a forward position to enrich the analysis. And if it has not been used for 100 pages or so, perhaps more illustration is warranted. Missing and messed transitions are easy to spot with the perspective of a second or third trip through the writing. This polishing can be immensely gratifying.

Lastly, it is sometimes useful during reworking to submit work to colleagues for opinions and critique. If this is too traumatic, the usefulness is neutralized. The analyst should be wary and submit only to those colleagues with sensitivity enough to be appreciative, delicate in suggestion, and knowledgeable enough to understand and give positive and possible suggestions to the reworking.

Submitting drafts to journals is a good source of evaluation from the outside world of un-chosen readers. It is an excellent source of material for reworking to solve problems that derail the professional and layman public who do not know the meanings familiar to and often assumed as general by the grounded theorist. There is as yet no standardized sociology with respect to either method or paradigm. This freedom to do different kinds of sociology is a strength of our field and spawns growth in many directions. But it also forces accommodations to make grounded theory accessible to other sociologists with training in different methods and theorizing. Their critique should be seen in such light, not as "dumb," "deprecating," or "outrageous."

### **Footnoting the Literature**

One important aspect of reworking drafts is to integrate the generated theory into the existing literature through the use of footnotes. The key to this task is the analyst's attitude toward the existing literature. His attitude should not be one of adumbration, volume, or reverence. It should be one of carefully weaving his theory into its place in the literature.

To "adnumbrate" is for the analyst to find in the literature an idea he has generated, especially in the literature of a great man. It is amazing how many authors try to find their

best ideas in previous work in order to legitimate using it, as borrowed or derived as if they could not be allowed to generate it on their own. The proper attitude is simply to accept having discovered ideas. There are so many in grounded theory work! And if the analyst discovers that one of his many ideas has already been used elsewhere, the proper attitude is "he (the other author) discovered it too," as might any theoretically sensitive analyst in dealing with the same or similar data. The essential point to remember is that the discovered idea is relevant because of its connections to other variables which make up a theory which accounts for the variation in a pattern of behavior. And the analyst will almost never find this relevance associated with the concept as it was used previously! Thus, his contribution remains truly original, since the crucial issue is a multivariate, grounded theory that works.

Many a scholar, theorist, or empirical research worker will voluminously footnote every piece of possible related literature. The footnotes seem like a reading list or an extensive bibliography (Merton, 1949/1968; Smelser, 1962). There are far too many to integrate meaningfully. Interestingly enough when, in theoretical writings, one studies these footnotes carefully, one usually discovers that nothing is referred to that might detract from the originality of the citing author. This is so even when well-known related, relevant works are overlooked by the theorist, perhaps purposefully, so as not to threaten his creativity. Thus, much necessary integrated placement of these theoretical works is missing. This non-integrative approach cannot fail to hinder the growth of theory.

Reverential, commemorative, and referral footnotes are fine, as long as they do not take precedence over the generated theory. They go hand in hand with integrative placement of the grounded theory. There is no magic about a theory in print before the analyst's writing just because it already occurred that warrants undue reverence. Soon the analyst also will be in print and his ideas will be used. Thus, reverence and commemoration should be moderate based on what the idea from the literature truly contributes to the big picture, just as the analyst uses ideas for his own theory. Idolization of "great men" should be replaced with the attitude: "He too was working with these ideas." In addition, there should be no implication that the current idea was derived from a previous author's merely to legitimate the idea. In our research, ideas are discovered on their own or emergently fit. Clearly, reverential derivations are farthest from our methodological position.

Integrative placement of the grounded theory in existing literature occurs through a footnote alone or combined with text. The citation indicates the theory's place among others working on the same topics or ideas. It briefly extends the theory of others. It refers to other ideas in the literature of a related by tangential direction. And it conceptually transcends, while grouping together, empirical articles which just present findings.

These efforts should be as short as possible so as not to derail a reader who stops to see the footnote. A reader will also be less likely to miss footnotes, because they are brief, since he can see at a glance that his reading will barely be slowed. Footnotes that require length can be put at the end of the chapter as noted references. Even longer requirements can result in another article.

Obviously, this kind of footnoting takes analytic work; it is not easy. But it is done



just as the analyst does his grounded theory; he compares, generates memos, sorts and writes up the idea for the footnote.

### **Theoretical Pacing**

It is appropriate to close this chapter by referencing to many of the properties on theoretical pacing as they apply to writing. The theoretical pacing of reading, talk, deadlines, respites, collaboration, and personal growth become very relevant during writing.

### **Reading**

We have said that during data collection, coding memos and sorting of memos, the analyst should read in other fields so as not to preempt his thought regarding the significant variables in the substantive area under research. The analyst should continue this rule throughout the initial draft, if his sorting has not reached a firm integration. This maximizes on another dimension the emergence of his theory.

But when he starts reworking his draft, he should make a concerted effort to cover as much literature as possible in the same area in which he is writing his theory. Now the job is to compare his work to others and weave it into its place in the pertinent theoretical and substantive literature. It also sensitized the analyst to reworking his theory to the best advantage, as he studies how others are theorizing in the field. As noted above, integrative placement of ideas by supplementing, extending, and transcending others' work is the issue, not their preemption of his ideas.

It is a travesty not to do this scholarly aspect of grounded theory for sociology, though some analysts do not because of their personal saturation. Just because grounded theory has emerged and can stand on its own, does not mean it should be left to isolation or only for the consumption of laymen interested in the area. It should contribute more explicitly to the "bigger enterprise" in some way. If theoretical and substantive literature is sparse, as it has been for some of our own studies, hopefully it starts a literature to which others can contribute.

### **Talk**

As in doing codes and memos, the analyst should avoid talking about the ideas he is writing. At best, talk is interrupting and distracting. At worst, it gives the ideas away before writing by releasing the energy behind them which can easily be followed by forgetting them or feeling no need to write them up. Also, others can derail or block even the most careful writing up of sorts. Once the analyst is deep in the writing mode, he should stay there undistracted. There is plenty of time during reworking to discuss ideas for critique, clarification and polishing after the initial draft. At this point, they are down on paper so they cannot get lost or blocked. The initial draft can always be changed, if it is written. But we have seen too many drafts get blocked or prematurely changed or closed off by a too soon critique of ideas by a trusted colleague who has little notion of the interrupting effect of his ideas through connections to other codes that he is unaware of.

### **Collaboration**

A carefully applied exception to the rule on talk is to seminar with a collaborator who is stimulating rather than draining. Again, when writing, the analyst must be careful because of possible blockage, derailment, and/or drain from even this trusted, respected source. There is really no reason why collaborators cannot also wait to talk during reworking once they know which parts of the integrative outline they will write up.

Collaboration is very useful in reworking because it saves much time. An analyst may have to wait a month or two to be able to rework his draft with sufficient freshness. While a collaborator can start reworking it the next day, since for him the initial draft is fresh (not having written it), when collaborators trust each other with reworking of their initial drafts, then writing proceeds very fast. When they do not trust, they can destroy each other (Hagstrom, 1965).

Collaborators who are out of "sync" with each other's pacing should be patient in waiting for the other to be ready to talk. Demanding talk can be damaging to the work and the collaboration. It may force premature closure of the writing of one collaborator, when the other's judgement is valued.

By the same token, to demand talk of a personally saturated colleague who cannot say one more word about the project is to be avoided. At this point, the collaboration is either over for the moment or completely.

### **Deadline**

Our goal in preventing talk and showing one's work before the initial draft is to maximize the energy behind productivity and minimize those circumstances which so often short circuit it. Helpful along these lines is the analytic rule of giving oneself the shortest possible deadline for the initial draft. This pressure prevents wasting time on premature showing and talk. And it gives the analyst an expectation to himself and others as to when he can show his work. A deadline is strength inducing to ward off these and other typical foibles of writing. It prevents drift, evasion and over elaboration of the theory. It generates focus, perseverance, and closure.

A deadline should include the possibility of respites consistent with the analyst's personal pacing recipe. Otherwise the work may become a drudge, that undercuts the richness of the writing. The deadline and respites should be synchronized both with the analyst's personal pacing and the natural pace of the work. Respites occur best after semi-closures, such as finishing a section or sub-section.

### **Outgrowing the Material**

From the outset, grounded theory work is a growing experience both personally and with theoretical understanding of the data. Writing further grows the analyst with respect to maturity with his data, and fortunately, knowing far more than he is capable of getting on paper. The sheer fact of writing a paragraph, quite often, yields insights that put the analyst beyond it. This outgrowing of one's material can be disconcerting and even undermining of the final writing of the theory. In grounded theory work, the analyst must realize that *writing is but a slice of a growing theory.*

The analyst, who feels that he cannot finish writing because he can never begin to tell what he knows, should just accept this fact and finish as sorted and planned. He can never outstrip his own constant growing, no matter how much he writes. His writing will always spawn growth and yield more to say. He cannot overload his work and break his integrative outline—thus, he must accept that although he knows more and better, his reader, knowing less, can greatly benefit by whatever the analyst does write. It will be “news” to the reader, even if “old hat” to the analyst. Others will respond to the richness of the dense grounded theory, while the analyst may feel he had only begun and that it is “sort of thin.”

It is a tribute to grounded theory that it maximizes this outgrowing of one’s theoretical material. The reduction, natural high, and relief from closure on what theory he has written, usually outweighs the nagging realization that much more could be said. Yet some analysts still are blocked by the “puniness” of writing compared to what they really “could tell.”

Other qualitative methods leave much theory implicit and undeveloped because they do not allow for much generating, strategies of coding, sorting, memoing, and integrating. These likely will leave the theoretically inclined researcher with an even worse feeling that much has been undone and left out, since he has not at least integrated a fledging theory that fits and works.

The point is to publish this “slice” of a growing theory so others can get to this point and also use it and grow with the theory. The differential perceptions of the reader and the writer does not rebound against the writer. He will be applauded for what he did, not what he knows he did not do. What he did not have room to set down can be covered in other papers or books and can be suggested to others as future research leads. What is arbitrary about writing and publishing a substantive theory is more than compensated for by the contribution of the grounded theory methodology by which the theory was generated.

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## Becoming an Expert: A Classic Grounded Theory Study of Doctoral Learners

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### Abstract

The theory of Becoming an Expert is about the transformation from a student who consumes knowledge to expert and scholar-researcher who creates knowledge. However, more conceptually, the theory is equally applicable to anyone who progresses from novice to expert in a specific endeavor or field. The process may start with an innocuous idea as “I would like to learn more about ABC.” Through a series of trials and tribulations—referred broadly as juggling in the theory—the person gains necessary experience in this area. These needed trials and tribulations are what help the person transform to an expert. Without these troubling incidences, these people would not necessarily have the opportunities to reflect and grow. As proficiency and knowledge are gained, as the person reflects on tumultuous events, he or she transforms into an expert.

**Keywords:** doctoral learners, attrition, classic grounded theory, success, juggling, novice, expert

### Introduction

German people have an interesting expression about the word *if*: Wenn das Wort wenn nicht wäre, wenn mein Vater millionäre. The translation is “If the word ‘if’ didn’t exist, my father would be a millionaire.” By that analogy, if doctoral programs were easy, everyone would do them. Yet, to explain why some students or candidates do not succeed, that analogy is not satisfying. Thus, it is important to understand the situation from a deeper perspective given that the attrition rate of doctoral students varies between 40-50% (Terrell, Snyder, Dringus, & Maddrey, 2012); in online programs, the attrition rate is higher-up to nearly 70% (Gardner, 2010; Maul, Berman, & Ames, 2018).

Doing doctoral studies is supposed to be transformative as the work changes a person from a learner to an autonomous scholar (Yazdani & Shokooh, 2018). Yet, from the aforementioned statistics, anywhere from only 30-60% of the students who enter a doctoral program succeed and it is not entirely clear why. Though research certainly exists on doctoral attrition in numerous fields, what is not known is what doctoral students and candidates believe *they* need to succeed in their programs. It is the objective of this author to explain what doctoral students and candidates need to succeed. Additionally, it will be valuable to understand in a more nuanced manner what some positive and negative elements that help and hinder doctoral learners. With this new knowledge, educators, post-

secondary administrators, and even doctoral students and candidates themselves will be able to understand more clearly why attrition is so high and what could be done to lower those alarming and disappointing statistics.

### **Methodology**

As the research design for this study, the author used classic grounded theory. The objective of this design is to understand the behaviors of participants as they attempt to address their main concern. In the case of this study, the main concern is (presumably) how students and candidates successfully complete their doctoral program.

Following the tenets of classic grounded theory (Glaser, 1965), from a procedural perspective, this author created gerund codes from the raw data, constantly compared codes with each other, and wrote memos to uncover any heretofore undiscovered connections. As codes developed into categories, the categories were constantly compared with other codes and categories and additional memos were created. Memos were constantly compared with each other, then sorted, and the data were conceptualized with the ultimate goal of developing a theory.

### **Instrument**

The objective, in any classic grounded theory study, is to "instill a spill" (Glaser, 2009, p. 22): a way to get participants to talk freely about whatever issues surround their main concern without directing or limiting them (Spradley, 1979). To accomplish this task, it may be important to have, using a qualitative term, a semi-structured interview. However, in classic grounded theory, rather than a list of questions, a single "grand tour question" (Leech, 2002, p. 667) was used. For this study, the grand tour question was: What is it like being a doctoral learner? By allowing participants to answer this question in whatever manner they wish, by only asking for additional clarification, and by remaining open to all unforeseen possibilities, through extensive memo writing, the researcher was able to develop the theory of Becoming an Expert.

### **Literature Review**

Ample research exists as to why some online learners leave their doctoral programs (Ames, Berman, & Casteel, 2018; Maher, Wofford, Roksa, & Feldon, 2017; Sutton, 2014; Willging & Johnson, 2009). Some educational researchers (Fetzner, 2013; Sutton, 2014; Willging & Johnson, 2009) have even proposed various causes (Ali & Kohun, 2006; Burkholder, 2012; Shaw, Chametzky, Burrus, & Walters, 2013) for such attrition. The reasons may be organized into these categories: (a) poor prioritization of time (either due to poor time management or family and private issues) (Burkholder, 2012; Sverdlik, Hall, McAlpine, & Hubbard, 2018); (b) displeasure of the course (either due to the style of the course or professor, or because of a misalignment between what the learner expects versus what the faculty members expect) (Burkholder, 2012; Sverdlik et al., 2018); (c) insufficient academic focus and performance due to inadequate self-efficacy (Sverdlik et al., 2018); or, (d) other issues such as, but not limited to feelings of isolation, inadequate motivation and deficient writing (Sverdlik et al., 2018). Though each of these categories will be addressed in turn,

because the themes are often intertwined one with another, a clear separation is not always possible.

### **Poor Prioritization of Time**

Doing doctoral work requires dedication and an extended commitment. No one would argue this point. The continued desire, though, as Maxham et al. (2016) described, is a marathon; it is not a short dash to the finish line. Such a long race requires excellent time management skills. Some doctoral students and candidates might not be as adept as they should be in this regard. Some learners might not realize, for example, that working for 30 minutes several times each day (Burton, 2016) may be better than a three- or four-hour marathon session on one day of the week.

### **Displeasure of the Course or Culture of the School**

Learning style and teaching method need to be in alignment one with the other for optimal acquisition of knowledge. If, for example, the professor only lectures but the student is a visual learner, a disconnect exists and the student will have a more difficult time learning the necessary information. Similarly, if faculty members follow a certain prevalent cultural behavior (Burkholder, 2012), and the student feels that the behavior is in some way incorrect, a disconnect will exist to impede learning. Thus, the needs of learners—with respect to their learning styles—have to be considered.

### **Insufficient Academic Focus and Performance due to inadequate Self-efficacy**

Especially when a student becomes a candidate and starts working on his or her dissertation, a feeling of overwhelm will take hold. The idea of writing a dissertation is a monumental undertaking that terrifies some candidates; they do not necessarily feel worthy of such an undertaking. The idea of worthiness may stem from feelings of imposture syndrome. When symptoms of imposter syndrome manifest themselves (Green, 2016), the result could be “increased levels of stress, burnout, and decreased job performance” (Hutchins & Rainbolt, 2017, p. 195). A reduction in performance at work for a doctoral candidate, could be debilitation and paralyzing as he or she would not be able to work on the necessary components of the dissertation.

### **Other Issues**

In this subsection, three elements will be presented: feelings of isolation, inadequate motivation, and deficient writing. Though they are placed here under an “other” category, they are by no means to be minimized.

***Feelings of isolation.*** Without a doubt, doing an advanced degree—especially if it is done in an online environment—is a lonely experience. At a doctoral level, the feelings of ostracism and isolation take their toll on many learners (Barney, 2018). For this reason, possible, some doctoral candidates do not proceed beyond the All But Dissertation (ABD) stage. Engagement, therefore, is crucial (Ames, Berman, & Casteel, 2018; Chametzky, 2018).

The need for engagement begs the question "what kind of engagement?" Academic cohorts play an important role in the success of students (Barney, 2018; Marshall, Kocko, & Davidson, 2017); without them, doctoral students and candidates have a harder time to succeed.

Engagement doesn't only mean cohorts. If students are connected to their school and feel as if they belong, then following Tinto's Theory of Student Departure, the likelihood is that they will complete their program of study. So, if administrators and educators established social environments for all learners and helped doctoral students feel that they belonged (Hilinka, 2017; Kommers & Pham, 2016; Olive, 2019), the rate of success would theoretically increase. Without social and academic integration, success would not generally be as prevalent.

***Inadequate motivation.*** As Maxham et al. (2016) mentioned, writing a dissertation is a long marathon. Sometimes doctoral candidates lose steam and become unmotivated. The cause of demotivation may stem from many personal or academic factors. Perhaps candidates get to a certain point in their dissertation and no longer feel self-reliant (Sverdlik et al., 2018) in their abilities to accomplish a given task. Perhaps the drive the candidates once had has faded due to disinterest or a change in priorities (Sverdlik et al., 2018). A lack of motivation could potentially also stem from the learning environment. In an online environment, knowledge acquisition is an extremely isolated experience. For someone who needs and thrives on interaction, this environment may cause a decrease in motivation. Regardless of the reason for inadequate motivation, without it, writing a dissertation cannot be easily accomplished.

***Deficient writing.*** Writing is tough. Such an aphoristic statement may seem banal and even perhaps trite, but some candidates might not realize that writing and editing and revising and further proofreading and correcting take a great deal of time and effort. The deficiencies that Johnson and Rulo (2019) mentioned are equally important when writing a dissertation. In a scholarly work such as a dissertation, it is vital that a "lack of clarity, poor organization, weak construction of paragraphs, spelling and syntax errors, and poor document structure" (Johnson & Rulo, 2019, para. 10) not be present at all. To have any of these elements is to diminish the value of the research. Additionally, if a candidate cannot write well and use appropriate vocabulary to present the clear and cogent points, and cannot endure the undesirable elements of distress, potential misunderstanding, and overall frustration (Sverdlik et al., 2018), then he or she will not succeed in completing the dissertation.

### **Tying the Themes Together**

In examining all the themes presented in this literature review, a person is able to make certain valuable observations and connections. These thematic interactions and influences will be illuminated in this section of the literature review.

A number of reasons can explain why a person might have poor time management skills. One possible explanation for poor time management is avoidance. The person avoids the given task perhaps because he or she doesn't like it or, perhaps more accurately, doesn't deem it high enough in importance to accomplish it in a timely manner. While that

answer may seem plausible, the response also seems inadequate as it is not evident why there is dislike or inadequacy. One possible explanation for both issues is inadequate self-efficacy and possibly a dislike for the particular task that leads directly to inadequate motivation. If a person does not believe in him- or herself and feels a certain degree of inadequacy—whether justified or not—it is normal human nature for people to procrastinate and avoid doing the task. In this instance, avoidance can masquerade as poor time management. The logical question regarding dislike is why the task is displeasing to the person. An easy answer is not available as each person and reason for not completing a task is different. Yet, it is possible to address dislike, poor time management, and all of the aforementioned issues.

Extremely positive results have been obtained with the Ewing model developed by Ewing, Mathieson, Alexander, and Leafman (2012). In the Doctor of Health Science program at A. T. Still University, with the Ewing model in place, it was shown that success rates increased to 73% (Ewing et al., p. 34). This statistic, higher than what researchers have demonstrated (Gardner, 2010; Maul, Berman, & Ames, 2018; Terrell, Snyder, Dringus, & Maddrey, 2012), is rather remarkable and indeed warrants further investigation.

The model consists of four principles used for student research ventures: (a) a very structured, sequential curriculum is offered; (b) intense assistance is provided; (c) collaborative learning occurs as learners are placed in cohorts; and, (d) a performance-based evaluation of fundamental skills are conducted (Breitenbach, 2019; Ewing et al., 2012). Though this model might not be valuable in all doctoral programs, with its use, it is reasonable to believe that the aforementioned impediments of doctoral students and candidates could be severely limited thereby increasing successful completion rates. Yet, as promising as the Ewing model (Ewing et al., 2012) may be, no extant research exists to explain what doctoral learners (students and candidates) feel they need to succeed in and successfully complete their specific doctoral programs. Only with this valuable information will educators, post-secondary administrators, and even doctoral learners themselves understand more clearly why attrition is so high and what needs to be done to lower those alarming and disappointing statistics.

### **Becoming an Expert**

The theory of Becoming an Expert consists of several broad categories: Hoping, Juggling, Feeling Vulnerable, Restabilizing, and Transforming. From the time a person wants to achieve a goal, these categories come into play at various times during the development and learning process. But for the category of Hoping, the categories are not mutually exclusive of each other.

#### **Hoping**

Everyone starts a long-term project with some wide-eyed innocence; hope is evident regardless of the type of project. We all aspire to do, to be, and to achieve something in our lives. Unless we have done something similar, we have or may exhibit a certain naïveté before we are sufficiently enmeshed in the task.



Given the experiential nature of doctoral work, when learners start a program, they are optimistic and hopeful that they will succeed. This belief may be based on their experiences with previous education. But, because very few people have done more than one doctorate, people may not believe any negative elements they might hear; one participant aptly summed up the sentiment: it “won’t happen to me.” Without having that prior experience, a learner may be under a faulty misapprehension. Additionally, disbelieving could be a defense mechanism to “protect” the person from potential disappointment and vulnerability.

Doctoral learners know the program into which they will be going will be challenging. Yet, at this initial point, they are not fully cognizant of and prepared for the frustrations and challenges that await them because of their inexperience.

### **Juggling**

Doctoral learners are adults who have additional responsibilities outside of school; many of them are in their chosen professions and have families. To add doctoral studies and eventually a dissertation to a potentially already busy life requires careful consideration and planning. Juggling of time and priorities becomes a necessity to ensure that available time exists for the necessary tasks in one’s life. Some learners are not “used to the time requirements,” as one participant stated, of a doctoral program so sometimes, work and life makes juggling school difficult.

As a learner progresses in a doctoral program, the need for juggling can, and often does intensify. A high degree of flexibility is needed as roadblocks and obstacles exist with “lots of moving pieces,” according to one participant—especially during the writing of a dissertation. Without flexibility, juggling cannot successfully take place. If a learner is not sufficiently flexible and able to juggle all of his or her responsibilities, then he or she will need to try to put things “on the back burner” and modify responsibilities and deadlines. As one participant mentioned, “Things happen” and if a student can’t be fully dedicated to the task at hand, then he or she may need to “pick up the pieces and move on with a new plan.”

Juggling requires two components: being self-motivated and being focused. To juggle all the requirements of life and of a doctoral program, a learner needs to have a degree of self-motivation to be able to prioritize things and possibly set up a study, work, or family schedule so as to compartmentalize all the required tasks in his or her life. Motivation and focus are also important components of destabilization.

### **Feeling Vulnerable**

One of the reasons doctoral work is challenging is the frequency and intensity that learners feel vulnerable. In the beginning, any changes and obstacles are infrequent and minor; learners are able to juggle well. However, as the program progresses, when unexpected elements and changes are more substantial, learners feel increasingly vulnerable. Two broad subcategories of feeling vulnerable are internal and external; both lead to frustration and self-doubt.

A learner may doubt his or her abilities and be disappointed in him- or herself when results are not satisfactory because self-expectations are (perhaps too) high and/or possibly unrealistic. One participant stated that no one “wants to be the weakest link.” Another participant commented that it felt that “not getting it right the first time is like failure.” These ideas clearly show anxiety and vulnerability.

This feeling of unrealistic expectation may be exacerbated by the gap which exists between doctoral courses and writing the dissertation. The shift from being a student to a candidate might be too steep for some learners. Additionally, possible intimidation may be intensified since the doctoral degree is the pinnacle of education and the person may not be secure enough in his or her abilities to attain that objective.

Feeling vulnerable is also because of external sources which might be related or not to school can take many forms such as a shift in life events, work, family crises, or the need to revise dissertation chapters. During this time, learners call into question their abilities. With the continual fear of failure present, learner confidence decreases as they are scared. As one participant stated, “I was so nervous and scared that I would bomb.”

For school-related obstacles such as a sudden change in expectations, missing files, poor and unprepared professors, incorrect information, or a lack of guidance, learners become frustrated. When these obstacles present themselves, learners feel inadequate; as one participant stated: “The obvious escapes us sometimes.” They need people to guide and assist them. Sometimes just “a nugget of clarification really helps,” as stated by a participant. Without guidance, learners feel overwhelmed, vulnerable, confused, and frustrated. In fact, this lack of guidance and assistance intensify the feelings of vulnerability and insecurity as learners often second-guess themselves and “soul-search” as to whether doctoral work is for them.

One participant stated that without “an advocate to walk [learners through the various complexities of doctoral work],” doctoral learner success is greatly reduced. The shift from “hypothetical to reality” during the shift from student to candidate is challenging for some learners and exacerbates their vulnerability.

Though doctoral learners may find various elements frustrating, value exists in understanding potentially why those roadblocks exist. While someone might feel “hazed,” as one participant commented, since professors went through the challenges and frustrations, these roadblocks are often meant to help doctoral learners get used to figuring things out for themselves as scholar-practitioners would do, and reach higher levels until they are at the oral defense stage. As beneficial as this explanation might seem, knowing when to help the learner and when to tell him or her to figure it out without assistance is challenging.

Doing doctoral work is difficult; it is not supposed to be easy to become an expert in a field. Regardless of the cause or type of challenge and frustration, the learner needs to restore stability in whatever manner possible. Without restabilization, anxiety will increase until a learner is either burned-out or quits.

### **Restabilizing**

During the time of frustration, anxiety, and instability where juggling is not fully possible, the need to restabilize is quite strong. The process of restabilizing can take different forms depending on the learner and the situation. Several types of restabilizing exist.

### **Be in the moment**

It is important for learners to be “in the moment” rather than persevere on an end goal. One participant commented to “Take one day at a time.” Being a doctoral learner means sometimes being myopic rather than hyperopic. Thus, when doctoral work can be overwhelming, learners should be focused and pay attention to “nitty gritty” details in the moment and near future rather than ones in the distant future as they may indeed change as they get closer to the present. Being focused on today can help a learner avoid becoming overwhelmed.

Being focused can happen with good organization and planning. Tasks need to be organized and planned so that they can easily be done in the required time. Planning and focusing also require learners to “follow the guidelines [to] be successful” instead of overthinking and overanalyzing things.

### **Be motivated**

Motivation is needed during doctoral work but sometimes having motivation is challenging when specific deadlines are vague or not present. Having motivating, determination, and “stick-to-it-ness” are also tough when various roadblocks are “dumped on your plate at the same time.” These impediments could manifest themselves in different ways. For example, when a professor pushes the learner out of his or her comfort zone, such cognitive stretching should not be viewed as anything but helping the learner grow. Yet, many learners do not view the pushing in this manner. Additionally, motivation is required to depersonalize criticism. As two participants stated, “Don’t take things personally. Setbacks will happen.” Finally, motivation is required when the doctoral process becomes confusing. According to one participant, “Getting there and learning it is scary” so having motivation, along with trust in the professor and process, can make the entire process a bit easier to manage.

### **Be engaged**

Through interpersonal interactions, learners can potentially overcome struggles. For example, “staying connected to professors is important.” When in doubt, it is vital to connect with the professor to ask clarifying questions or request additional assistance. Having patient instructors help learners to overcome whatever struggles are present. Additionally, during doctoral work, the instructor acts as a cheerleader, a barometer, and pushes the learner to exceed previous expectations or reach certain required new levels.

Sometimes learners also need to interact with respected colleagues, and/or family members to get validation, to find a different perspective, to vent, or to obtain clarification on a particular required task. Sometimes, learners need to get and have “social emotional support.”

Peers are equally valuable for venting, commiserating, or validating ideas. However, in an online program where true face-to-face interaction does not happen, sometimes peers are misinformed and unintentionally spread incorrect information. Verification of all information received from people outside of the school is vital to keep any frustration or anxiety as reduced as possible.

Finally, some learners need additional outside help such as a proofreader or an editor. Asking for help when needed is vital to restabilize oneself so juggling can once again occur. Disambuity resolves frustration, stress, and anxiety.

### Transforming

Transforming is made up of two components: Engaging and Reflecting. It is important for learners to engage with course material and reflect on it to see relevance in their own lives. The equation  $T(\text{ransformation}) = E(\text{ngaging}) + R(\text{eflecting})$  is appropriate to show the interconnectedness of the elements. As is evident in the following figure, the process of transformation is cyclic because engagement and reflection requires learners to “stretch [themselves] professionally and academically [and] move out of one’s comfort zone,” according to one participant. During doctoral studies, the process of transformation is continual though sometimes imperceptible.

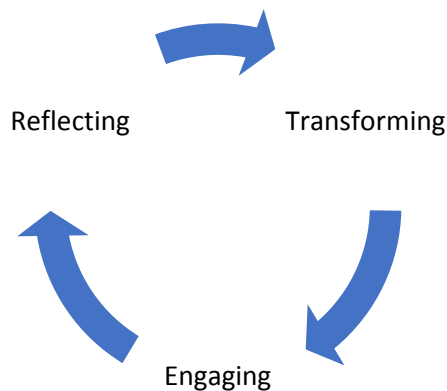


Figure 1. The interconnectedness of transforming, engaging, and reflecting

It is easy to state that reflection is a requirement for doctoral learners; such a statement, though, is almost trite. However, the ways which reflection happen vary depending on the person and circumstance. Additionally, reflection could be backward or forward pointing: Looking back on one’s work helps a person see how far he or she has progressed. One participant commented that “I thought one of my skills was writing in the 1st class to now and I thought Oh my god... [that is] something a sophomore in high school would do.”

Looking forward is equally possible. When learners see course work relevance in their job environment, a transformation takes place and is enhanced when this relevance is discovered. Such practical relevance is vital in a doctoral program and set the studies apart from other degree bearing programs.

Transforming could also be internal. At some point in time, learners realize that they are in charge of their own learning. This self-discovery, caused by introspection and reflection, can be an unexpectedly pleasant surprise. Sometimes growth comes from experienced self-belief. Doctoral work and writing a dissertation can be daunting. Given that few people have multiple doctorates, a need exists for some “evidence” that a learner can succeed. When a student doubts his or her abilities and then sees good grades after an assignment or successful course completion, the necessary “evidence” is presented that the learner is able to do doctoral work. And with that realization comes growth and transformation. Another element of “evidence” happens when a learner becomes “more analytical outside of classes.” At this point, all the possibly imperceptible changes become apparent to the learner. Part of transformation is getting past the feelings of inadequacy and overwhelm.

### **Recommendations**

With the theory of Becoming an Expert, two elements are clear. First, a more nuanced perspective is evident of what being a doctoral learner is like. Next, a clearer understanding is present of what doctoral learners need and, conversely, do not want, in a doctoral program. Based on the interviews conducted, a list of four recommendations—broadly related to several causes presented in the literature review--may now be presented which doctoral learners need to succeed. These recommendations are: (a) the need for accurate and consistent information, (b) proper and adequate guidance, (c) the necessity for strong organizational skills and preparedness, and (d) the need for social interaction. Each idea is discussed in turn.

Learners need accurate and consistent information. To have inconsistent information sends a message to learners of confusion and ambiguity. Given the complexity and stress of doctoral work, additional confusion because of incorrect or inadequate available information is neither desired nor warranted. While some programs may be growing and maturing, any changes or modifications need to be explained to learners with ample time for them to adjust.

Next, the instructor wears many hats in an educational institution: mentor, facilitator, educator, and many others. Within a doctoral program and in doctoral courses, the instructor must be helpful and fully prepared. If there is something that the instructor does not know, he or she must find the answer to tell the learner. What is unacceptable is placing the educational process fully and solely on the shoulders of the learner. The instructor is a mentor to guide the learner when there are questions. Thus, a response like “go find it yourself” is not acceptable when mentoring learners. Similarly, if a learner needs additional support, it is up to the instructor to suggest where that support may be obtained. Tangentially related to the role of the instructor is the need for guidance from an advocate who understands the doctoral progress. Thus, when administrative questions arise from learners, the advocate is able to offer step-by-step assistance. Without such guidance, learners are left to fend for themselves in a confusing environment thereby causing levels of frustration and anxiety to increase.

Third, for a learner to succeed in doctoral work, being highly organized is necessary. On the course level, each learner needs to know the requirements and plan out how long each task will take. On the dissertation level, learners need to schedule time to research and write. Given that multiple reviews occur for each dissertation chapter, a learner should build into the schedule these required additional reviews. Aiming for extensive writing and researching within a short period of time would be desirable as editing and revising can take a great deal of time. Without good and flexible organization, learners cannot succeed. The advocate could and should mention some organizational elements to help learners.

Finally, developing social connections is vital as they help alleviate any frustration that may develop from doctoral work. These connections could be class peers or other learners in the program. With these connections, learners are able to vent and commiserate with one another. Having a sounding board on a doctoral level—whether the program is online or face-to-face—is necessary so frustrations don't become excessive.

If doctoral program and school administrators look at the data regarding attrition rates (Gardner, 2010; Maul, Berman, & Ames, 2018; Terrell, Snyder, Dringus, & Maddrey, 2012) and then implement these recommendations, it would stand to reason that more doctoral learners would be able to Become an Expert rather than become a statistic.

### **Discussion**

It is now valuable to look at Becoming an Expert from a broader perspective. The ultimate objective of doctoral training is to transform a student into a scholar-researcher capable of producing high-quality research. Since the key word in the previous sentence is *transform*, within the context of educational theory, looking briefly at Mezirow's Transformational Theory becomes valuable.

Mezirow devised a list of 10 stages that make up transformative learning (Katz, 2018). The first stage is a disorienting element (Fleming, 2018) which sets in motion the entire process. A disorienting trigger (King, 2009) allows the person to reflect, grow, and reemerge a new (Chametzky, 2013). Without this "emotional disturbance" (Fleming, 2018, p. 3), a transformation could not take place (Katz, 2018). In doctoral work, then, for transformation to take place, some disorienting event is needed.

Also needed is the element of self-reflection ("Transformative learning theory [Mezirow]," 2020). Without critically reflecting (Fleming, 2018) on a disorienting element—and on a doctoral level with the stakes being so high and the multilayered navigating taking place such a task may be difficult—transformation and growth cannot occur. In this light, it might be possible to state that the imbalance that learners feel when they are not successfully juggling is a necessary component to transformation, though many doctoral learners would certainly disagree.

Finally, this transformation is universal. If the 10 stages of Mezirow's theory (Fleming, 2018; "Transformative learning," n.d.) are examined more closely (see Figure 2), it is clear to see that through conceptualization, the 10 stages can be thought of in four broader components: "(a) conflicting considerations, (b) making discoveries, (c) modifying oneself, and (d) becoming anew" (Chametzky, 2013 p. 15). As Chametzky (2013) stated,

“taken together, these four categories could be viewed as a Personal Learning Lifecycle that every living creature follows” (p. 15). In looking at these four stages, then, it is easy to see the universality of transformation and of becoming something.

If this learning universality is accepted, then the idea of Becoming an Expert has a direct connection to Mezirow’s theory and is made more relatable since all people experience such a lifecycle and, during our lifetimes, we all aspire to grow and transform into something different from what we currently are.

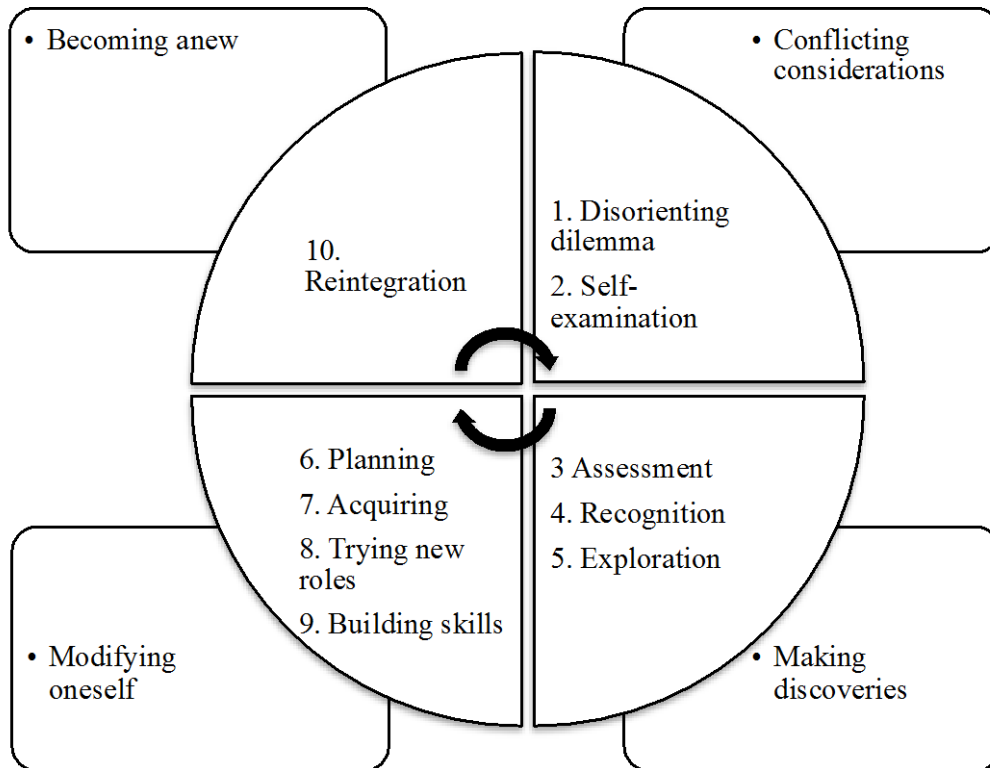


Figure 2. Mezirow’s 10 stages with broader categories

### Limitations

Two limitations to this study are present. First, to develop the theory of Becoming an Expert, only 11 participants were required for the theory to be developed. In classic grounded theory, through constant comparison of elements (Glaser, 1965), such a sample size is acceptable. Though respectable in classic grounded theory, such a sample size may be a bit sparse in typical qualitative analysis.

Second, one post-secondary school was used so all participants had the same doctoral learning background. While such a limitation is not problematic in classic grounded theory, in qualitative analysis, such a limitation may be concerning as generalizability may be limited. In classic grounded theory, though, with constant comparison and conceptualization, such a concern is not an issue.

### Conclusion

The idea of juggling many components—a sort of multilayered navigating—as evidenced in the theory of Becoming an Expert, is complex and non-linear. The continual shifting between juggling and restabilizing is often exhausting for doctoral learners yet the movement is necessary for transformation to take place. One participant described the process as required “a lot of pure grit” which may be exacerbated by the lack of “spoon feeding” thereby underscoring the need to juggle multiple components. Through frustrating, growing happens if learners can navigate the negative elements while successfully juggling. Becoming an Expert is a combination of juggling and continual forward movement to the end goal.

### 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.

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## **Grounded Theory through the lenses of interpretation and translation**

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### **Abstract**

This paper explores interpretation and translation issues that arose during a grounded theory study of the Greek health sector. It highlights problems that were encountered when working in two languages and demonstrates how these were overcome. This is important because

Grounded Theory (GT) research, in cross-cultural contexts, is associated with the linguistic challenges of conceptualisation. The authors offer their suggestions on how to conduct a GT research project within a diverse team based upon their experiences of undertaking such a study. Our paper supports Glaser's work and contributes to GT methodology by offering guidance on how interpretation and translation can be incorporated in a multi-lingual research design with system and rigour to provide extra levels of constant comparison. Hence, this paper will be of value to future researchers who are working in diverse teams and/or are undertaking studies in multiple languages.

**Keywords:** Grounded theory, translation, interpretation, method, Greek, English

### **Introduction**

This paper is the result of our experiences of using grounded theory (GT) to discover the concerns of nurses working within the Greek health sector. We studied nurses working in hospitals and nurses working in GP surgeries. The main concern of both groups was workplace stress. However, the way in which stress impacted on our participants was significantly different, despite many of the daily and weekly duties being identical in each setting. Hospital nurses experienced burnout (Maslach & Jackson, 1981), but GP nurses experienced boreout (Stock, 2015). This is important because both boreout and burnout can significantly affect the health of those affected and impact on the quality of service they provide (Lehman et al., 2011). The results of this study will be published separately.

Our team consisted of two researchers. The first author is bilingual, a native Greek speaker and fluent in English, whilst the second author is monolingual being a native English speaker learning Greek. Greek was the language of the data and the analysis for the first author, whilst English was the language of analysis for the second author. Integrating the linguistic needs of participants and researchers led to a plethora of practical and methodological issues that are explored in this paper.

When working in a multicultural team, interpretation of the spoken word and translation of the written word are the instruments which allow non-native researchers to engage with and conceptualise the data. Glaser's (2004) maxim "all is data" (p. 2) is a bedrock of GT. Indeed, Gynnild (2006) argued that the importance of this concept "[cannot] be overestimated" (p. 61). 'Data' are not only 'words' or 'facts': they are also cultural beliefs, behaviours and perceptions (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2018) which need to be understood if data are to reveal their meaning, and enable conceptualisation (Glaser, 1978). Translation must therefore not be neglected or mismanaged, as flawed translation processes can lead to a loss of meaning (van Nes et al., 2010), or the misunderstanding of culturally-important nuances (Venuti, 1995), which can impact upon the research and fundamentally affect the foundations of the study itself (Al-Amer, Ramjan, & Glew, 2016).

Our paper is highly relevant because cross-language research has become increasingly popular (Fersch, 2013). For instance, a major international conference brought together the topics of GT and translation in a stream of its own (IATIS, 2018). Previous authors have made recommendations about the way in which translation might take place within qualitative research generally (see for instance Bradby, 2002; Chen & Boore, 2009; Xian, 2008), but there are few studies of the translation issues that specifically arise in GT research, with its particular systematic and rigorous procedures. Some literature contains the phrase "grounded theory" in its title, but does not actually relate to doing GT. For instance, Wehrmeyer (2014) sought to incorporate the principles of GT into translation studies, but did not actually conduct a GT study, whereas Tarozzi (2013) explored how the translation into Italian of Glaser and Strauss' (1967) seminal work, *Discovery of Grounded Theory*, has parallels with GT principles. Nübold et al. (2017) adopted a GT methodology that combines English and German data, but the bulk of their paper focuses on the *products* of the study rather than a detailed discussion of the *processes* involved in collecting and analysing multi-lingual data. With the exceptions of Nurjannah et al. (2014), who specifically provided a worked example of the process of data analysis in the Straussian version of GT, most authors do not explore how to "do" translation focused GT research or provide guidance for those working in a multilingual context.

Our study outlines the benefits of working in a diverse research team in a multilingual context and how interpretation and translation can be incorporated into the GT process, systematically and with rigour. As will be shown, this does not destroy the essence of GT. On the contrary, we will demonstrate that the GT method is actually strengthened in these situations rather than diminished. A strength of GT is that it permits, and even encourages diversity amongst researchers (Evans, 2017). We were inspired by Shklarov (2009), writing in this very journal, although she was working alone, whereas we are a two-person research team and a mentor. Also, Shklarov's paper was essentially a reflective piece whereas in this paper, we explain how interpretation and translation works within a GT context and provide advice to future researchers. We also explore the use of verbal memoing within GT, and in doing so, we answer a previous call for research (Stocker & Close, 2013). In addition, we challenge the idea that research is inhibited by recording participant data (Glaser, 1998): non-recording assumes that each member of the data collection team can understand the language spoken by the participants and therefore that each researcher can write field notes and make contemporaneous memos in a meaningful way. On the contrary, we show that recording is essential in multilingual studies and can enhance the GT research. In this study, recording the research encounter enabled the first author to fully

engage with the participant before interpreting for the second author enabling the second researcher to also ask questions, make observations and offer theoretical ideas. The first author's interpretations, voiced in English, re-state the data and can be regarded as a verbal field note.

This paper has three main aims. Firstly, it demonstrates the role that interpretation and translation can play in GT studies. Secondly, it discusses how interpretation and translation might be implemented within a GT study by drawing upon the authors' experiences. Finally, it identifies issues and difficulties encountered in the process and demonstrates how these can be overcome. Illustrative examples of translations from our study are provided to enable readers to understand the translations process and to make an informed judgement about the research (Birbilli, 2000; Wong & Poon, 2010). The paper begins by briefly outlining the nature of classic GT, and the bulk of the paper is devoted to a worked example of how translation was used within our study. We conclude by summarising the key theoretical and practical contributions from this study. For clarity, it should be noted that interpretation and translation are different concepts. Translation relates to written messages, whereas interpretation relates only to converting verbal data into a different language (Bell, 1991). Hence, in the following pages, we use "interpretation" (and its variants) in its strict linguistic sense, i.e. during the interviews to verbally reflect in English what was spoken in Greek, whereas translation was used to reflect the written Greek interview transcripts into English.

### **The nature of translation and interpretation**

Any act of communication involves interpretation or translation—if only to process meaning—and thus can be inter-lingual (between different languages) and intra-lingual (within the same language) (Steiner, 1995). Intra-language techniques are the most common form of communication, for instance, a dictionary translates English words into other English words. There are, however, many examples where one word has multiple meanings. Weaver (1955) observes, that the English word "fast" has several meanings: two of which are effectively opposites (rapid and motionless): to understand the word "fast," it is necessary to read the words around it to get a conception of the sense that was intended. This issue is magnified when comparing one language into another.

There are two main theoretical approaches to interpretation: simultaneous and consecutive (Shuttleworth, 2014). In the former, the interpretation is undertaken whilst the speaker is talking (Morales et al., 2015), and is commonly used in conferences (Gillies, 2017). Consecutive interpretation refers to situations where the speaker pauses, and the interpreter summarises the essence of the discussion (Gibb & Good, 2014). Consecutive interpretation was the method used for creating verbal field notes, since this allowed the participants to speak without being interrupted and gave the interpreter time to think about the meaning of the discussion before rendering it into English. It also gave the interpreter (Author 1) time to think about the theoretical implications and offer those as verbal memos.

Translation, on the other hand, has three main categories, or "turns"—linguistic, philological, sociolinguistic (Nida, 1976). Linguistic puts the emphasis upon the structural difference between the source and target languages; philological stresses the words themselves; and sociolinguistic emphasises the meanings, cultural norms, and contexts inherent within the communication process. Our research belongs in the sociological turn, because we were not only

working with words and their meaning (linguistics) but were also obliged to consider factors such as the context, the setting in which translation took place, and the translator's own knowledge and theoretical sensitivity (As-Safi, 2011; Glaser, 2002). Hence, our focus was on the intended meaning, or the sense, of the text rather than a literal translation (see Table 2, where a selection of participants' statements have been translated into English in two ways: a translation by Author 1, and another translation by another Greek speaker, who was not otherwise involved in the study. This was done to ensure the authors were translating the participants' intended meaning, rather than merely the words used).

### **The use of interpretation and translation in the present study**

In the following pages, data collection, interpretation, and translation are discussed separately for clarity. Interpretation was undertaken during the data collection phase, allowing for the creation of verbal field notes and verbal memos while translation took place after the transcription of the recorded data.

### **Data collection and analysis within this multilingual GT study**

Iterative activities in classic GT include data collection, coding, memoing, sorting, and writing (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Holton & Walsh, 2016), a key outcome of which is the grouping of data into categories (Thulesius, Scott, Helgesson, & Lynøe, 2013). The emphasis is firmly on conceptualising patterns of behavior and interconnected ideas. The result is a dense, rich theory that "gives a feeling that nothing [has been] left out" (Glaser 1978, p. 58).

**Data Collection.** Participants were contacted several weeks before the interview to ensure they were willing to contribute, and neutral venues were found for the interviews where it was possible for participants to speak freely and candidly. Prior to each interview, emergent concepts were identified from previous interviews via open coding and constant comparison until the core category emerged, at which point we introduced theoretical sampling and selective coding.

It was clear from the outset that data collection would present difficulties because Author 2 did not have the necessary linguistic skills. We faced a dilemma: should the interviews be conducted in English or in Greek? From the researchers' perspective, it would be easier to conduct the research encounters in English, in which both are fluent. The literature, however, suggests that data must be gathered in the local language, i.e. Greek (Nübold et al., 2017; Nurjannah et al., 2014). Whilst many of our participants spoke some English, conducting the interviews in English might have compromised the data for those not totally fluent in the language: participants might have used the words that were most important to them, rather than expressing themselves using the correct grammar, where the correct grammar might have revealed important clues about their underlying thought processes (Xian, 2008).

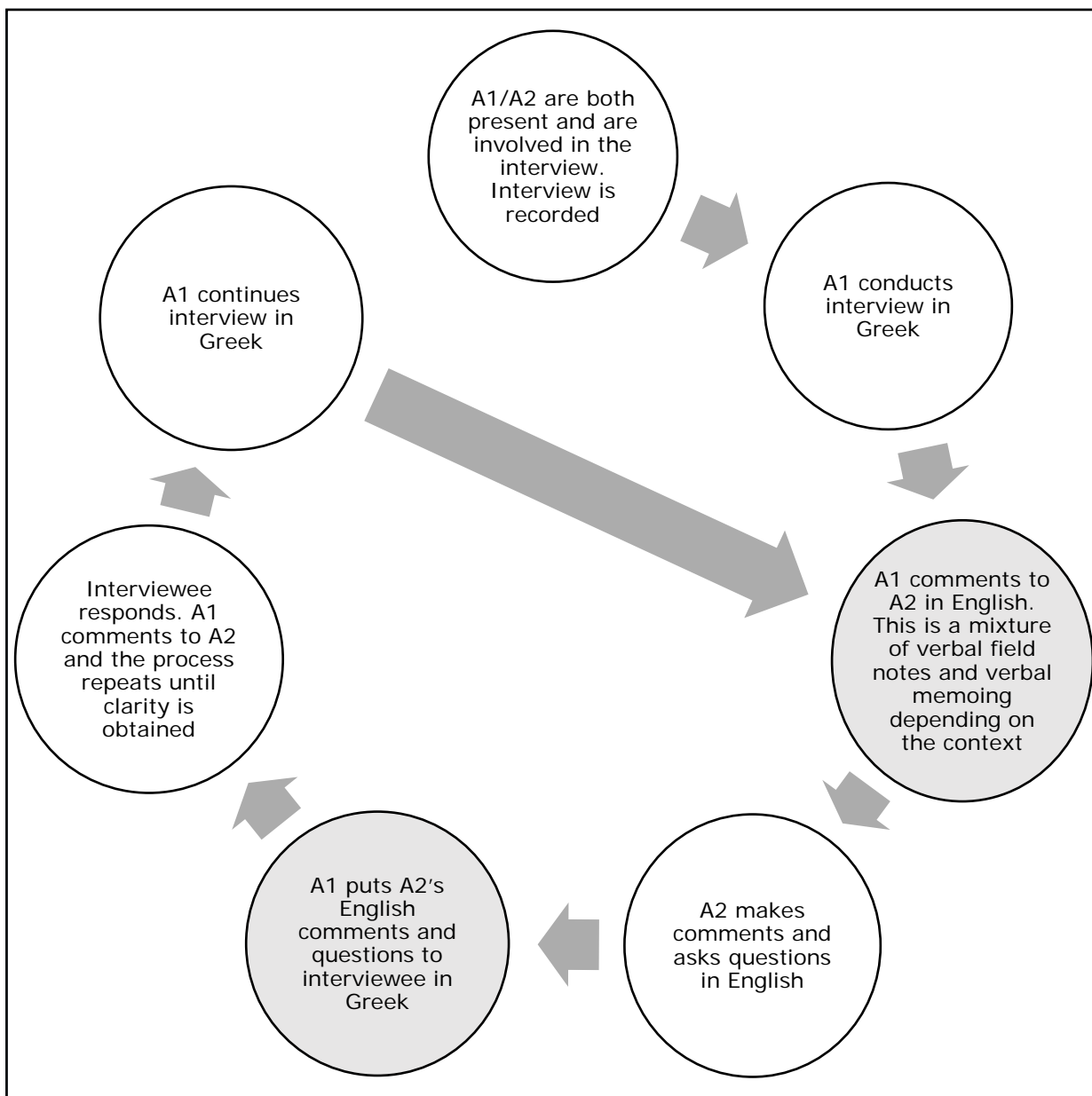
Furthermore, we sought to understand the culture and lived experiences of participants, which might be diluted by forcing participants to speak in what was to them a foreign language. Moreover, participants with weaker English language skills might feel uncomfortable and we sought to avoid this at all costs. With the intention of allowing participants to be in control throughout (Robson & McCartan, 2016), we asked the participants what they would prefer, and on every occasion, it was clear that they preferred to speak in Greek. This was the same approach

adopted by Shklarov (2009). Each interview was therefore conducted in Greek for the benefit of the data quality and participants, despite the fact that this would present the researchers with practical problems.

Despite Glaser's (1998) arguments against recording interviews, we chose to record for pragmatic reasons: the demands on Author 1 to interact with participants, interpret participants' contributions and include Author 2 in the conduct of the interview, precluded Author 1 from also taking field notes systematically. We recorded all interviews on a Dictaphone with the prior consent of the participants. The recordings were transcribed, and the transcriptions were translated. Having a full and permanent record of the research encounters enabled us to revisit the data as and when needed: repeated listening allowed us to develop a fuller understanding of participants' concerns and as the meanings became gradually clearer, allowed us to identify new avenues for exploration. The seamless inclusion of Author 2 into the research encounter and the ability to refine translations were deemed more important than collecting surplus data (an important reason behind Glaser's injunction not to record). Furthermore, recording liberated both authors to create verbal field notes and verbal memos and this process was therefore a crucial component of our GT approach and contributes to the methodology and theory development. An outline of the data collection and analysis processes can be seen in Figures 1 and 2 respectively.

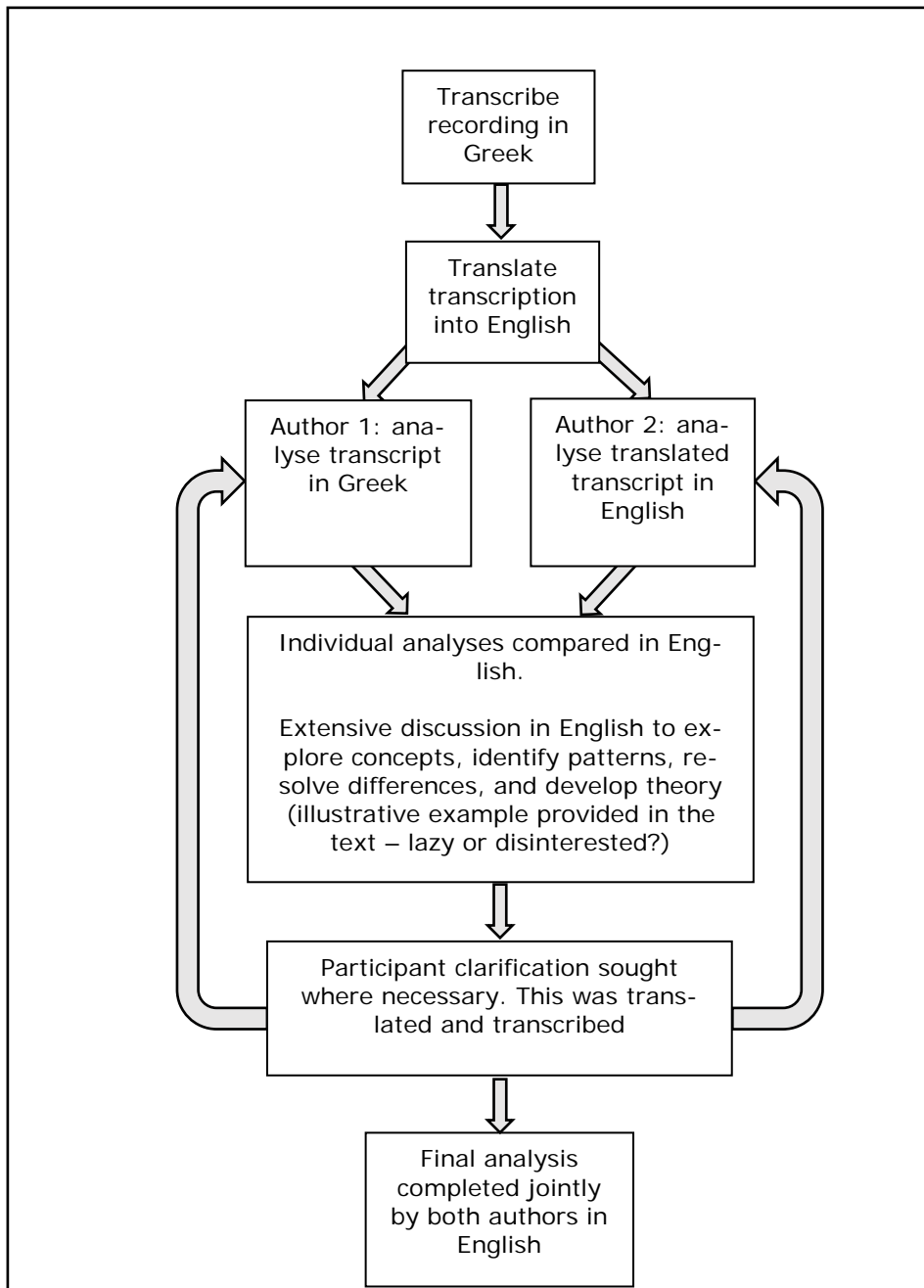


Figure 1. Simplified outline of data collection process



Notes: A1 and A2 refer to Author 1 and Author 2 respectively. This is a cyclical process which continues until interview is concluded. Shaded circles show where interpretation and translation occur

Figure 2. Simplified outline of data analysis process



In addition to advising against recording GT interviews, Glaser (1978) also advised against taking notes during a research encounter. Again, for linguistic reasons, we needed to be practical and take opportunistic notes. We often had to gather data from several people within a short period and so made some contemporaneous field notes in order not to forget key data and to ensure that the right notes referred to the right situation. Additionally, writing memos between interviews and during coding (Glaser, 2014b) helped us to keep track of our emerging theoretical ideas and helped to guide our thoughts (Glaser, 1978).

**Data analysis.** Theoretical memos are a fundamental requirement within classic GT (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), which allows researchers to capture their thoughts and generate and collect ideas about concepts and how they relate to one another (Glaser, 2014b). Ideas should be captured in memos as the idea occurs using whatever comes to hand. Theoretical memos are written throughout the analytic process to allow key theoretical ideas to be captured and thus they shape the development of the emerging theory (Glaser, 1978, 1998, 2012). Since Glaser (2014a) encouraged each researcher to develop their own memos, in our study, memo writing was undertaken by both researchers, and the results and ideas were discussed together. Glaser (2014b) advised that memoing must be concurrent with data collection. "It starts with note taking at the same time as taking field notes and very soon after, as the researcher is filled with thoughts" (Glaser, 2014b, p. 23). We therefore followed Glaser's approach—the only difference was that some memos were spoken, to allow both researchers to be fully involved and this expanded the avenues available for theory development.

Because of the composition of the research team, it was decided that during the interviews, Author 1 would interpret and re-state the data in English (effectively creating a verbal field note) to enable Author 2 to be involved more fully. This process triggered both authors to generate theoretical ideas, that is, verbal memos. For example, Author 1 mused: "I think the behaviour is different in the hospital. These nurses are behaving differently from the GP nurses. Do we have burnout and boreout? Burnout for hospital nurses and boreout for GP nurses?"

Following up on this idea, Author 2 proposed theoretical questions to do with burnout (Maslach & Jackson, 1981) and boreout (Stock, 2015), to probe and seek clarification, which Author 1 interpreted and posed to the interviewee. These concepts, which relate to stress in the workplace, ultimately proved to be important to the emerging theory.

Although verbal memoing has occasionally been attempted before, it was done to ensure that the researchers' thoughts were not forgotten (e.g. Stocker & Close, 2013). We used verbal memoing for a different purpose: to aid in developing a shared understanding of the data and in conceptualising the meaning of the data. Hence our study extends the technique of memoing to also include verbal memos.

Verbal memos are spoken versions of traditional memos, and perform the same function. In our study, verbal field notes triggered ideas and each author was able to offer verbal memos as ideas occurred. This helped us to develop and refine our theory. A detailed discussion about the data during the interview would have been very disruptive and impaired our data collection, therefore our verbal field notes and verbal memos were kept brief whilst still allowing both researchers to be equally involved and to contribute theoretical ideas. Interpretation of the data was therefore conducted for practical reasons, which is consistent with standard GT practice (see for instance Glaser, 1978; Nathaniel et al., 2019).

Our research process discovered that verbal memoing can enhance the efficiency of data collection (by pointing towards fruitful avenues to explore) and can enable the capture of fragile ideas in the moment. In addition, the verbal field notes and verbal memos were also included in the written transcript and were, therefore, themselves included in the constant comparison process. This proved to be useful as constant comparison occurs in coding when incidents, concepts and categories are compared within and across each group. It also occurs in sorting,

where ideas are compared one with another. In our study verbal memos and verbal field notes allowed ideas to be preserved and compared. Indeed, without verbal memos and verbal field notes, it would not have been possible for Author 2 to have been involved to any meaningful extent.

Examples of verbal memos and how they differ from field notes can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. Examples of verbal field notes and verbal memos

Verbal comment made by Author 1 during interview	Verbal field note or verbal memo	Comments
<i>"she was upset when she was talking about sick children."</i>	Verbal field note	This is a translation of what the interviewee was saying. It is merely a summary of the conversation. It does not offer conceptualisation or ideas for theory development. Thus, it is not a memo
<i>"We need to check out Hochschild (1983)—emotional labour it looks like surface acting is part of her day job."</i>	Verbal memo	Memos are <i>"the written records of the researcher's thinking"</i> (Glaser, 2014b p3). <i>"They are just ideas"</i> (Glaser, 2014b, p. 13). This comment is a record of the researcher's thinking and of the ideas that occurred at the time. It serves the same purpose as a written memo – the only difference is that it was made at the time.
<i>"I think the behaviour is different in the hospital. These nurses are behaving differently from the GP nurses. Do we have burnout and boreout? Burnout for hospital nurses and boreout for GP nurses?"</i>	Verbal memo	Memos are <i>"where the emerging concepts and theoretical ideas are generated and stored when doing GT analysis"</i> (Glaser, 2014b, p. 2). This comment is suggesting two concepts may be emerging – burnout and boreout – and is suggesting a possible link to different participants. It is making a comparison with previous data. Therefore, it is a memo.

**How we used Interpretation.** In our study, interpretation was interwoven with data collection. During the interviews, most of the questioning was done by Author 1, and as responses were received, they were interpreted for the benefit of Author 2. This was done discretely to minimise disruption for participants. These interpretations can be thought of as verbal field notes.

The aim was to interpret the “essence” of the conversation (Glaser, 2011). An example of this occurred after a long section of speech when Author 1 stated that “she’s talking about crying in the car to hide her emotions from her colleagues”—this is effectively a summary of the participant’s statement. This, therefore, follows Ivir’s (1987, 2004) substitution strategy, where the interpreter uses similar, but not exact, phrasing to maintain the meaning of the statement. This strategy allowed the second author to contribute directly because he could then pose questions, which Author 1 interpreted into Greek for the participants. This added an instant “gut feeling” insight (Stocker & Close, 2013) that helped to explain what was happening in the data (Glaser, 1978), and sparked the recall of situational aspects, initial thoughts, and overarching context which could, perhaps, have remained unsaid in the actual interviews (Stocker and Close, 2013). This is important because the brain processes verbal and written thoughts separately (Michael, Keller, Carpenter, and Just, 2001). In our study, we created verbal memos in English, which were captured on a recording device for later transcription and transfer to our memo bank. Our study shows how verbal field notes and verbal memos complement traditional written field notes and memos.

***How we used Translation.*** During our study, we were faced with three key methodological questions: Who should translate written materials? When should translation be undertaken? How should translation be undertaken? Clearly, translation must be performed by someone who is fluent in the language (Nurjannah et al., 2014), but it is also vital that the translator is directly involved with the research so that they can provide context and can clarify terms and concepts that would otherwise remain ambiguous (Tarozzi, 2013). This helps to retain participants’ intended meanings, and this is particularly important when culturally-or-contextually specific phrases are used (Nurjannah et al., 2014). Hence, in the present study, the translator was Author 1. The merging of two languages and cultures formed the translator’s habitus (our way of representing ourselves to others [Bourdieu, 1977]), and through interpretation and translation, the information was more easily understood by Author 2.

There was a risk that this habitus might have led to a power imbalance (Bourdieu, 1991; Nurjannah et al., 2014) between Authors 1 and 2. However, this was not the case in the present study, because we consciously balanced out the power relationships by emphasising the need for communication (Lesch, 1999). Firstly, we shared the workload (Svetlana, 2007). Secondly, Author 2 was present at all interviews and was an important part of the team: the use of verbal memos allowed him to receive and convey theoretical concepts as they emerged and hence he was able to contribute meaningfully to the questioning which, in turn, refined the emerging theoretical concepts and introduced new concepts that could be explored further. Significantly, his independence from the host culture was a positive factor because he was able to ask the “obvious” questions that might otherwise have been overlooked due to the first researcher’s familiarity with the context. The researchers’ theoretical sensitivity (Glaser, 1978) was sharpened by working in multiple languages because we were mandated to engage deeply with the data and their meaning (Shklarov, 2009), which meant that taken-for-granted assumptions were questioned (Starks & Trinidad, 2007), and that both authors were both fully involved in the analysis.

Having discussed who should translate, the next question was when should the translation be undertaken? Should the translation be done immediately after data transcription, during the analysis, or immediately prior to writing up the research for publication? There is no consensus

in the literature. Some authors suggested that the original language should be used for as long as possible, and that translation should take place once the analysis has been completed (e.g. Nübold et al., 2017) whereas others suggested that translation should occur during the analysis phase (e.g. Suh, Kagan & Strumpf, 2009). In the present study, the better option was considered to be translation to immediately after transcription (Nurjannah et al., 2014) to allow both authors to engage with the data. This also allowed the verbal memos to be written down and transferred to our memo bank. In addition, since constant comparison is a key differentiator between GT and other methodologies (Glaser, 1998), translating only prior to publication would exclude Author 2 from analysis and undermine our research process.

The “who” and “when” questions had therefore been settled. The final question was how should translation be undertaken? Equivalence, or faithfulness, is a key tenet of translation studies, and this seeks to ensure that the translated text is similar to the original text. There are many types of equivalence including dynamic equivalence, where the meaning of the source language and target language are as close as possible (Nida & Taber, 1969; Venuti, 2012), and formal equivalence, where the content in the source language matches the content in the target language as closely as possible (Baker & Saldanha, 2009). In recent decades, there has been a movement away from an emphasis on equivalence and faithfulness, towards a greater appreciation of the purpose and function of the text in the original culture (Baker & Saldanha, 2009). Indeed, in the present study, many statements made in Greek by participants had no equivalent translation in English.

These issues can be illustrated by a simple example from Greek. The phrase *ἡμέρα κάνει ζέστη* means “it’s hot today,” but a more literal translation is “today does heat”. Hence, Derrida (1998) argued that translation can say almost the same thing as the original, and indeed, these results show the lack of a single correct answer (Tarozzi, 2013; Temple, 2005) and highlight the difficulty the authors faced. Thus, translation is laden with social and cultural connotations, hence it can never be an objective and neutral process (van Nes et al., 2010; Wong & Poon, 2010). However, even if the translation is accurate, it does not necessarily convey the meaning behind the words (Croot, Lees, & Grant, 2011) and it does not take account of cultural or contextual differences (Su & Parham, 2002), which Fairhurst and Putnam (2018) argued are important to understand and which are important to maximise theoretical sensitivity (Shklarov, 2009). Moreover, linguistic equivalence may not always be achievable (Wehrmeyer, 2014). For instance, the English expression “it’s raining cats and dogs” cannot easily be understood by someone who does not share a common cultural background, even if they speak English well (Tarozzi, 2013).

Early in the process, we wished to satisfy ourselves as to the “equivalence” of the translations made up to this point. For instance, it was possible that another Greek speaker from a different part of the country might assign a different meaning to the text. Hence, samples of interview transcriptions were forwarded to another Greek speaker, and she provided her own translations without sight of the originals, and then a comparison between the two translations was made. Three representative examples are provided in Table 2.

Table 2: Examples of different translations from the same data source

Participant's original statement	Author 1's translation	Second Greek speaker's translation
Ναι είμαι , αλλά δεν υπάρχει εργασία... όσο είναι να κάνω. Τι να κάνω άλλο; Δεν μπορώ να κάνω το γιατρό. Εγώ πάω, κάνω ότι βρίσκω. Αυτό δεν μπορώ να αλλάξω κάτι.	Yes, I am, but there is no work. I do as much as I can. What else can I do? I can't be the doctor. I go to work, do what I find. I can't change anything.	Yes, I am but there are no jobs. I do a few things. What else to do? I can't be the doctor. I do whatever job I find. This is the situation. I can't change it.
Τι κενό να καλύψουν, όταν έχουν φύγει τόσοι σε σύνταξη, έχουν αλλάξει, τόσοι ρε παιδί μου. Εεε, ειδικότητα, δηλαδή κάποιιοι νοσηλεύτες, μπήκαν στο διοικητικό ή φύγαν τελείως από το νοσοκομείο ρε παιδί μου	It is impossible to cover these gaps when so many people have retired, or have changed specialisation. Some nurses have entered administration, or they have left the hospital completely	It is impossible to cover these gaps when many of them have retired, or are now in different specialisms. Some of the nurses have moved to administration, or they have left the hospital
Σου λένε κάνε την πάπια	Pretend that you don't know	Pretend you are a fool

These examples illustrate several points. In each case, both translations were very similar, although not identical. Although some nuances may have been lost in translation, the essential meaning was the same. This was vitally important in this study (Al-Amer et al., 2016), because of the GT methodology, where understanding the meaning is much more important than accurately recording direct quotations (Glaser, 1998). Secondly, a translation commonly contains a mix of approaches (Baker, 2018), and in this case, both translators followed three of Ivir's (1987; 2004) seven strategies--translation by omission, literal translation, and translation by substitution.

Translation by omission occurs when the source text contains phrases that are not important to the meaning (Baker, 2018). This can be seen in the second example: both translations ignored the phrase 'ρε παιδί μου' ("my child"), which occurs twice, because the translators knew this to be a phrase that is in common use, but which is rather meaningless, and reflects cultural contexts (Angelelli, 2003). Similar examples are found in English, such as "like" in the phrase "it was, like, an exciting game." Literal translation is an exact or faithful translation from the source language to the target language (Molina & Hurtado Albir, 2002) and can be seen in the table where Greek words have been directly converted into the English equivalent, for instance, 'νοσοκομείο' is translated as "hospital" and 'γιατρό' is translated as "doctor." This was done by both translators. Substitution occurs when translators use a similar phrase rather than an exact phrase in order to render the phrase less strange (Baker, 2018). For instance, in the third examples, a literal

translation might be “you say you play the duck.” This is a common Greek idiom that has no literal meaning in English. Hence, both translators substituted this with a more natural-sounding English equivalent, but not a literal, phrase.

***Translation in the process of coding.*** Given the importance of coding within GT (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), an important question was “which language should be used for coding?” Where researchers have used dual-language coding, sometimes the results have been very similar in both languages (Chen & Boore, 2009), but sometimes there were some slight differences between the codes generated in the two languages. This may be due to the different characteristics of the languages concerned (Nurjannah et al., 2014).

Whereas in the study by Nurjannah et al. (2014), the translated interviews were coded in English by the bilingual researcher, in the present case we were aware of benefits of retaining the original language. Hence, a dual approach was taken. The data were coded in English by Author 2 and were coded in Greek by Author 1. Coding took place as soon as possible after the interviews. This approach proved very beneficial, because Author 1 could take full account of the context in which the comments were made and Author 2 was able to code irrespective of context--or at least, without the same level of knowledge. When the English and Greek codes were compared, this often raised hitherto unexpected lines of enquiry. For instance, Author 1 coded a section of speech as ‘*τεμπέλης*’ (lazy) and Author 2 coded the same extract as “disinterested.” This led to a detailed discussion between us which opened up new lines of enquiry: it was important to conceptualise patterns of behaviour and this required us to identify the “proper” understanding, which understanding was resolved in follow-up interviews with participants. Comparing conceptualisations made of the Greek transcription and the English translation brought an extra layer of rigour to our analytic process.

Throughout the study, our ideas were captured in memos written in English. This allowed for full discussions within the research team, since Evans (2017) stressed the importance of including all members where there is a diverse research team. Data, codes, and the ideas in our memos were constantly compared, and the results guided the ongoing interview process. Periodically, memos were sorted to try to develop the emerging theory. As new ideas emerged during sorting, these were themselves recorded in memos (Glaser, 1978). These were arranged in the pattern which best allowed the theory to be described (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Hence, sorting was an iterative process which gradually refined the theory (Glaser, 2012).

***Translation of the literature in the present study.*** Two main sources of literature were used during this study: theoretical and context-related. All theoretical literature was in English. Therefore, no translation was required, other than intra-language (i.e. English-English) translation when topics were outside our own expertise, such as medical terms and the translation literature: concepts were developed in English.

However, all context-related literature was in Greek, and focused on the Hellenic health service. This included internal memoranda, procedure notes, newspaper articles, etc., and hence had to be translated as described above. This literature was treated as more data, in accordance with GT methodology (Glaser, 1978). Several television programmes were also of interest, some of which included interviews with medical staff or hospital directors. These were dealt with in the same way as our empirical interview data--i.e. they were transcribed and were then translated.



Since our concepts were largely saturated and our theory was in a mature stage of development in English, both Authors coded the transcribed Greek literature in English, making visible relationships between the data and the literature that might otherwise have been obscured.

### **Conclusion**

This paper exemplifies a research design where the data and the theory are expressed in different languages and where the research group comprises researchers with different levels of fluency and embeddedness in each. It illustrates the power of the techniques of verbal field notes and verbal memos as a means of including those who are not fluent in the language of the data in data collection and in enriching the moment during research encounters. In our experience these techniques have enabled us to access richer data than either of us could have achieved alone: it gave Author 1 access to the conceptual thinking of Author 2 and gave Author 2 the theoretical sensitivity of the native language speaker. The resultant synergy triggered not only questions to probe for and clarify the issues of participants but also allowed emergent conceptualisations to be rapidly communicated helping each researcher to identify patterns of behaviour and conceptual ideas in the moment and suggesting further avenues for real-time exploration. We would welcome further research into these ideas.

Our integration of interpretation and translation into our research design and our development of the techniques of creating verbal field notes and verbal memos have introduced the extra layer of rigour necessary for the conduct of multi-lingual GT research and effective constant comparison. Interpretation and translation enabled the non-native speaking GT researcher to engage in analysis: to conceptualise participants' meaning and identify patterns of behaviour. The process of generating this data through translation and the exploration of the differences between potential meanings are sources of important theoretical concepts. These differences sharpen theoretical sensitivity (Glaser, 1978) where working in multiple languages encourages the researchers to engage deeply with the data and their meaning.

Constant comparison across the languages of the study have further clarified the link between data and emerging concepts (Shklarov, 2009).

Although recording is not normally used within classic GT because it may negatively impact on what participants choose to reveal, the pace of analysis and researchers' creativity (Glaser, 1978, 1998), some GT studies have adopted the practice (e.g. Musselwhite & Haddad, 2010). Hence, whilst we fully support Glaser's doctrine that 'all is data', there may be a hidden assumption within it—that all researchers fully understand the language being spoken. This assumption does not take into account potential cross-cultural research partnerships which may be formed as part of an increasingly global research community. It is, however, important to note that Glaser (1978; 2014a) himself stressed the flexibility of GT and argued that it may need to be adapted to fit the needs of the research. Hence, we supplemented the traditional analytical process by incorporating recording, interpretation (verbal field noting), verbal memoing and translation into the research to aid the conceptual analysis.

More specifically, interpretation and translation rendered visible otherwise hidden data and this significantly aided conceptualisation. Ultimately, interpretation and translation add extra layers in the GT process since comparison now happens at least four times: during the verbal

memoing process, during the translation when meaning is being sought in the text, during the open and selective coding when patterns and themes are being discovered across many data sources, and during sorting memos when ideas are compared. This paper strongly supports Glaser's work, and we recommend the use of interpretation, translation and verbal memoing for future multi-lingual research design.

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**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.

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## Doing One's Best: Becoming a Kinship Caregiver

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### Abstract

A kinship family is one where a family member, other than a biological parent, is primarily responsible for the child. In-depth, unstructured interviews with kinship caregivers and children from 15 kinship families were conducted to gain a thorough understanding of interactions and relationships among kinship family members. Other data sources included notes from monthly kinship care committee meetings, kinship care focus groups, and kinship family support groups. The resulting grounded theory, *Doing One's Best*, explains a process of becoming a kinship caregiver and doing what one can regardless of multiple factors that make the situation difficult. Chaos increases as situational, relationship and emotional complexity are exacerbated by occurring together, leading to compounding complexity and the need to engage in behaviors to survive.

**Keywords:** classic grounded theory; kinship families; complexity; caregiving, surviving

### Introduction

In preparation for this classic grounded theory (CGT) study, the researchers identified an area of interest, the substantive area, which, for this study, was kinship care. Kinship care defined in its purest form is raising a child for a family or a friend (KFI, 2019). Kinship caregivers are any adult relative or adult fictive kin providing full-time nurturing and protection of children, with the most prevalent type of kinship care provider being a grandparent--predominantly a grandmother (Child Welfare League of America, 2011). In 2012, approximately 4.2 million households in the U.S. (3% of all households) included both grandchildren under 18 and their grandparents. A grandparent headed over 60% of these households, and 33% had no parent present (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). Among grandparent caregivers, about 12% are younger than 45 years old and 54% range in age from 45 to 59 years. Twenty-five percent are between the ages of 60 to 69 and 9% are over 70 years old (Pew Research Center, 2013). Researchers and practitioners most often explore kinship care through a child welfare lens, generally concluding that child welfare outcomes, such as safety and permanency, are stronger in kinship care compared to foster care (Winokur, Crawford, Longbardi, & Valentine, 2008). Because kinship care is most often seen as a better alternative to foster care for the children, the assessment of challenges and needs within kinship families focusing on the kinship caregiver, children, and the biological parent is often not

explored. This study focuses on the kinship caregiver and the children with future research needing to include the biological parent.

Grandparents who are the primary caregivers for their grandchildren experience positive and negative aspects of the caregiving relationship (Kirby, 2015) but we need to understand more about these experiences. Often, custodial grandparents live in families where their children are unavailable to parent due to adolescent pregnancy, incarceration, death, child abuse, neglect, or addiction (Smith & Palmieri, 2007). Additionally, the complications of raising a child as a grandparent can have a negative impact financially, especially in terms of retirement; socially, as raising a child later in life can be isolating; and emotionally, as the grandparent may feel anger toward their child as well as guilt. These stressors can lead to challenges in caregiving from grandparents in kinship families (Smith & Palmieri, 2007).

### **Methodology**

Classic grounded theory (CGT) is “a general research methodology linked with data collection that uses a systematically applied set of methods to generate an inductive theory about a substantive area” (Glaser, 1992, p. 16). The primary stages used in this CGT study were preparation, data collection and analysis, sorting and creating a theoretical outline, and writing the theory. While method stages are presented linearly, the researchers engaged in a recursive process, working multiple stages simultaneously.

In preparation for a CGT study, a researcher identifies an area of interest, the substantive area, which, for this study, was kinship care. As the opioid crises and other social problems are on the rise, it is imperative to have a theory grounded in the data providing guidance to assessment and interventions to families where the head of household is a family member other than the biological parent. An initial literature review was not conducted, and preconceptions were suspended to remain open to the data as dictated by the method.

In CGT, data collection and analysis are done in an integrated recursive process of collecting, coding, and analyzing data using constant comparative analysis with memoing interwoven throughout the process. While CGT can use any data, qualitative or quantitative (Glaser & Holton, 2004; Glaser 2001), open-ended intensive interviews with a grand-tour question are the most common form of data used and were used in this study. A grand-tour question is a broadly worded question designed to facilitate participants discussing the substantive area (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The grand-tour question for this study is: What is it like to live within a household headed by a grandparent (or other relative)? Data analysis began with the collection of the first data and guided the researchers as to where to gather data next and what questions to ask. This process is known as theoretical sampling whereby data analysis and data collection continuously inform each other (Glaser, 1978).

The first author and a graduate student interviewed the participants. Fifteen kinship families, living within a 50-mile radius of each other, were interviewed for this study. All of the respondents were from a family system that does not include either a biological parent or stepparent residing permanently in the same household with the children. The families were found by distributing flyers to social workers employed at the local department of family services, posting flyers at local health clinics and referrals from kinship families known to the researchers.

All interviewed caregivers were grandparents except one who was an aunt. The children being cared for ranged from 3 to 17 years old. Only children who were at least 12 years old were permitted by the University's IRB to be interviewed. Twelve children were interviewed. All interviews with children took place with the caregiver present. Theoretical sampling also led to the use of kinship caregiver data from the local county's monthly kinship care committee meetings, kinship care focus groups and support groups. Theoretical sampling led to more interviews with kinship caregivers but not with additional children.

In CGT, data analysis uses constant comparative analysis as the researcher engages in substantive and theoretical coding. Substantive coding includes open and selective coding. Open coding led to the discovery of the core category and subcategories, which become the focus of the research and theory. The core category accounts for the most variation in the data. Once the core category emerged, the researchers began selectively coding which involved limiting coding to concepts related to the major categories (Glaser, 1978). Coding continued until no new indicators of categories emerged, known as theoretical saturation. Next, the researchers engaged in theoretical coding which conceptualized how the substantive codes related to each other (Glaser, 1978).

Throughout the process of coding, the researcher engaged in memoing, theoretical notes about emerging codes and their relationships. Memoing is the core of the process and should take precedence because memos become the emerging theory (Glaser, 1978). Once theoretical saturation occurred, the researchers began sorting concepts and memos conceptually which created an outline of the emergent theory. The researchers used the theoretical outline and sorted memos to compose the first draft of the theory. Once the researchers were confident in the emerging theory, relevant literature was analyzed and integrated. The authors of this manuscript worked together on the process of analysis--from the coding to the emergence of the theory. The process included weekly meetings to ensure codes were conceptual and not descriptive, the discussion of what additional data was needed (theoretical sampling), sorting of the codes, memoing, writing the theoretical outline and the theory.

### **Doing One's Best**

The chaos created by compounding complexity is the problem that emerged from the data in this kinship care study. *Compounding complexity* is the complex environment within which kinship caregiving occurs and the factors that contribute to the complexity<sup>1</sup>. Compounding complexity becomes the context within which the process of Surviving the complexity takes place. To understand *Doing One's Best*, a brief overview of *Compounding Complexity* will be presented,

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<sup>1</sup> The details of *Compounding Complexity*, the context in which *Doing One's Best* takes place, are described in Tompkins and Vander Linden (2020). Our study on kinship care had the possibility of having more than one core category. Glaser explained when this occurs the researcher should focus on one core category while demoting the other and then later can focus on the other core category while demoting the first. This is what we did. The first writeup focused on the conditions of compounding complexity whereas this article focuses on the process doing one's best to address the complexity. When viewed as a whole, the two theories produced a more complex theory of Surviving the Chaos. *Surviving the Chaos* is a survival process of taking on the caregiving role and doing what one can despite multiple factors that make the situation increasingly complex.

followed by a more detailed explanation the process of *Doing One's Best*. It consists of two stages: rescuing and taking-on. Throughout the stages of this process, the complexity factors, along with other factors, will be discussed in relation to their effect on kinship caregiving and the need to engage in surviving behaviors in order to do one's best within the situation.

### **Compounding Complexity**

*Compounding Complexity* emerged as a significant category which explains the complex environment within which kinship caregiving occurs. There are three interrelated categories of factors that contribute to complexity in kinship caregiving: situational, relationship, and emotional complexity. Factors involved in situational complexity for kinship care families include society and community laws, policies, and expectations, whether formal supports (social services) have been sought, and if individuals are eligible for the formal support, the presence of conflict, the prevalence of change, and dealing with the situational logistics, such as the point in life of the caregiver including health and financial status (Tompkins & Vander Linden, 2020).

Within kinship care there is a relationship history (all past interactions between individuals) and a present relationship status (current state of interactions that exist between individuals) between the triad of family members (child, biological parent, and grandparent/other kinship caregiver) that contributes to the relationship complexity of the situation (Tompkins & Vander Linden, 2020). Emotional complexity is created by the emotional responses to the factors contributing to the situational and relationship complexity. These emotions guide choice and behaviors (Tompkins & Vander Linden, 2020).

Situational, relationship, and emotional complexity were discovered as the context in which *Doing One's Best* takes place, which will be explained in detail below as a survival process of taking on the caregiving role and doing what one can in spite of multiple factors that make the situation difficult. *Doing One's Best is a process that explains the response that takes place within a complicated situation that becomes increasingly complex as situational, relationship and emotional complexity interact, leading to compounding complexity.*

### **Core Variable: Doing One's Best**

Doing one's best is the greatest effort possible, at a particular point-in-time, that a person can put forth when taking on the caregiving role and making the best of the situation. Compounding complexity (Tompkins & Vander Linden, 2020) may prohibit the caregiver from doing her best. Factors contributing to the compounding complexity are often used as justifications for not taking on, but once a decision to take on has been made, the caregiver needs to be able to cope with or change the factors contributing to the compounding complexity in order to do her best, which will be discussed later within the stages. Other people (especially those outside the situation) often use a caregiver's level of commitment as a measure of whether a person is doing one's best. When doing one's best, caregivers find ways to work with conflict. The level of control a person has over a situation (or factors within a situation) affects one's ability to do one's best. The more control a person has, the more successful she may be at doing one's best. One grandmother expressed how she did her best saying, "She was supposed to stay six months, and she stayed five years. At points I was like lord I can't take all of this, but I did."

Roles are a factor that affect in doing one's best. Role identity, role identity conflict, changing roles, changes in levels of attachment and role confusion are factors that contribute to compounding complexity and affect the ability of a caregiver to do her best. Establishing and maintaining roles will vary depending on the level of enabling and proactivity of the caregiver. For example, whether or not the biological parent is around and if so, whether or not they are living in the same house as the caregiver and the children, and whether or not they are in and out of the lives of the children or are consistently around affects how roles are defined and managed. Parenting behavior coming from a caregiver who is not the biological parent may lead to parental confusion and conflict. These are all factors that contribute to compounding complexity that caregivers try to manage in the process of doing one's best.

The presence of conflict also affects doing one's best. Conflict can be classified into two types: internal conflict and external conflict. Internal conflict is a struggle within oneself to decide or to move forward within a situation. External conflicts are struggles relating to the compounding complexity factors, especially in relation to the people involved in a situation. While working through the conflict, the new caregiver contemplates abdicating (giving up) versus maintaining the caregiving role. It is often difficult to maintain consistency because of the conflicting roles of the parents and kinship caregivers. If consistency is established and maintained through the process of doing one's best as described later in this paper, the kinship caregiver is more likely to refrain from abdicating, and a long-term primary caregiving relationship may be established between the new caregiver and the care receiver(s) (grandparents and grandchildren) as they work together – doing their best to survive the chaos. As one grandmother explained, "We have had some struggles but recently we have been doing much better. We have both made some adjustments."

*Doing One's Best* is attempting to bring order to the chaos and confusion resulting from the complexities and the lack of permanency associated with the situation. In kinship care situations, it involves doing what is needed to create and maintain a better environment for the care receivers than was the case prior to or during the occurrence of the trigger event.

### **Trigger Event**

The process of *Doing One's Best* begins with a trigger event which is an event that is significant enough to disrupt the status quo of life, adds to life's complexity, and results in change. A trigger event may be one event or several events that often create increased stress in the life of a caregiver. Two common types of trigger events are destabilizing events and tragic events.

Destabilizing events are events that upset the normal routine, such as losing a job; while tragic events are occurrences that cause great suffering, destruction, or distress in the life of those involved. Tragic events are often related to accidents, crimes, or death. One kinship caregiver who was a part of this research was caring for her niece because both her sister and brother-in-law were killed in a car accident. The trigger event may have to do directly with the child, such as a teenager becoming unruly, but often the trigger event is an event in the life of the caregiver (biological parent) that does not directly pertain to the child, such as a loss of job, the addiction to drugs or alcohol, or the onset of an illness, all of which were seen in the data. One

caregiver stated: "my baby was 30 years old when she died. She was out in the street doing what she wanted to do. In the wrong place at the wrong time."

A trigger event adds to the situational complexity (Tompkins & Vander Linden, 2020) that already exists within the situation. Trigger events often result in change as the caregiver tries to address the ramifications of the trigger events. They often exacerbate problems which already exist within the situation and cause a person to feel loss of control and power. Trigger events may cause the needs of the individual to conflict with societal and community laws, policies, and expectations, such as caring for ones' own child. For example, it is most often a societal norm that biological parents are the primary caregivers for their children. Trigger events often complicate the logistics of caring for a child and leads the caregiver to seek additional support.

The additional stress of dealing with a trigger event may also increase the level of conflict within the situation. The caregiver may experience more internal and external conflict which contributes to situational, emotional and relationship complexity (Tompkins & Vander Linden, 2020). Internal conflict is a struggle within oneself to decide or to move forward within a situation. External conflicts are struggles relating to the factors or people involved in a situation. Factors that affect internal and external conflict when faced with dealing with a trigger event are harboring and conveying feelings, conflict between a person's hopes and expectations with reality, and emotional conflict. The trigger event also generates an emotional response that further guides a person's actions, behaviors, and choices within the situation. The trigger event may create emotional conflict within the individual as the person weighs and chooses between two or more options, none of which are ideal. The emotional complexity factors that may affect the outcome of the trigger event include, love, discomfort, unhappiness, and the inability to function as a primary caregiver. One of the children interviewed in the study stated, "My mom is in Washington state with her husband, with my stepdad; she never married my dad because I came before they got married."

A trigger event compounds the complexity of a situation by causing a person to reach one's limit of ability to cope with the situation. Reaching one's limit is going beyond an individual's ability to take-on more responsibility or even continue with the current level of responsibility. A trigger event often relates to coping with change within a complex situation and the caregiver may already feel she<sup>2</sup> has reached her limits and cannot cope with the complexity brought by the change, including the logistics of caring for the child during this change. A trigger event often causes a caregiver to feel like she no longer has the power and/or control needed to deal with the situation, especially when individual or family needs conflict with societal laws, policies, and expectations. From one of the grandmothers interviewed:

We have a wonderful friend who is Billy's therapist. Ms. P. has helped Billy understand why he is not staying with his parents by telling him that they had--they took some money that they shouldn't have . . . quite a lot of money and they had to go away to work to pay the money back.

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<sup>2</sup> The personal pronoun she is used because in this study and statistically, the kinship caregiver is often female.

The trigger event leads to the primary caregiver (biological parent) abdicating the caregiving role. Abdicating is when an individual who has been the primary caregiver gives up that role or responsibility. Abdicating often occurs when the primary caregiver reaches her limit. The trigger event may lead to a voluntary abdicating, where the caregiver gives up the role by choice, or it may be involuntary, where the primary caregiver is forced to give up the role by someone with more authority. In most cases this outside authority is the State but not always (Myers, 2010). If voluntary, the caregiver often feels incapable of continuing the caregiving role, seeks out a new caregiver and both the caregiver who is abdicating the role and the new caregiver perceive this abdication as temporary (Myers, 2010). If forced or involuntary, an outside authority (i.e., the state) has found that the caregiver is incapable of continuing the caregiving role. The outside authority finds a new caregiver and determines if the abdication will be temporary or permanent: One grandmother explained it this way, "You know, so I went along and I said okay, I'm taking custody of both children."

The trigger event results in a caregiver abdicating the role to a new caregiver and creating a new caregiving situation. Within this new caregiving situation, the new caregivers and care receivers continuously work to address the chaos that results from the trigger event(s) by doing one's best. The new situation is not always better than it was prior to the trigger event for the caregiver but the caregiver is driven by motives such as being the family stabilizing influence, family watchdog, family arbitrator, or family heritage keeper, which are described later in the theory.

While the change in the caregiver role may lessen the complexity of the situation for the previous caregiver, it frequently increases the complexity in the life of the new caregiver and may also increase the complexity in the life of the care receiver. Doing one's best often involves identifying and trying to address the most pressing factors that are contributing to the complexity of the situation (i.e. compounding complexity). These factors may include situational complexities such as housing, finance; relationship complexities such as integrating the care receiver into the existing family structure; and emotional complexities such as the emotional states of those involved in the situation. For example, the new caregiver may be adjusting to a change in life plans, lifestyle, and expectations. Many new caregivers thought they would be retired at this point in life but instead they continue to work in order to support themselves and the children they are caring for and they are back to a child-rearing stage of life. The care receivers may have similar adjustments such as getting use to a new living environment and learning what may be new expectations from a family member who did not have a permanent, primary caregiving relationship with the care receiver in the past. During doing one's best, the new caregiver and care receiver do their best to work towards creating a new equilibrium in life. *Doing one's best* can be broken into the stages that track the development of a transitioning caregiving relationship (going from biological parent--child caregiving relationship to a kinship caregiver-- child caregiving relationship). These stages are rescuing and taking on.

### **Rescuing**

The first stage of *doing one's best* is rescuing. Rescuing is taking action to save someone from physical or psychological/emotional harm by providing relief from a trigger event which is a traumatic or destabilizing event. There are three types of rescuing: helping out, stepping in, and

taking on. Within each type of rescuing there are two common variations: enabling and protecting. These two variations will be explained first and then related to the types of rescuing, since these two variations affect the different types of rescuing.

Enabling is a reactive behavior in which one individual indirectly supports another individual's negative behavior (i.e., the grandparent enabling her daughter--biological parent). This may include repeated bailing out, another "one-more chance," ignoring or avoiding the problem, joining them (in the behavior, the blaming or justifying), do for the person, and controlling the person or the problem. The level and duration of enabling may vary based on the frequency and severity of the behaviors of the second individual (biological parent) and the stamina and resources of the enabling individual. Enabling often becomes a habitual pattern of behavior within the relationship history of these two individuals. The enabler often offers justifications for the enabling.

Protecting is a proactive behavior in which one individual tries to keep other family members safe from the difficult circumstances that brought them together. Protecting often involves a high level of care which may include physical, emotional, and psychological care and support. It often occurs for a longer duration of time because returning to the previous situation is not a safe and acceptable option. One grandmother illustrated this saying,

J has been in my home basically since he was about 18 months, he was abused, his father had him for probably 3 or 4 months until he was 18 months old, being physically abused so I stepped in, and brought him to my home and tried to get him--I wanted his mother to have a relationship with him--which was very difficult at the time.

Both variations may result in creating a dependent and reliant relationship within the various types of rescuing and are often seen within the same situation. The new caregiver (i.e., the grandparent) engages in enabling the previous caregiver (i.e., the biological parent) while protecting the child. The protection of the child may become the justification for the enabling of the parent.

**Types of Rescuing.** As stated previously, there are three types of rescuing: helping out, stepping in, and taking on. Factors that affect rescuing range from reactive to proactive, level of care provided, and the duration of care. Helping out is the temporary process of meeting the needs of another. The level of care is limited and often takes the form of physical and financial needs. Helping out can be reactive or proactive. It is reactive when the help is asked for and proactive when the help is offered. While in the rescuing phase, some caregivers foresee the reality of a more long-term arrangement early on and begin to identify obstacles for taking on the caregiving role long-term. There may be concerns about meeting the physical, psychological, and emotional needs of the child or children as well as housing and financial concerns. Within kinship care, helping out often begins as protecting but becomes enabling, as discussed earlier, when the previous caregiver (the biological parent) does not take the steps necessary to reassume taking care of the needs of the child (or the caregiver's [biological parents'] own needs) as seen in this statement by a grandmother. "I have legal custody, but I have never assumed that I would take her indefinitely. I thought my daughter would get her degree, graduate and then move out with T."



Stepping in occurs when a person proactively decides to accept responsibility for the care of a child. Concerns about the care the child is receiving are often a motivating factor for stepping in. The level of care provided is often more substantial than helping out, involving all aspects of care for the child. The duration of care may be perceived as temporary but often is long lasting. As the duration of care increases, the new caregiver is more likely to engage in enabling the previous caregiver while protecting the child. One grandmother explained it this way:

Well, my daughter, she's having problems . . . so I had to step in. He was living with his other grandmother, then moved his uncle's, and [didn't] getting along, so I said, 'Well, come on up here,' so he's up here. Yeah, my daughter - she's doing better now. She's messed up a lot of her teenage years, but she's going to get her GED, and she's going to be alright.

Taking on is often reactive and less voluntary. Once a decision to rescue is made, it is often perceived that there is not a choice besides taking on. Taking on occurs when a person decided to accept responsibility but feels like there is not another choice because most often, any choice outside of the family system is not an initial option for caregivers. Taking on can be seen as temporary or may from the start be seen as permanent. Like in stepping in, as the duration of care lengthens, the new caregiver is more likely to engage in enabling the previous caregiver (i.e., supporting the biological parents' negative behaviors by bailing them out) while protecting the child.

Rescuing involves two steps: adjusting and accepting. For rescuing to be successful, then the caregiver must adjust to the new situation and ultimately accept it. Adjusting and accepting are complicated by aspects of relationship, situational and emotional complexity (Tompkins & Vander Linden, 2020). The compounding complexity often complicates decision-making within the situation. Rescuing often occurs without contemplation of long-term consequences. Adjusting is the first step in rescuing. Adjusting to what can be seen as a non-traditional situation often involves figuring things out that relate to aspects of relationship, situational and emotional complexity. In terms of relationship and situational complexity, the new caregiver often struggles with figuring out things such as the level of involvement of previous caregiver(s), determining how far to acknowledge the previous caregivers (acknowledging existence), and clarifying and rationalizing the situation to the care receivers and others. In a kinship caregiving situation, the parent who has abdicated her role may still be present or be totally absent in the life of the child and new caregiver. However, the parent may also be in-and-out of the life of the child and creating a situation that is unpredictable and unstable. The new caregiver may be enabling this behavior to protect the child. In each of these cases the grandparent is faced with determining the level of involvement of the caregiver(s) who have abdicated their role and explaining, clarifying and rationalizing this to the child and others which may cause strain in those relationships adding to the relationship complexity. Adjusting also involves dealing with aspect of emotional complexity including not really wanting to be in the situation (the situation not being ideal), the situation being unplanned and not a part of the caregiver's original life plan. In the data from this study, caregivers discussed having to put on hold plans for retirement and what they hoped to do in retirement due to caring for the child, as one grandparent explained:

It was never, never supposed to be permanent. I am writing a book--I have a lot of other things. It never occurred to me that I would be mothering. I am mothering--I am not grandparenting. I am mothering a teen.

Accepting is the second step in rescuing. Accepting is coming to terms with the situation. It often involves dealing with aspects of emotional complexity including denial and grief. In kinship care situations, the grandparent may be in denial or experience grief about the actions and behaviors of the previous caregiver (biological parent) that lead to the abdicating of the caregiving role. This is especially true when the new caregiver (grandparent) is the parent of the previous caregiver. When the new caregiver is the grandparent, denial may also exist over the role in the life of the child that led to the biological parent abdicating the role. The new caregiver (grandparent) may also experience grief over the situation being different than what was expected or hoped for. One grandparent demonstrated her unmet expectations when she said,

I would call every week or every 2 weeks and she would say, I don't want to talk to them and I would give them the phone anyway – you need to let them hear your voice and I know that you are not going to be mean to the children on the phone so I would just give them the phone and of course we didn't have no relationship with my daughter and we used to be really close, I mean I taught her how to read when she was like 3 years old.

There are disappointments and frustrations involved with rescuing, adding to the emotional complexity. Frustrations include challenges and barriers, discomfort, unhappiness, unacceptance, turning away and challenges with decision making and making future plans. Initially the situation is most often seen as the caregiver helping out, whereas the caregiver does not have a perception of a loss of freedom nor a perception of the full weight of taking on the caregiving role. However, as time progresses and the situation from which the rescuing took place does not show signs of improving, the reality of the situation begins to set in. The situation has become more than helping out or stepping in; the situation moves from a perception of temporary to long-term or permanent and a perceived sense of loss of freedom (taking on the caregiving role). One grandmother explained her thoughts as she realized the permanence of the situation. She said, "I told my daughter when you get yourself together, at least they are still in the family and they are still your children, they are going to always know you are their mother."

As the perception of the situation changes from short-term to long-term, the caregiver begins to consider her role within the situation. The caregiver is faced with two basic choices: abdicating, in which another new caregiver (i.e., another family member) would be sought, or carrying-on. Carrying-on begins with continuing with tasks and responsibilities that were started during the rescuing phase. While making this decision to carry-on, the caregiver may contemplate motive and other factors that may affect carrying-on. Often these factors relate to aspects of situational complexity, as described by one grandmother. She explained,

First it was really stressful for me and very overwhelming and I was really tired a lot. I didn't have any social life whatsoever. Nothing. Because my whole life just revolved around whatever the child needed. I didn't have any time to do anything else. I would just go to work and come home and take care of her.

Contemplating motive (not necessarily a conscious contemplation) is a step the caregivers go through when thinking about why they are carrying-on. Motives often relate to one or more of the following four areas: family stabilizing influence (one who promotes stability in the lives of other family members), family watchdog (one who acts as the protector of family members), family arbitrator (one who tries to resolve conflict within the family), and family heritage keeper (one who works at keeping the family close and together). The level of control a person has over a situation (or other factors within a situation) affects one's decision as to whether to carry-on. The caregiver often thinks about whether she will be able to take over the caregiving role. The caregiver may consider factors relating to her point in life as well as the point in life of the care receiver. Health and finances are also common factors considered at this point. The caregiver often wonders if there are any other choices and if carrying-on is the last resort. The alternative of not carrying-on, abdicating, is often not a choice because of the unconditional love the caregiver has for both their children and grandchildren. Abdicating is more likely to occur when a caregiver's limits are bypassed and there are too many stressors in the situation.

A caregiver transitions from the rescuing stage to the taking on stage when a conscious decision is made to become the primary caregiver of a dependent family member(s) after some level of grappling with the complexities and responsibilities of the situation.

### **Taking on**

The transition to taking on may seem seamless to the children (depending on the age of the child) but is often a major turning point for the new caregiver. The previous caregiver (biological parent) may not notice a significant amount of change either. However, taking on is a conscious decision to absorb the primary caregiving responsibilities of a dependent family member(s) after some level of understanding of the complexities. Austinson (2011) defined taking on as the act of identifying an obstacle, choosing whether to address an obstacle and, if deciding to take-on, utilizing various behaviors to work toward minimizing or eliminating the obstacle. Caregivers who are taking on may or may not feel like they had a choice in making the decision. Unconditional love and what is best for the child and other family members may override the preference of the caregiver (and even what is best for the caregiver) and leaving the caregiver with the perception of not really having a choice. Two behaviors used in taking on are: stabilizing and normalizing, which will be described next.

Upon taking-on, caregivers may begin to engage in stabilizing, recognizing that what was initially believed to be temporary is now long-term. Stabilizing is a set of behaviors used to establish or reestablish a state of balance within life after an unsettling event or situation. Some stabilizing behaviors include seeking support and resources, accessing resources, and working the system. Seeking support and resources often starts with an individual's informal system (family and friends) and then if this level of support is inadequate, may move to a formal level of seeking support (for example through the social service system or educational system). Accessing resources is being able to acquire the resources once they have been sought out. Working the system is engaging in strategic actions of aligning to advantage themselves, others, and/or the overall system. The person may work the system by accessing resources through multiple systems. Caregivers can stabilize, create a sense of balance, on their own, with the support of family and with the support of social service interventions. Caregivers who are unable to engage

in stabilizing may wind up in a crisis situation because they are unable to create a strategy or reach out to others for guidance.

Normalizing is the process of establishing a schedule and routine while implementing a course of action due to a destabilizing event resulting from situational complexity. Redefining roles, setting boundaries, and creating a routine are strategies used to normalize a situation. To do one's best when taking on, the caregiver often finds it necessary to adopt a new role in that child's life. This often means setting aside previous roles in order to adopt the new role. This transition may be gradual or more rapid, depending on other dynamics within the situation. Both the new primary caregiver and the child may experience discomfort at the redefining of roles. The primary caregiver is more likely to experience mental or emotional discomfort while the child may act out against the new role of the primary caregiver. This often leads to the next strategy, setting boundaries which is establishing what behaviors are acceptable or not within the new defined family unit. Creating routines aids in normalizing by creating predictability within a situation. Due to the situational, relationship, and emotional complexity, caregivers alternate between stabilizing and normalizing as new issues arise while doing one's best.

There are limits of viability that make normalizing challenging. Limits of viability explains a person's acceptable limits of tolerance which includes what they value, the amount of effort they can exert, the length of time they can expend, and the emotional capacity they are capable of handling. It may also include the resources they have to expend on the situation. Regardless of the means by which people gain responsibility, there are points when they reach the limit of their ability to take on more responsibility or even continue with the current level. In these cases, the limits of viability have been bypassed. When a person reaches her limits of viability, it may prevent the person from doing her best or being able to make the most of the situation.

## **Discussion**

The literature supports kinship care being a better alternative to foster care, but kinship care is not without its challenges and complexities (Generations United, 2019). It is essential to understand the kinship family, from the perspective of the caregivers and the children to determine if caregiving within kinship families is sustainable over the life course.

Whether or not a caregiver's role is sustained and effective over time is complicated. There is a plethora of literature on caregiving, but a minimal amount examining outcomes such as the effectiveness and sustainability of caregiving situations for the caregiver, care receiver and other relevant members of the social network (Joling, Windle, Drees, Huisman, Hertogh, & Woods, 2017; Kim, Lim, Kim, & Kim, 2018; Verbakel, Metzelthin, & Kempen, 2018).

Direct and clear communication between the dyad (and often the triad in kinship caregiving) is important to the success of the caregiving relationship. The ability of the care receiver to send clear messages and the ability of the caregiver to decode and respond to messages appropriately impacts the success of the situation (Corwin, 2018; Nussbaum, Baringer, & Kundrat, 2003). The caregiver's history, particularly concerning the element of trauma, can also impact the complex caregiving relationship and outcomes. A caregiver with a trauma history may be less sensitive to responding to the needs of a child, especially concerning the development of attachment in the relationship, through a misinterpretation of the child's behaviors (Bohr et al.,

2018). Additionally, the caregiver's history may impact other interpersonal relationships, preventing them from seeking help from other individuals or services in the community (Bohr et al., 2018). The impact of successful kinship caregiving has a significant effect on children regarding emotional, behavior, and intellectual outcomes (Sanders, 2003).

The literature relative to caregivers of older adults illustrates that caregiver stress negatively impacts the care receiver and caregiver overall (Cohen et al., 2015). Is this similar for kinship caregivers and the children in their care? The caregiving relationship is difficult to describe as either positive or negative, but a complex relationship of both positive and negative experiences (Cohen et al., 2015). Particular aspects of caregiving are likely to be stressful, and the emotional aspects of a caregiving relationship will have positive and negative qualities for the caregiver and the care receiver. We understand more about the caregiving relationship between the care receiver and caregiver when the caregiver is providing care to a dependent older adult than we do when the care receiver is a child and the primary caregiver is an older adult. It is important that we have theoretical guidance to better understand kinship families before we can make hypotheses as to whether the children raised by their grandparents will potentially step up as adults and become caregivers--whether or not the caregiving relationship will be sustained over the life course.

### **Implications for Practice**

This research can be used to understand more clearly and completely the relationships, situations, and emotions that are often a part of the daily lives of kinship families. When the complexities of these situations interact with each other it makes it challenging for some caregivers to work through the stages of surviving the chaos, rescuing, taking on and doing's one best. It is important to use the theories emerging from this data as guides to better understand kinship families and advocate for needed resources.

### **Limitations and Area for Future Research**

A limitation of this study is not having direct access to the biological parents of the children. A study examining the situation from the perspective of the biological parent is imperative. A grounded theory methodology is not intended to provide population estimates or random stratified survey results (Schoenberg & McAuley, 2007); however, with a better understanding of the variables to explore, a methodology that will lend itself to external validity is a future step. Another area for future research is whether the grandchildren, as young adults who were raised by their grandparents, step up and provide care to their grandparents if the need arises. There is literature to support grandchildren as caregivers for their frail grandparents (Blanton, 2013; Fruhauf, Jarrott, & Allen, 2006) but a question that needs continuous exploration is whether or not the complexities of kinship families (compared to non-kinship families) lessen the chance that the grandchildren will be motivated and capable of providing care to their grandparents if the need arises. As kinship families are more prevalent across the country, we need to understand the existing complexities to sustain the intergenerational relationships over time. It is our hope that this theory is a steppingstone to future research addressing this issue.

### **Conclusion**

Kinship families are prevalent across the country as our foster care families. Kinship care is most often seen as the first choice over foster care because the child stays within the family and the child welfare outcomes tend to be stronger (Winokur, Crawford, Longobardi, & Valentine, 2008). We are learning that the emotions, relationships, and situations that occur as a result of kinship families may be a catalyst for chaos and may need more societal attention than first realized. This study adds to the literature by providing a theoretical framework that is grounded in the data--predominantly in-depth interviews with kinship caregivers and the children they are raising. Kinship care is often seen as what is supposed to be occurring--the best situation for the child; if the biological parents begin to raise a child and then are unable to for a variety of reasons, then a kin or fictive kin option should be initially assessed. The current study did not contradict this perspective but provided a theoretical perspective of the reality of the kinship and the importance of needed societal support. Though we are learning that kinship families are often in need of financial resources, housing and social services to address physical and mental health challenges, we need to have a clearer understanding of what the needed services are to help kinship families cope with the complexities, do one's best, and survive the chaos that is often a part of their lives.

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**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:** This research is funded in part by the John A. Hartford Foundation

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## Moving On

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### Abstract

Moving on explains a five-stage process of making voluntary change. The first stage begins with a realization that a person is moving toward or away from something and faces a decision to do nothing, perch, or continue on. In the second stage, seeking a right fit, a person explores vehicles for change and uses value-based decision-making to seek a right fit. Acting upon that right fit does not happen until a tipping point is reached, the third stage. Deciding to move toward action or not is a decision made when a person either impromptus, comes to know, or deliberates over information. The fourth stage explains the journey, decisions made and factors that affect decision making, and coping strategies. The fifth stage explains how moving on concludes by evaluating the success, or lack thereof, of moving on.

**Keywords:** voluntary change process, values, decision-making, coping strategies, classic grounded theory

### Introduction

Change is a constant part of life and with change comes many decisions. This study began with an interest in what leads certain individuals to select a specific institution of higher education. However, as I began collecting data and following the grounded theory method, I soon became aware that although grounded theory may start in one substantive area it often leads to the emergence of a broader social process (Glaser, 1998). According to Glaser (1992),

Grounded theory often starts off with a study located within a structural unit, such as in a particular business, hospital or school. The conceptualization going on in grounded theory automatically leaves the time and place of this unit. The theory is no longer generalized to a unit, but to a process which goes on in many other similar units. (p. 137)

Indeed, this is exactly what happened. The study went from a study about people's choice of higher education institutions to how people move through a process of voluntary change. Thus, the resulting theory is about how people make voluntary change.

### Methodology

This classic grounded theory (CGT) study was completed as part of a doctoral degree from Fielding Graduate University where I completed a specialization in classic grounded theory. A grounded theory is useful in identifying people's main concern (or problem) and how they go about resolving (or solving) that concern (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). A grounded theory is often identified by its core variable, the one idea (also known as concept or variable) that explains how people resolve (or solve) their main concern (or problem) (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In my theory, moving on is the core variable that explains how people solve their main problem which is how to deal with making voluntary change in their lives.

To start this CGT study, I made every effort to acknowledge and limit any preconceptions concerning the area under study. This was done in an effort to keep an open mind and be able to listen to what others were saying, and read what people in the action scene may be writing as opposed to allowing my own ideas to cloud what the data was showing. If a researcher is unable to set aside preconceived notions, then the researcher risks adding information into the study that has not earned its way in and therefore may unground and invalidate the study (Glaser, 1998). Similarly, prior to data collection and analysis, I did not read literature about the topic of the study. If this were done the researcher's assumptions would have become preconceived and not earn their way into the study; this again, may unground and invalidate the study.

Setting aside preconceptions, the researcher starts data collection. A grand tour question, sometimes phrased as a statement, is used to frame the inquiry. My grand tour statement was, "tell me about your experiences at [name of higher education institution]". This question was asked of three initial participants. Yet, as I analyzed the data, I realized that the information was not only about the process people go through to choose institutions of higher learning but also was more broadly about how people navigated change in their lives. Thus, the grand tour question changed to, "tell me about your experience with change." I used this question with the remaining 14 interviewees, some of whom were in higher education and others were not. I also collected data from newspapers, specifically about people who made difficult involuntary change decisions.

This study used two types of sampling. The first was convenience sampling, which the researcher uses to initiate data collection. The second is called theoretical sampling, which is where the emerging concepts and theories direct the researcher to the next data needed next (Glaser, 1978).

After attaining that first piece of data, I began data analysis. Data analysis, at the beginning, was simply a matter of taking important ideas, which were often descriptive in nature, and giving that idea a conceptual/ theoretical name. This process is called open coding and continues with the initial sets of data until the researcher begins to identify some theoretical patterns in the data (Glaser, 1978). Through continued analysis, I came to understand that there was an issue that people were dealing with and of all the coding that had been done, there was an overarching code that explained how people resolved that issue. It is this code that is known as the core variable; that is the one idea (also known as concept or variable) that explains how people resolve (or solve) their main concern (or problem) (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). At this point I started sampling only for those theoretical ideas that

are important (called theoretical sampling, as noted above) and coded just for those ideas that were related to the core variable (called selective coding).

As concepts emerged through coding, data was analyzed using constant comparative analysis (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). I wrote notes on how one idea was related to another during open coding; and how one theoretical concept was related to another during selective coding. Glaser and Strauss (1967) called this process of writing about the code comparisons, memoing. Once theoretical saturation was reached (the point where no new variation is found), I organized memos into a theoretical outline, relevant literature was integrated, and the theory was written up.

### **Moving On**

This dissertation started in the area of higher education with an interest in why and how people choose a specific institution of higher learning. Yet, through the constant comparative analysis, it became clear that the emerging theory was not just about the choice of an institution of higher learning but was about how people navigate the process of voluntary change in their lives. The core variable (that one idea that explains how people resolve their issue--in this case, how people deal with voluntary change) is called *moving on*. Moving on explains a five-stage process of making voluntary change. The five stages are: becoming aware of a need for change, seeking a right fit, reaching a tipping point, journeying, and drawing to a close.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Stage One: Becoming Aware**

In stage one, people become aware that they want change. This awareness falls on a continuum ranging from people who are unaware that there is the possibility for change to those who feel a need for change is obvious. People who are unaware generally have a feeling of ease about their lives or situations; however, they listen to suggestions. For example, a study participant's friend suggested that she change jobs because the current situation was so awful. The friend said, "you've got to get out" and "you got to find something new." Suggestions, like these, may come in the form of a nudge, which is when someone else is cognizant of the possibility for change and it informs or brings the other person to that awareness. Furthermore, sometimes people who nudge others are actually able to help, including financial assistance as in the case of a benefactor or it may include situations in business where change agents may stimulate aspirations for improvement in clients (Lippit, Watson, and Westley, 1958). No matter the situation, a nudge often occurs when people are unaware of the possibility for change.

Further along the continuum of awareness is when people begin to know that there is a need for change as they feel a desire to move toward or away something. When the awareness for change is obscure, people may be grappling with their self-identity and/or the need for self-improvement including mental, physical, and spiritual or some hidden agenda, such as one participant in the study who was attending college for the social aspect and not

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<sup>1</sup> Note, the topic of change was limited to voluntary change because the data showed that this process is much different than that of involuntary change.

for education. In this example, the participant was attending college to gain a sense of equilibrium in her life.

On the other end of the continuum of awareness is when people know they obviously want change. In this case, as people move toward some change they speak of their wants, desires, and longings. Change for people in this situation is being contemplated to better themselves, bring pleasure to themselves, or bring about transformation. Also, when people know they want change, they may want it because they are moving away from something. In this study, several people spoke of abusive situations they knew they had to get away from. Other offending situations may include boredom, inequality, or injustice. People who are moving away from something speak of complaints they have and needing to make change.

Understanding where one is on the continuum of awareness relates to valuing and timing. Valuing is a behavior people engage in when considering the relative importance of each aspect of their prospective change. As people evaluate each aspect of change that is important to them, they consciously assign a worth or value to that aspect. This is called *weighting*. And, when people subconsciously put a worth or value to an aspect of their change, *instincting* takes place. Additionally, a person evaluates the timing of change. If a person is unaware there is a possibility for change, then that person may not even think about values or timing. However, if a person has started contemplating change then the factors that are valued and the timing of the potential change become very significant. This idea is important because when the prospective change is known by friends and family, those people may actually want to know what is being valued and the time frame under consideration so that they can help (however, sometimes family and friends do not want to help; instead, they block).

As people become aware of the prospect for change and begin to place value on various aspects of their prospective change and evaluate the timing, they decide about moving on. One option is to do nothing, which generally occurs when people are satisfied with their lives and therefore any change would take energy and is generally not deemed, as necessary. Another option is to do nothing for now (perching) and keep the status quo while waiting for the timing to be better to move on. Lastly, people may decide to continue on. If the person decides to move on, then he/she seeks a right fit, which is the next stage in the moving on process.

## **Stage 2: Seeking a Right Fit**

In this second stage of moving on, seeking a right fit, people look for a vehicle for change that will fit and work well for them. A vehicle for change that fits well is a good match for the person; and therefore, is different for each person depending on individual values and appropriate timing. When a vehicle for change works for a person, it situates well into his/her life.

People find and evaluate various vehicles for change for a good match according to a person's values. Hence, the concept value-based decision-making is an evaluative process based on people's values which guide decision making and therefore is what drives the choice for the vehicle for change. There are five aspects of values that inform peoples' choice of what

vehicle for change to use; they include: support, structure, accessibility, comfort, and couponing. The more aspects people value, the more complicated the decision-making becomes leading people to use a sort of cost-benefit analysis way of evaluating their options.

According to the data, support or the lack thereof was the single most important consideration (value) people used when choosing a vehicle for change. When people feel supported, they feel fulfilled and cared for and can more easily make a choice for a vehicle for change. However, if people feel a lack of support, they may not know where to turn for information or may not know how to get things accomplished, leaving a feeling of loneliness which makes choices more difficult. A study participant commented how the support admissions officers, or the lack thereof, influenced his selection of one college over another.

Another aspect people consider when choosing a vehicle for change is how much structure and control, they feel they need. People who need a lot of structure may tend to gravitate toward vehicles for change that offer that structure. Conversely, people who do not need structure may gravitate toward vehicles for change that have less structure. One study participant said he could not care less about what the teachers were doing; he just wanted to be left alone to do his own learning. Additionally, some people like to have control in how their vehicle for change functions, while others do not; and this aspect may affect people's choice in vehicle for change.

Accessibility is another aspect people may consider when choosing a vehicle for change. Cost, duration, and location are three characteristics of accessibility that are often valued; therefore, people seek a price that suits them, and offers the duration and timing they desire, at a location that works for the person.

Another aspect considered when choosing a vehicle for change is level of comfort. Comfort may include physical and/or emotional familiarity with the vehicle for change. Knowing what something looks like or how a system works lends to that familiarity. One participant spoke about looking for a career that emotionally fit into his life. People who value comfort will seek a vehicle for change where comfort is optimized.

Finally, another aspect that influences the selection of a vehicle for change, is whether they are offered a special deal to choose that vehicle for change. This is like the way stores offer coupons to entice people to purchase their items. The lure of the offer may be so enticing that it affects the person's choice in a vehicle for change.

The preceding five aspects are those values that people use when choosing a vehicle for change. However, there are problems that may obstruct people finding their vehicle for change and their right fit. These problems fall into a few categories such as lack of information, in accurate or conflicting information, and the effects of people's preconceptions. Lack of information prohibits people from making good decisions. Inadequate information and inaccurate or conflicting information may have the effect of slowing down the process of choice of vehicles; and may lead to a poor choice. Preconceptions nag at a person and may sway a person to act or do what they think others want. Thus, preconceptions may affect people's choice in a vehicle for change.

Not only do problems obstruct a person's ability to make a choice for vehicle for change, but the effort one must use to justify, either to oneself or to others can affect the choice for vehicle for change. People like to think they are making good decisions; thus, they may start to justify a particular vehicle for change. The energy required to justify may help sway the opinion and choice of vehicle.

Although most people do not look at many options, they do search until they find a match using value-based decision-making. Once people have a good option for their vehicle for change, they may tip toward action.

### **Stage 3: Reaching a Tipping Point**

Reaching the tipping point occurs after people become aware of a desire for change (stage one) and after they have investigated their choices for a vehicle for change (stage two). Reaching a tipping point is that crucial moment in time when people decide to move on and act in an effort to attain their desires. Generally, people will reach their tipping point by using one of three decision-making approaches: impromptuing, coming to know, or deliberating. These three decision-making methods are affected by people's values and timing.

Impromptuing is one approach used to help people decide if they should move on. When people make a quick or spontaneous choice to move toward action, people are making an impromptu decision. When people make an impromptu decision, they use little or no forethought. In this study, one person impromptued her decision to attend a university because it was the same university where she attained her Master of Arts degree.

Another decision-making approach, coming to know, occurs more slowly. Although coming to know creeps up on people, when they feel it, they have a certainty about it. Coming to know occurs when people just get that feeling that they know what they have to do. Coming to know is almost spiritual as if a higher power is guiding a decision or change. One study participant reported knowing she needed to take care of her dying grandmother. She likened the decision to being almost spiritual because she felt that there must be a purpose in her leaving nursing school and taking on such a responsibility. Thus, people who use coming to know as a decision-making approach value their gut feelings which take precedence. This is like impromptuing; however, impromptuing occurs quickly, while coming to know occurs in a more subtle manner.

The third method people may use to help them decide if they should act is deliberating, which is more thought based. Deliberating requires more time as people need to recognize the events and feelings that are tipping them toward action. People need time to figure out how they will navigate the new experience. People also need time to vacillate, if they feel conflicted, as to whether they want to tip toward action.

When people reach this stage, they have already become aware that change is an option and they have started looking through the choices for a vehicle for change. However, they have not tipped toward action. This stage is about the process of tipping; people will either use the approach of impromptuing, coming to know, or deliberating. People's values and timing affect each of those methods. A tipping point will happen. However, that tipping

point may not be one toward continuing on. In fact, the tip may actually stop the person from moving on when the person no longer feels moving on is in his/her best interest. This stopping may be permanent or temporary; however, it has the effect of stopping the forward motion. People stop for a variety of reasons; they may lack confidence meaning they do not have the wherewithal to move forward. Loneliness, feeling afraid, and being nervous can also stop a person from moving forward. After people reach their tipping point and if they decide to continue on, they begin their journey.

#### **Stage 4: Journeying**

Stage four, journeying, explains how people manage their chosen path as they try to maintain the fit of their vehicle for change. Journeys can be smooth sailing, where people progress through their journeys as planned, or full of snags which hinder people and cause people to either divest (leave) or work it out. If people work it out, they use coping strategies which help them move back to smooth sailing.

The factors of support, structure, accessibility, and comfort which were discussed in stage two, seeking a right fit, affect journeying. When these factors are available and used, they make people feel cared for, fulfilled, and aligned with their change. When these factors of support, structure, accessibility, and comfort are available, it leads to smooth sailing; however, when people do not receive the right amount of support, structure, accessibility, and comfort, they may feel unimportant, lonely, and/or off track from their desired change.

As previously mentioned, journeys can either be smooth sailing or full of snags. If a person's journey is smooth sailing, any glitches are dealt with seamlessly as people feel happy and/or content with their journey. However, most people experience smooth sailing and snagging. Snagging is the opposite of smooth sailing and requires people to make decisions.

When snagging, people no longer have a good match as their once good fit is deteriorating. Snags are blocks "that hinder your chances for success" (Dyer, 1984, p. 98) in the change process. An example of snagging from this study, occurred when a person wanted her undergraduate degree but snagged when she could not get her transcripts sent from her high school. Snagging may occur at any time during one's journey and may slow down or stop the journeying. When snagging, people must decide what to do; this decision is based on the factors they value most and how they perceive the support, structure, accessibility, comfort, and couponing, previously discussed. If people use value-based decision-making by considering the aforementioned factors when they snag, people may decide to either work it out or divest.

When snagging, if people choose to work it out, they do so by making do, resolving the issues, coming to a meeting of the minds, acquiescing, or doing it over. When making do, people decide it is easier to block out or ignore the issue than deal with it and perhaps the people involved. Therefore, when people ignore or block out situations, they are making do with what they have. Lindblom (1965) wrote about muddling through as a way for people to deal with bad situations. Juxtaposed to making do is resolving issues. When people resolve issues, they work the problems out and find answers to the offending items. Francisco (2010) wrote about making do as the way people resolve their main concern of dealing with

unsatisfactory situations. One complicating aspect of resolving issues is that sometimes people may need to resolve negative events and/or feelings in their past to move on. Sometimes, as people resolve their issues, they have to come to a meeting of the minds which is when opposing sides come together to form some sort of an agreement or compromise so journeying may continue. When people come to a meeting of the minds, they may have to do a little dealing and bargaining about which Eisenstadt (1970) and Raffanti (2005) wrote. Another method people may use to work it out is simply to acquiesce. Acquiescing allows people to un snag and move forward. However, acquiescing may continue to affect people because the issue still may be a bother to them. This often leads to holding a grudge, anger or frustration which may lead to a less successful journey. Finally, another method of working it out occurs when a journey is restarted which may take some coaxing from other people and may include a redefinition of either goals or the vehicle for change. In summary, if people decide to work it out, they will do whatever it takes to end the snag and return to their journey.

Sometimes when people have lost their fit and are not coping well, the only decision is to divest. When divesting, people do so in three general ways (escaping, bailing out, and/or slowing down) and for four general reasons (losing part of themselves, enabling others, roguing out, and experiencing painful situations). Furthermore, when people divest, it may be permanent or temporary depending on people's experiences while journeying, their goals, and their ability to bring closure to the experience.

The ways people divest are by escaping, bailing out, and/or slowing down. These approaches to divesting occur when fit is being lost which affects the meaning of or manageability of a journey. Escaping allows people to divest. People, who speak of escaping, sometimes discuss escaping from abusive or difficult situations. Others may divest by bailing out which is a quick response to end events when people are unable to cope with their journey. Bailing out eliminates extra responsibilities which have become a strain. While bailing out is quick, some people may prefer an option which happens by slowly backing away from a situation. Leaving may become easier in this slower manner.

Reasons for divesting relate to people losing part of themselves, enabling others, or roguing out in painful situations. When people feel like they are losing part of themselves they may decide to divest. People speak of losing part of themselves when they must compromise their beliefs. One participant spoke of the stress of being a doctor's wife and her loss of identity. A feeling of losing part of oneself may also occur during a lifecycle change for which one is not ready or when a person loses contact with his or her spiritual self. Another reason people may decide to divest is when they enable others. When people allow others to do something that is harmful at the expense of the person giving permission, there is a resultant imbalance. A third reason people may divest is when people rogue out, which comes from the concept of rogue element or someone who clashes with the system in which they are functioning. One participant, who wanted to switch to an honors college, found it very difficult to work within a set system and was seen as a rogue element. In this theory, roguing out occurs when people's personal determination clashes with the system or venue in which the person is journeying. Roguing out may be the reason for divesting. The final reason people may divest is when there are painful situations, including but not limited to abusive situations.



One painful situation occurred when a person in this study realized she was financially broke. She decided to divest from the boyfriend with whom she was making poor financial decisions. In summary, people may choose to divest when they have a good reason.

As mentioned previously, divesting does not have to be permanent. When reinvesting, people seem to be wiser and are more able to make do with what they have, resolve issues, come to agreements, acquiesce (or step aside as needed), and do over (but with more perseverance).

While journeying, people use coping strategies. These include, but are not limited to, support strategies, management strategies, optimizing strategies, calming strategies, and determination strategies.

For some people, support is the single most important indicator of a journey's success. People may find new support systems or reconnect with old ones. In fact, every participant in this study spoke about the critical importance of his or her support systems in accomplishing his or her goal and maintaining balance. Furthermore, participants who did not accomplish their goals, spoke of the lack of support and how that derailed them. Lippert, Watson, and Westley (1958) wrote about the importance of having support during change and how supporters encourage, reduce doubts and hesitation, help maintain a realistic view of change, and help people get through the change. Having support during difficult times or people to talk to is important to smooth sailing and un snagging as people continue their journey.

Management, another coping strategy, refers to ways people organize, and try to control their affairs. Some people are good jugglers of their affairs, keeping them in smooth sailing. Yet, when people find they cannot sustain their juggling and when hassles get in the way, they snag. One participant reported feeling she was "dropping the ball" and reaching her "breaking point" when she struggled with attending school and caring for her children. Other people manage their affairs by refueling. Refueling strategies include all the techniques people used to take care of their basic physical and emotional needs so that they may achieve their goal. However, when people do not refuel enough (such as enough nutrition and sleep), they may snag. Another way people organize and control their affairs is by looking back at their journey and reevaluating their choices and making sure they are on the right path to attaining their goals. This behavior is a reviewing strategy. People may reminisce about their journey, remembering events fondly. Therefore, reminiscing is a technique people use to stay in smooth sailing. However, if people start second-guessing themselves and their journey there may be a sense of doubt about their decisions. What-iffing tends to get people stuck. Soloing is another management strategy used to disengage from a situation and go it alone. Oftentimes, when people go solo, they find it easier to work alone to accomplish goals. In this case, they can maintain smooth sailing. Yet, going solo may snag people when they would rather have had support. All of the preceding management strategies are useful for people as they are making progress; yet there is one strategy that entails putting the journey on hold. This management strategy is called halting. People who put their journey on hold simply stop what they are doing, take care of what needs to be done, and then restart the journey.

When smooth sailing or when a person just needs to tweak the journey to get a right fit back, he or she may use optimizing strategies by finding the positives. Finding the positives

helps the person focusing on the good attributes of their endeavor. People who are adept at finding the positives seem to have ways that help them deal with situations and focus on the good, positive aspects. Yet, when people do not find the positives, they may snag. Like finding the positives is discovering redeeming qualities. While finding the positives has to do with actions, redeeming qualities has to do with personal characteristics which may include any qualities of human behavior. Humor is another optimizing technique used to maintain their smooth sailing or un snagging. People who can find situations funny and positive optimize their journey.

Calming strategies are another way people maintain or regain smooth sailing. Calming strategies include keeping the goal in mind, being certain, embracing newness, trusting the process, and acknowledging that the moving on process is a work in progress. Keeping the goal in mind enables people to stay calm and focused as they smooth sail or work through any difficulties. One participant noted contemplating a dual major which snagged her since it would take so much time and money. Her mentor helped by reminding her of her goal, graduation. People who can keep their goal in mind are more likely to attain it. Another calming technique is being certain and not second-guessing decisions. When people are certain about what they are doing, they do not second-guess themselves and therefore can stay calm and finish their journey. Embracing newness is a calming technique people use. When people give themselves permission to change, they allow for new ways and thoughts to enter their lives. A final calming strategy is called trusting the process, meaning "going with the flow" instead of "banging one's head against the wall." Trusting the process allows people to relax, ease up, or lighten up about a situation. When people trust the process, they learn to cope with this situation by making it easier.

Determination strategies are ways people show that they have the fortitude to make it through a situation. One determination strategy, superhumaning, is to push through and handle the multiple tasks and stresses in a superhuman manner. Superhumaning may promulgate an adrenaline rush where people are successful despite little food or sleep. The person in the study who took care of her dying grandmother, spoke of superhumaning to do what was needed to care for her grandmother despite having little sleep and eating sparsely at times. Another determination technique, hell or high watering, occurs in some situations where people show their stamina and determination along with an attitude of "I'll be damned" if a situation will get the better of me. In essence, they refuse to give up. The determination strategy of being oneself is useful for people who need others to accept them for who they are. Often, when people are themselves, they maintain or regain their smooth sailing journey. Finally, some people have a calm yet determined manner and steadily achieve their goals. This placid determination shows people's incredible fortitude and strength. As people journey, they continually assess whether the journey is going as wanted and can always choose to work it out or to divest.

### **Stage 5: Drawing to a Close**

The fifth and final stage of moving on is called drawing to a close and occurs when people evaluate the success of their experience. Success, being a valued personal quality, is evaluated according to the emotions people have across various factors and informs how

people will move on to their next voluntary change experience. When people's emotions are in sync with their experiences, they have closure and feel successful. Closure is determined by people's views of attaining their desire, their ability to deal with difficulties, and their ability to withstand the toll of journeying. Each of these factors varies for different people depending on what they value and the amount it is valued.

Some people value attaining their desire and therefore link success to attainment, while others do not. According to Kolodinsky (1999), people's expectations account for how they respond to the factors affecting their views. Expectations are similar to values; for some people, attaining their desires is critical for completion. These people fall within the hell or high-water category. They are going to do whatever it takes to achieve their desires. However, some people do not view success as attainment of their desire. These people can have success even though they prematurely divest (leave the journey). Divesting may happen when desires change, and people no longer feel in sync with what they are doing. They may feel relief as they come to terms with disparate desires; and therefore, leaving is actually seen as success. People may also leave their journey because they are forced out; yet they may feel closure. This closure may happen when jobs are eliminated, or they do not make the grade and are not good enough to stay. In both situations, people are dismissed. Some people do not see this action as something bad and are able to experience closure.

The degree of difficulty of the moving on experience affects people emotionally and influences whether or not they are able to experience closure. People who can manage the degree of difficulty of their experience speak of smooth sailing. However, when the degree of difficulty is emotionally and/or physically draining, they may snag. If people are able to cope with the snag, they may be able to bring closure to the experience; however, if the snag is beyond people's ability to cope, they may divest which may delay or prevent closure.

Some journeys take a toll on people; and their ability to deal with this toll affects whether they experience closure. The toll may be seen as disillusionment and occurs when people's expectations clash with reality. Being disillusioned may force people to end their journey before it is over. When such an action happens, there can be a physical and/or mental toll on people. People may speak of feeling beaten down with nothing left to give. They may quit and have difficulty bringing the experience to closure.

As just discussed, people view success differently; some come to closure when they attain what they want; others experience closure when they have success in navigating the degree of difficulty of the experience; and others come to closure when they are able to withstand the toll. Each of these leads to an outcome of the moving on experience. When people not only attain their desire but also have closure, they experience a "it is all good" feeling about the experience. Annas (2004) referred to this closure as attaining desire and having satisfaction. Another outcome is when people realize that the journey is but a steppingstone to larger accomplishments. Steppingstones are those actions people endeavor to complete so that they may continue moving on. Vander Linden (2005) wrote that while sometimes people achieve their goal in one experience, other times they need multiple experiences to meet a goal. Another emotional outcome of journeying is when people do not have closure and therefore do not feel success—an outcome called duty-bound. This happens

when people feel obligated to do something and/or when they lack ownership. The obligation tends to weigh heavily on them, and they do not feel true success even if they complete the experience because of their lack of personal investment. Similarly, when people feel the experience was so difficult that upon completion it takes time for them to own the accomplishment, they often do not feel success. Owning an accomplishment means feeling proud of one's success. Yet, when people feel duty-bound, they may not feel pride in their success because they feel brutalized, traumatized, and/or victimized from their experience. These people tend to feel like they have been through an ordeal. For some people who have experienced a rough journey, owning it and experiencing closure may take time. Finally, there are some people whose outcome of journeying is a feeling of failure. These people neither attain their desire nor feel good about the experience. Oftentimes these people speak of the need to heal.

This need for healing is, for some, the first step in preparing for a future. Healing allows people to draw their moving on experience to a close and is accomplished by a multitude of activities and spiritual healings. A few of the ways people may heal are by reinvigorating themselves, speculating about what could have happened, and by going anonymous. Some people heal by reinvigorating their lives and getting away from whatever is snagging them. Other people speak of speculating, considering what life would have been like if events would have been different. By speculating, people are more able to bring closure to a difficult situation. Going anonymous, another way people heal, happens when people pretend they are not themselves and act in ways that are most unlike them. Kuhn (1962) called going anonymous a paradigm shift which people use to heal from past experiences. Another step in preparing for a future is reinvesting or trying again. These steps of healing help people bring their journeys to closure and prepare to move on once again. Some people move on quickly out of fear of being idle; other people take longer to move on. Moving on therefore as a function of desire and previous experience. Thus, the moving on cycle of voluntary change continues as another desire appears.

### **Discussion**

This study started in the area of higher education but transcended the substantive area to include situations where people experience voluntary change in their lives. The topic of change was limited to voluntary change because data showed that this process is much different from that of involuntary change. Therefore, this theory explains people's behavior as they transition through the stages of voluntary change.

In stage 1, people become aware that they want change. Although this awareness may be subtle, people respond to the awareness with the decision to move on, perch, or stop. People's values, along with their need to get the timing right, affect this decision. When people move on, they seek a right fit which is the next stage in the process.

In this second stage, people look for a vehicle for change that will fit and work well for them. Although most people do not look at many options, they do search until they find a match using value-based decision-making. Once they have a good option for their vehicle for change, they may tip toward action.

The tipping point is the third stage and may be arrived at by impromptu, making a quick or spontaneous decision; coming to know, which occurs subtly in an almost creeping manner; or deliberating, which is thought based and requires time. Even though people may tip toward action, not all people start their journey. Sometimes, people decide to stop and not journey because they no longer feel there is a right fit. Other times, they may continue onward.

When people continue onward, they journey. In this fourth stage, people aim for smooth sailing; however, sometimes they snag. The factors of support, structure, accessibility, and comfort will affect their journey. As long as the journey is progressing well, people stay in smooth sailing; yet, when they snag people use the coping strategies to work it out and move back to smooth sailing or divest and give up their journey.

In stage 5 the moving on experience draws to a close. Not all experiences close with people attaining their goals and this evokes differing responses. Sometimes this may suit them; yet sometimes this may not. People's ability to draw their moving on experience to a closure that suits them is important as it can affect their next moving on experience. Hence, the cycle of moving on starts again as people become cognizant of another desire.

### **Implications for Practice**

This article began with the comment that change is a constant part of life and with change comes many decisions. Grounded theories are supposed to have predictive capabilities and it is the hope of these authors that the theory of moving on is useful. Moving on explains patterns of behavior used by individuals who are making voluntary change. As the theory started in the area of higher education, it may be noted that this theory could be used by college advisors to assess how their students are acclimating to college or indeed various aspects of the college experience. Advisors who know what to look for and how to un snag struggling students are valuable to colleges as they help keep matriculation low and income high. The theory can be used by individuals who are navigating some change process by helping them become consciously aware of the process and what to expect along the way. This conscious awareness may help individuals navigate the process more smoothly. Furthermore, the theory can also help organizations, which strive to be vehicles for change by identifying and optimizing factors that contribute to smooth sailing. For example, the need for support was indicated as essential and knowing this can be used by organizations to gather or provide necessary support for smooth sailing. The possibilities for theoretical implications is endless and limited only by people's imaginations.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

Grounded theory, as a research design, is only limited by the researcher's ability. If the researcher is lacking in ability to conduct interviews, he or she may not be able to gain useful information or indeed may unground the work. However, we had long, detailed interviews where every effort was made not to use leading questions and tried to only use topics suggested by the interviewee (thus not ungrounding the work). Furthermore, we did not use our own data in the theory so we would not feel biased toward it. Remember any biases can underground a researcher's work. A second area where a researcher may lack ability is in

taking empirical evidence and coding it conceptually. To be able to do this well, we took courses in coding and memoing and spent hours with honing the skills. Another area where the grounded theorist may lack ability is in taking codes and memos and turning them into a rich theoretical write-up. Again, coursework was taken and with special tutoring in this area so to feel confident.

Two key areas stand out for future research. The first is a grounded theory on involuntary change. While some data were collected on involuntary change, it became apparent that people going through involuntary change go through a different process than those who go through voluntary change. Another area for further research is on the concept of value-based decision-making and the contexts and extent to which people use this decision-making method in various other aspects of life.

### Conclusion

This theory of moving on as the process people go through to make voluntary change in their lives is not totally unique. Literature of similar concepts were integrated into the theory. However, the concept of value-based decision-making is novel, and we are humbled to offer it as a contribution to not only the lay person but also to those people in sociological circles. If people can start to think of voluntary change as a way of thinking through those values that mean the most to them and the weights which are significant for each value, then better decisions will be made (or maybe at the very least, people will understand why they make the decisions they do). Thus, people who want to buy homes or decide on which job to take will have a way to think through those values which are important to them. In contrast, people who constantly choose the wrong partner or other ill-made decisions will also have a way to look at what values lead to those bad decisions and may begin to understand those values and decisions that need to change in order to be more successful in that arena. The theory of moving on and the concept of value-based decision-making are indeed the hallmarks of what people can use to navigate voluntary change in their lives.

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**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.

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## **How Do Waste-Picker Families Endure? Resolving Pains and Managing Support Systems as Close Relationship “Resourcing:” A CGT with Readily Available Data**

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### **Abstract**

Public waste-management systems in Latin American cities are defective. However, waste-pickers take advantage of this situation and create small family-based waste-processing units. However, little is known about how these families constantly meet their needs, manage suffering or even overcome poverty. How do they get to survive in such a context? This paper presents the classic grounded theory of *resourcing* from close relationships, based on a secondary analysis of data produced during 2009-2011 by a grass-roots NGO. The core category of managing support systems explains how a family constantly approaches or wards off towards an ideal work system through anchoring motivations and system adjusting. The resulting actual system, however, creates pains. They have to be resolved through tolerating dependency and negotiating against deviance, which is what finally allows the family to adapt or thrive to changing economic environments.

**Keywords:** Waste-pickers, Peru, family economy, child labor, informal economy, classic grounded theory

### **Introduction**

Urban waste-pickers (also known as scavengers or recyclers) are at the background of everyday life. However, they are always at the forefront of Latin American waste-management issues (Dias & Samson, 2016; Velis, 2017). Not even Peru's national census of 2007 speaks clearly about their characteristics, roles, or concerns. When a grass-roots advocacy project in Peru triggered executive changes over waste-picking regulations, the interests of the city government and even the country's president about them were ignited for the first time in decades.

A research team and a non-governmental organization supported recyclers during this time. They used a wide array of research designs to inform the interdisciplinary objectives of the project. The gathered data described recyclers' work, epidemiology, and lifestyles in the oldest district of Lima. Nowadays, the recyclers' *barrio* in which research was done has disappeared because of the building of a new



highway. I accessed the data produced during the period and performed a re-analysis over a set of qualitative transcripts.

My research project focused on open coding some of the said data. I found three different main concerns: reproducing family economy at home, avoiding the municipality's law enforcement in the streets, and participating in unions to respond to marginalization. However, the main concerns were later specified. This article describes the grounded theory of resourcing from close relationships as a way of constantly resolve the main concern of managing survival in families of recyclers.

### **Methodology**

This paper uses CGT research design for discovering how participants continually solve their main concern. As said by Giske and Artinian (2007), after finding a main concern, the researcher then focuses on one relevant core category to explain how participants solve it. But the theory is not ready yet. Following Glaser and Holton (2005), the use of theoretical codes integrates sub-categories and properties with the core category.

CGT is characterized by a two-step coding process: substantive coding and theoretical coding. The first step comprises open and selective coding (Holton, 2007). This process is powered by the ability to conceptualize with fit, theoretical sampling and the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1965), which allows to discover major categories, including a core category. After choosing (and not forcing) a core category, the researcher works selectively, collecting and analyzing data only related to the first and other categories related to it. The sorting of memos and theoretical sensitivity by reflecting on the fit of theoretical codes to the substantive patterns found in the data makes a CGT a well-grounded explanation.

### **On using secondary data in CGT**

This paper, part of an undergraduate dissertation project, was based on the available qualitative research materials produced during 2009-2011. They were 27 transcripts from 16 recyclers (members of a formal organization), from 10 recycler families, from which only 17 transcripts (just the ones mentioning families or family issues) were used. The transcripts were a mix of mostly unstructured and exploratory fieldnotes and transcripts. However, the materials were made for different purposes, by different people, and in differing timing. Moreover, the set was written with a generally low linguistic quality by novice researchers.

This project was based in readily available data; in other words, it made what some call a secondary analysis (Medjedovic & Witzel, 2005) or re-analysis (Wåsterfors et al., 2014) of qualitative data. But, in absence of data collection, how can theoretical sampling and saturation proceed? Not much research has been written on this issue. Whiteside et al. (2012) noticed the problem of differing quality of secondary materials in Straussian GT, while Andrews et al. lists the concerns of working with data collected for a different purpose and with a different sampling approach compared to CGT. Glaser (2014) himself warned against secondary data "picked up as preplanned" (p. 18) and advised us to work with data collected by novice researchers: "In fact the less

he know the easier it is to let concepts emerge" (p. 18). Yet, guidance on this issue still seems lacking.

Glaser's other writings can be used as a creative starting point. In a text devoted to quantitative research (Glaser, 2008), he mentioned that secondary analysis is "uniquely well suited [for CGT but] severely limited for description" (p. 36). He also cited Anselm Strauss suggesting that "data need not be of the very best to yield a very suggestive, solid, important, multivariate conceptual analysis" (p. 37). Furthermore, in an old text, Glaser (1963) recognized the suitability of secondary analysis for teaching discovery. However, I noticed that few classic grounded theory studies were actually built from readily available data, while the majority of sources regarding secondary analysis come from descriptive QDA traditions (Andrews et al., 2012). Facing a difficult task and lacking guidance, I remembered a Glaser dictum: "Remember, GT is a general methodology than can use any data" (Glaser & Holton, 2005, p. 5).

Hence, the following strategy was followed. First, data were not coded using the "conventional" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 105) qualitative coding techniques but by paraphrasing large text portions (Mayring, 2014). This first step intended to give linguistic clarity and a wider understanding of my data. Considering that it is usually stated that CGT is not a method for qualitative description, here I discovered at least three main concerns in my sample, from which I chose managing survival in recycler families, with 73 paraphrases, 60% of which came from six participants from four recycler families. Paraphrases were further re-paraphrased by the finding of common patterns and later summed up by open coding and property-specification. As a result, initially nearly more than 20 categories were found that were latter reduced to six. But the problem with this approach was that working with limited theoretical sampling, codes seemed to fit more data than they actually referred to.

Inspired by the constant comparative process (Glaser, 1965) and remembering the closeness between CGT and other exploratory data analysis methods (Glaser, 2008; Holton & Walsh, 2016), I developed the following strategy for code-specification. After comparing incidents and codes, I built a double entry matrix to compare codes with each other. Going back to my raw data, I specified each possible code-pair patterned relationship. Sometimes I had to look at more than one transcript per participant to find this correlation. This produced an important quantity of hypothesis and memos. Each cell of the matrix was filled with small summaries of the correlations, adding the specific family names (my population) through ending parenthesis. While this can be seen as a mere descriptive step, it turned out to be effective as a substitute to theoretical sampling and for not confounding the types of correlations found. However, the filling of the matrix showed to be time-consuming.

Once the matrix was completed, cells were physically printed and compared. Hypotheses and codes were modified in a close comparison of the best and worst-fit correlations, while new, wider categories were formed and other codes were removed. This process was faster and produced a category list that was later shortened by simple comparison. Newly specified codes were compared again between each other in a similar way as done previously. Correlations were again grouped and coded, and

memos were produced. During the final step, core category candidates emerged from the most saturated codes, while sorting of memos and theoretical coding (by reading and applying Glaser's lists of theoretical codes) allowed to comparatively build the theory.

Even if theoretical saturation wasn't achieved as fully as in a conventional CGT due to the sample limitations, I believe that this process can serve CGT researchers as an alternative while working with secondary data. To address this issue, it is recommended to use some form of data visualization technique, which, in my case, was the use of network graphs with weights to indicate the empirical strength (number of interviewees) of each code between each other for each correlation step. Finally, is worth to note that this process was entirely in Spanish, and this entailed some translation issues during the theoretical write up (Tarozzi, 2013).

### **Resourcing from close relationships**

Waste-picking is a difficult job. Costs of waste materials change in a daily basis as a consequence of a global and local context. The networks of the recycling market are never fully transparent, and the job conditions of waste-pickers are reportedly precarious. However, waste-picking in developing countries is still seen as an alternative to job scarcity, income irregularity and the lack of education or other opportunities, and even as a consequence of the historical advocacy of waste-picker unions.

"Resourcing" is an in-vivo code, a code generated from the words of the participants themselves. The Peruvian Spanish slang for *resourcing* (*recursearse*) basically means managing to earn a living. In technical words, to grab the few resources at hand and invest them the most efficiently to generate the maximum quantities of money in the shortest possible time. The term was used by one interviewee while describing the economic activities done by her husband:

We sell just three blocks from here. There's a lady, they call her *Huayhua*. She's a gatherer (seller). . . We sell what we collect to her. Martin has been doing this for a long time. He has resourced since his youth. Now that's his job; we sustain our family just out of that.

Usually, *resourcing* is understood as a merely individual economic activity. However, as this excerpt shows, the meaning of resourcing works as well as a part of a family context (notice the use of both "we" and "he"). A focused census of waste-pickers showed that the whole family is involved in work roles. Moreover, all the members of the different family types in the sample seem to use resourcing through the relationships they have with others (partners, children, parents, neighbors, etc.). But, as we will see, this only generates new obligations and conflicts to be solved in order to maintain a close-to-normal daily productive rhythm.

At the more general level, resourcing from close relationships explains how managing support systems and resolving pains interact within a family system. By managing an efficient support system, the core category of this CGT, the nuclear

family approaches to a system of roles as well as departs from it and empirically adjusts depending of their current limited family situations. However, managing recyclers' families support systems generates an important consequence, which is the accumulation of pain in the family members. This is seen through the codes of tolerating dependency (of the trash and other families) and negotiating (gender and child labor related) deviance. This sums up in the resulting process of resolving pains, that can reproduce or change the support systems.

First, I will introduce the concept of managing support systems, and later I will discuss the process of resolving pains. It has to be stated that the discovered CGT explains interactions within an artificial system, an idea inspired by Glaser's Interactive Family of theoretical codes (Glaser, 1978). This is due to the hypothetical nature of the theoretical proposal and the present limitations of the data. Finally, I will compare my CGT with other theories on families that work as small-scale production units in developing countries.

### **Some context**

Waste-picker families usually organize around a work process, whose critical point is final selling of the materials initially collected in the streets by some member of the family, mostly a man (although this varies widely between and within countries). Families and businesses in Lima generally deposit trash bags or boxes of different sizes at the tips and corners of streets' sideways. Waste-pickers usually seek, find and explore them for relevant (priced) materials, carrying them on large *triciclos* (standard cheap large three-wheeled cargo tricycles). This implies that, at home, somebody must be in charge of the sorting, storing and cleaning of collected materials, whether big or small. This in my sample is mostly done by women and children.

Accidents after touching and lifting some materials are common, generating the need of care. Also, to control their access to certain city areas, municipalities normally employ violence against collectors on the streets through security officials. Unsurprisingly, added to street dangers such as car accidents and robberies, the transcripts talk of self-reported stress, anxiety and violent behaviors at home. Therefore, survival in the broadest sense doesn't just means to bring food to the table, but to be psychologically capable of enduring. Hence, without social support, waste-picking doesn't seem sustainable.

### **Managing support systems**

Managing a support system means, on the one hand, to conform to an ideal type of family support with two traditional main roles (worker and carer). Only a correct delegation of tasks allows to get ahead, but individuals have to also adapt to the always changing economic environment of recycling and the internal limitations of the families. Because of this, systems are based on strategies of adjusting the system in order to maintain the core standard features of work roles intact. Adjusting is sometimes not enough and requires a constant anchoring of individual motivations to properly work.

### ***Adjusting support systems***

This code is linked with an ideal type: one defined by the mutual support between the strong provider who works out of home and the dedicated carer at home. According to this ideal type, carers should divide their everyday time to able themselves to help providers and children, and providers should dedicate themselves to bring food to the table day-by-day.

The data show that this simple support system, although widespread, is insufficient. Because of usually having less time and disposition to dedicate themselves to the physically demanding tasks of waste collection, carers and cared individuals are usually part of trash-sorting at home. However, they are still dependent on the health and earnings made by the collector.

It could be thought that this depends entirely on gender roles, but the data and the literature disconfirm this (e. g., the community of female waste-pickers studied in Ecuador by see Solíz, 2014). Finally, it is worth to note that some children support their parents in the waste collection tasks (which is seen as part of a more "informal" or undesirable lifestyle, as will be shown), while the rest help with care tasks, housework, and waste-picking work at home.

These facts seem to complicate the ideal type, but note that even when this is true, the difference between the core activities (care and provide) is still clear. It is known by the work on ideal types that these exist as extreme stereotypes in the minds of researchers, but nevertheless are seldom fulfilled in their daily lives of participants. However, a clear pattern can be spotted: families try to adjust to the ideal system and at the same time to their limitations.

Recycler families' tasks are very demanding. Sickness and accidents are common due to the hazardous or weighty materials manipulated and carried. This causes temporary work pauses of some members of the support system, thereby generating the need to ask for external economic help or the absorption of tasks by some family member. Furthermore, performers of the two core roles use these strategies.

Sometimes providers are also carers, especially if women or children need special support (e. g., in case of disease), or when men are kids or teenagers. At the same time, some female carers share care and collection tasks, while they dedicate even more time to work before becoming pregnant and even as girls. During and after this event, additional help is needed. As stated in a field note:

He is the family head. Plus, the waste-picking job, he is in charge of housework (cooking, cleaning, etc.), for his wife is limited because of a health problem that affects her arm and feet. He is dedicated to the care of his children (in particular his younger daughter), although before she was born his wife helped him with the collection tasks.

Finally, the intensity of the children tasks also seem to adjust in relation to the changing needs of the support system. In other words, intense child labor is usually employed when the family is poorer. Children-collectors (alone or, more constantly, with their parents) constantly appear in the data in a negatively comparative sense. They also appear in a retrospective historical comparison sense.

To summarize, individual recycler families are used to adjust the support systems that are the base of the family economy. This adjustment is done towards an ideal binary-task-based type, but is also limited by the available human resources and the intensity of the current economic needs. Moreover, I see three empirical types of adjustment:

First, a "good team" family type that sticks together and where members support each other in the long run, which can or cannot include help from the outside. Second, an "imbalanced team" system, where a man or a woman carries the major part or all the burdens associated both roles, requiring constant adjusting due to exhaustion and other never fully-fulfilled needs. Third, a "failed team" system, where one of the two main role-types is absent, and no conventional adjustments are possible.

We will see how the system adjustment generates different kinds of motivations. For now, let's look at the need to support originated by the support system in individuals through the category of anchoring motivations.

### ***Anchoring motivations***

Recycling to survive isn't an easy job. This is why, for new recyclers, configuring an efficient support system takes some time. The difficulty increases for both too young or aged, while the system leaves aside the sick and pregnant women. And, as was presented previously, the support system continually adjusts according to available resources and current needs. On the flipside, the fluctuating adjusting of said systems runs in parallel to the search and selection of individual motives by recyclers.

This defines what I call anchoring motivations. Specifically, waste-pickers usually anchor themselves in the idea of taking care of their offspring. Sometimes, this idea is understood in terms of taking care of them directly (i. e., feeding or taking care of the sick), others indirectly (i.e., "my family/child is the reason why I work"). Moreover, this motive gives recyclers enough confidence to keep going on (that is, trusting the imperfect support system they have built for themselves). Recyclers in the three empirical support system types identified show anchoring of motivations. This applies even to the last one, the so-called failed team: "I neglected my work and I come back now after a while... I always celebrated a birthday for all my kids. . . So, now that Christmas' coming, I am fully into work to give him a good Christmas."

Anchoring motivations is present in people of all ages (showing in a different form in those people who don't have children) and in both sexes. It is present in those who collect and those who care, and in recyclers with less and more demanding tasks alike. Apparently, if caring of another family member who's not a child is a priority, the

offspring is still the motivation. It can be argued that it even creates the original need of many parents to help their grown-up children.

This universality gives this behavior a norm-like nature, and the external compliance to the norm seems to be an indicative of social desirability for recyclers. If those strong enough to provide decide not to work hard while their family face poverty or hunger, they face sanctions, like family conflicts that start around demands from fathers to jobless sons. And, on the contrary, if families center around the caring of children, even when they don't have the economic or human resources to do so, they receive the help of other members in the family or even community members.

Furthermore, recyclers and recycler families (though this is a strictly individual behavior) use anchoring motivations to socially distinguish themselves. Interviewees mentioned a wide range of objectives: to move to an apartment to give comfort for their children, to buy Christmas presents for a child, to save money and go visit a far-away daughter, not to involve kids in the hardest work tasks to let them study, etc. Note that every one of these desires potentially informs different actions of money earning, saving, and spending, and that making money by urban waste-picking is a hard and even dangerous job.

### **Resolving pains**

While focusing in family economy, support systems create non-economic consequences in families, like the concern for child-abuse and conflicts between helper and helped families. Recycler families are not far from constantly generated pain. Resolving pains appeared rapidly at the open coding stage, first conceptualized as "enduring" and "making others put up the suffering." One interviewee saw this as an individual experience ("each one carries their own pains"). While this is true, pain seems to require the existence of trustable support systems to be relieved. However, the only stable property of support systems is the individual anchoring of motivations. Thus, it seems very likely that the pain at a family level remains invisible until some or various family members make it evident.

I propose that resolving pains and managing support systems are the two sides of the coin of close relationship resourcing. All families tolerate some degree of pain. From the available data, it is possible to see that families at different levels of pain correlate with the effectiveness of their support systems. In other words, the variability in the different forms of pain seems to be explained by the different levels of effectiveness of adjusting support systems (as shown, e. g., by the "good," "imbalanced," and "failed" team types). Imbalanced systems and families with unfulfilled necessities usually experience family conflicts and violence. And the major part of families doesn't make "good" systems.

Resolving pains indicates two distinct codes that relate to specific system adjusting strategies: tolerating dependency and negotiating against deviance. The first accounts for the tension of co-dependence and setting limits within and between families. Alternatively, negotiating deviance indicates the switching of certain social norms regarding work and family life during the family mobility process. In both cases,

there are pain accumulation and releasing moments, but they are better resolved in the second one.

While tolerating dependency refers to the everyday tension in recycler families, negotiating against deviance accounts for a rather long-term change. Thus, it is normal to see one as a more adequately resolving pattern. But this is not the case. In fact, the patterns of creating and suffering pain unites both concepts, and recyclers try to resolve all pain as part of their survival process. In other words, resolving pains is never a perfectly accomplished cycle.

### ***Tolerating dependency***

Recycler form dependency bonds to be able to survive, both with trash and other family members. Through tolerating boundaries, recyclers manage the daily pain generated by the work tasks, encouraged by their anchored motivations. This toleration softens the suffering, while making the family receive some of it, but they are always inconclusive, because they still let pain to be generated.

***Tolerating within-home dependency.*** The support system created by recyclers and their families has a stage. While collection happens at the street, the storage and sorting of collected materials usually takes place at home. It is a moment of interaction between collectors, carers, and cared members of a same family. They can't storage outside their houses because it is illegal, and the municipality agents often surveil their entrances. Many stories of disappeared bikes and conflicts with other community members confirm they can't do it even informally.

For these reasons, recyclers cannot be completely separated from the garbage at home. They even look for supplies in it. In other words, they become co-dependent with the trash.

Thanks god, the school pants, shoes, and shirts are presented to me, and my son is studying wearing that. . . . For example, everything I wear is what I found recycling. Everything my kids and my wife wear, I found recycling. It's just I don't get enough money! It isn't enough for anything, just for eating, no more than surviving.

But accumulating waste in home carries some risks, sharp and toxic materials among the first. Furthermore, toxicological evidence confirmed that these risks are particularly worrisome among this population. Despite this, recyclers recognize the consequences and they mainly point towards the risks for their children. They can't get rid of the materials once and for all, but they can learn how to negotiate with the risk in order to protect others. They need to learn how to live in contact with garbage in a small work space.

I try to keep an adequate workspace. I try not to mix my home space with the recycling space. So, I do sorting right there in that corner facing the main entrance of my house. But this harms me too because I am working with paint



cans and . . . they are toxic . . . so little by little I try to get rid of them, even if I need them anyways, tho.

Along with this woman, four individuals recognize that this is not an easy move. Coexisting with waste somehow adds to all the suffering of the hard recycling job. Since they form a co-dependent tie with waste, I suggest that some recyclers need to learn how to negotiate with risky waste individually. But, more importantly, they need to convince carers that storing those materials is completely necessary, especially if they have children at home. These negotiations aren't always perfect.

Doris: I have seen him working without any gloves. I should too. But still...

Martin: I believe gloves are okay, but maybe just for some things, as you say, like glass and those things. But in carrying trash, tying it up. . . they're annoying. . .

Doris: They won't allow you to analyze things by touching. . . . But I anyway think he should use gloves. I believe that's why my girl gets sick, again and again. . . . I helped him when she was a baby, and I just washed my hands. So, I guess I was contaminating her . . .

Martin: She makes her drink cold milk. When her body is warm, she gives her cold milk!

Logically, broken negotiations will lead to family conflicts seen in this case and a number of other ones. Furthermore, the pattern shows again intermingled with between-family conflicts. But even old and single recyclers live like this, and conflicts make part of their lives as well. Thus, it can be said that the general concern generated by a hazardous work space is resolved through negotiations, but they aren't always effective. However, they seem as the only way to resolve the pain and take care of children.

***Tolerating between-homes dependency.*** The second way in which pain is resolved starts in the systemic adjustments that require the help of other families, and specifically the provider family. Many relatives help recycler families, which are constantly adjusting their support systems according to their limitations. Also, this is shown by the relative statistics of land-tenure that compares Lima and the population here addressed. By normalizing this help, families become co-dependent.

Helping is a social imperative among recyclers. Between-family help allows to survive in times of need. This help can involve sharing knowledge to work, work burdens, money, a place to live and even security. Recycler families can receive help from parents and at the same time from other family-members. On the contrary, extreme isolated cases are seen as deserving unconditional community help.

Because I take care [of my sick] husband, I can't go anywhere now. Sometimes my son brings me left over junk for me, and with that I put together some money for the month. That added to what the neighbors give to me. And sometimes I also go out and I use whatever I get to earn something, even . . .

[my two sons] died recently, and my other son works but he gives me anything at all.

This particular case contrasts with recyclers who get help from their parents. This kind can be more or less conflictive depending on the helper family power. On the one hand, there is disciplinary dependency. In particular, renting a room demands multiple-family cohabiting. Conflicts originate in not paying the rent, comparison of rights or life-styles, and other mutual complaints that appear with time. On the other hand, cooperative dependency is characterized by flexible parents, and doesn't generate suffering. Compare these two examples:

There are a lot of trouble with the brother of my husband. He had told Juan to build a second floor for the house, and three weeks ago he came here. They started arguing . . . Meanwhile, my daughters were watching TV in the first floor. . . . They almost hit each other. My daughters came out crying, telling them to stop.

Sometimes my daughters don't have an even job . . . in the firm they work at . . . . So, their work last a short time, sometimes days, or two weeks. . . . In those moments I have to give them a hand.

Tolerating between-homes dependency is also a role differentiated pattern. Providers are used to receive help from their parents. This help is usually related to stability: provider men give away bikes, work options and spaces to other providers ("my dad gave me this bike," "this little room his dad gave to us"). Compared to them, carers usually receive sporadic help due to pregnancies, sickness, or having no other options for help, as shown by direct support for doing tasks, loans, and sharing work knowledge (from the woman cited previously: "my mother-in-law, she tells me 'Doris this is coated paper' or 'this is plastic'"). Also, they seem not to ask for help to their parents as providers do.

Worth noting is that more disciplinary dependency turns to a greater independence desire, which expresses by establishing limits for help to avoid creating further compromises (as in "we're thinking to move to another place"). But this, obviously, depends on the capacity of the family to become independent. But it is important not to forget that cooperative dependency is still dependency too. Thus, by tolerating dependency, recyclers reproduce the between-families helping mechanisms, even if they allow themselves to soften conflicts.

### ***Negotiating against deviance***

Negotiating against deviance implies an accumulation of tensions. Formally, these tensions are related to the recycler families' social mobility process in the long run. This is not an easy process as it usually involves family conflicts and confronting ideas taken as norms in the past, like the compliance to gender roles and the acceptance of child labor. But these are also two areas that should take a socially accepted form. Negotiating against deviance is the difficult process of switching the social norms that families comply to while they economically grow.

***Negotiating gendered conflicts.*** The third effect of the constant support system adjustment is the accumulation of pain through sex differences. Chi-squared data confirmed the significance of dividing work tasks by sex in the sample. Ideally, providers (collectors and sellers of waste) should struggle with street violence and defend the family in case of conflicts with other families. But these providers are not always men:

And look what time is it! What time will he leave at? He's not going out today, I don't think so. Also, things between us aren't working out recently. It's not been so long ago that he's realized that he's leaving his family aside. I talk to him and try to persuade him to go out to collect together, but he says no, that I have to stay with the baby, that he's still very young and I have to take care of him. But I tell him to go out and see if we can collect a bit more.

I couldn't find one family where a woman dedicated exclusively to collection and a man to care. The opposite was prevalent and eventual shared roles too. And while children didn't have work roles divided by gender, more limited patterns emerged in adulthood, with all women dedicated to some form of care. Even women who mainly worked as collectors had a main focus as carers, as can be deduced by these excerpts:

[. . . ] because I also collect paint cans, which are toxic. But what else can I do? I need them too . . . . And neither can I leave my daughter. What would her life be without me?

My husband can't work because of an accident he had. I am stressed all the time, thinking in the things I have to do, looking for my husband, that he is well, that my child doesn't get asthma.

Additionally, from eight individuals, four men and four women both collect and care or have taken both roles before. However, from these, two women dedicated entirely to collect before having children; and two men only dedicated themselves to caring others during a particular spell of time. Women are the only ones who talk about "time" (as in "if he collects I have more time for my two little children" or "I keep thinking in the things that are left for me to do").

Enduring in pivotal moments shows differently between sexes which is evident when comparing the responses to conflicts between different families. Both men and women find agreement in the need to be strong, to endure recycling. However, conflictive or failed negotiations typically involve men as strong opponents. Specially punished are jobless or limited men, what seem to confirm the enduring acceptance of the core ideal typical features of recycler's systems. Talking about these conflicts, women instead focus on "machismo" and feeling fear or helpless. In contrast, less dependent women also free themselves from recycling routines; this coming with the cost of needing help of others with care or even money if a job is not stable enough.

The binary and prevalent difference between showing strength and sorting out limitations is striking. But in various cases, female action or words define the future of this divide. Indeed, where women get upset with men or have a wider margin of

action, change within the family seems plausible. This can be shown in examples where women choose to complain about the conditions that certain men keep them into (including conflicts and hunger).

It is possible to theorize the implications for some families of the ideal type that gives origin to adjusting. We could first add to it that men and women could be said to be expected to respectively collect and care. However, as previously stated, the ideal type is merely a model to which they compare themselves.

In reality, the work process and its adjustments generate pain, which resolves through gender-differentiated conflicts that also exacerbates the acceptance of the ideal type. However, tolerating gendered conflicts generate even more pain. On the contrary, a smoothening of some conflicts occurs when families agree to depart from the ideal type after a negotiation process (by assessing conflicts directly with men or by chasing jobs outside recycling), which usually seem to happen after crises have taken place.

***Negotiating Child Labor.*** For a matter of ease, kids and teenagers alike are considered children. Child labor was a taboo among recyclers, despite indirect references. Four interviewees said to have collected waste with their parents as children or to be currently doing so with their own. In other two cases, there was an important involvement of children in care tasks. In all, the time dedicated by children interfere with school, even in the caring second case: "The interviewee says that his son has had troubles in his educational process, due to health issues [that affect her mother] (a critical spine problem), which is disturbing for his son. This is causing him bad grades at school."

On the other hand, child labor doesn't always create the same amount of pain. Two interviewees recalled their work experience as children positively, for example, while describing turn-taking and the managing of work hours. But nowadays, recyclers actively try to avoid that their children collect waste, or at least to ease the burden by not letting them get in contact with hazardous waste in work-at-home tasks. Variations seemed to parallel the presence of some patterns.

First, at least from the recyclers' viewpoints, informality correlated with the abuse of child labor, which could deductively also indicate pain. As was evident, recyclers' stories also revealed that the importance of child labor in the past, when families were also poorer. However, recalling child labor in a positive light seemed to depend more on the actual team quality of the family, and less on the relative negativity of the memories. Indeed, it shouldn't be a surprise that poverty generates pain, and that getting out of poverty relates to the desire of ending it.

Also, the concern about the abuse of child labor was more prevalent among those who anchor their motivations in childcare. In other words, most women showed concern about the limits of child labor. But also, some men insisted in being flexible about the obligations of children, and particularly those who have been involved in some role of care. This opens up the idea that concern about the limits of child labor and the departure of the ideal type could go hand in hand.

Nevertheless, it could also be said that caring about children always provide an economic benefit. Not charging kids with too much work helps to adjust the system when facing emergencies and long-term family limitations. As was stated in a field note:

Then, I conclude that in the case of this interviewee, child labor can't be exactly seen as a problem. That is, it is not economic exploitation (long hours of hard work)... Activities such as helping at home, at a family business or collecting waste to get some cash during holidays or non-school hours. And finally, this kind of work helps the family in the present.

To summarize, children should submit themselves to the grown-up designed family rhythm. But the time load allocated to children tasks depends on the concern that the family has about the consequences of child labor in the children's future life. This concern depends, particularly, in carers. Judging by past and present data, one could theorize that this process unfolds in a way similar to tolerating gendered conflicts. However, the data seem to show that it also depends on the effectiveness of the support system (i.e., getting out of poverty). Thus, it could be a parallel but more slow process that steams from and contributes to systemic change in the long term.

### **Discussion**

Usually framed as part of the sometimes loosely defined "informal economy," waste-picking has been approached from the individual point of view. But now we can see how the activity is done at its fullest thanks to the secondary analysis of data produced during one year of exploratory field research. The theory of *resourcing* applies to groups of individuals as a research unit, grasping the ways in which families of waste-pickers survive in a day-by-day basis.

At least since the 1980s, Latin American governments and development NGOs showed a major interest in the life conditions of "marginal," "poor," or "informal" social groups. More recently, participatory and small-scale economic sustainability approaches better respond to the region current development status. Hence, explaining waste-picker individual and family survival can help to defy some obsolete frameworks still guiding negotiations and policy decisions regarding this historically overlooked group. This is even more pressing when one considers the delay in recycler formalization initiatives in Peru compared to other developing countries (personal communication with J. Herrera, ex-president of FENAREP; see also Rateau & Tovar, 2019).

Two popular but contrasting frameworks are used to support waste-picker families' survival. The social and solidarity economy theory (Coraggio et al., 2011) tries to understand and make visible the wide diversity of small-scale informal economic forms in developing countries, including cooperatives and family economies (Arruda et al., 2015). This theory also states that capitalism and modernity is constantly defied by the so-called small-scale cooperation. On a more management-related end, the family business approaches (e. g., Alderson, 2011) explore the optimization of family capital generation through capitalism.

The theory of resourcing from close relationships relates to both ideas, because it explains capital creation through human resource management and the creation of bonds that defy or admit economic exploitation. The grounded theory also explores the place of carers and those who are cared, a recurrent theme in feminist economics, linked to the first. Exceeding the various accounts of informality, still popular among those working with similar populations, the theory explains how family members manage economic and emotional support when framed by an extremely demanding context.

However, several theories have tried to do the same before. For example, the theory of survival strategies (also named as life strategies, family strategies, among other terms) focuses on the systems that frame family economies and the resources managed by them and its members, including social capital. This theory is common in rural studies (Ames, 2014; Fontaine & Schlumbohm, 2000; Najman, 2019) and has been used too to understand the economic adaptation of rural-urban migrants in Latin America, particularly since the 1980s (Altamirano, 1983; Béjar Rivera & Álvarez Alderete, 2010; Tovar, 1996; Uquillas et al., 2003).

Nevertheless, there are some differences between this theory and the theory of resourcing. In the first place, survival strategies include a wide range of social, cultural, demographic, and political phenomena; while these can be present in the substantive population, the focus was only on families. Secondly, urban recyclers in the population were far from being newcomers striving to survive in the city: the population are inhabitants of the very traditional Cercado de Lima district.

Third, the survival strategy theory has been widely criticized for preconceiving rationality (Cuéllar, 1996; Rodríguez, 1981; Torrado, 1981). As was shown, the family decision-making process allows for ambiguities and confusion, and is far from being adequately understood using rationality axioms. Hence, even if more recent accounts (e.g., ordinary rationality) can give a new light on the phenomena we are interested in, we develop an even more data-grounded model for achieving the same.

This theory has, however, some data limitations. Theoretical sampling wasn't possible and some codes need to be further saturated through new interviews, ten years after the original codes and interviews were collected. This could also be a great chance for verification. Additionally, the linkage between tolerating dependency and the core category is still somewhat weak. But, since the population was mostly men with a balanced sample size, great care has been put to avoid pre-conceived gender relevance (Glaser, 2002).

## **Conclusions**

The theory of resourcing from close relationships explains the constant interaction between managing a support system based on work roles and resolving the pains created by such a system. The resourcing further optimizes according to how well poor families adapt to an ideal support system type, according to their limitations, and fueled by motivations anchored in the wellbeing of the most vulnerable. But building systems isn't perfect, and the economic progress of a family will depend on within and

between tolerating and negotiating against pains. This theory, as opposed to other ones, accounts for the short- and long-term tensions within families of waste-pickers as economic units. However, it could be useful to understand other delicate interactions among urban social groups and even wider socio-economic phenomena dealing with survival.

**Acknowledgments:** I would like to thank professor Water Varillas, who allowed me to work with his data for this thesis project, Diana Torres, for her constant support and encouragement, my good God and the sweetest family in the whole world.

**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.

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