From the Editor's Desk

The Value of Modifiability

I have been thinking about the value of modifiability as a criterion of classic grounded theory rigor. In June 2020, I wrote about the need for research, and especially grounded theory research focused on changing social processes. What I couldn't foresee was that we were on the mere cusp of multi-year virulence and social upheaval. I wrote, "These are troubling days of pandemic illness, cultural upheaval, racial animus, international disruption, and political turmoil. . . . We are in uncharted territory. In response, particularly to Covid-19, structural and psychological social processes are changing. Education, family life, health care, work life, business, consumerism, sports, trade, entertainment, government institutions, and travel are all changing. People are assuming new roles or are adjusting their roles to fit new life circumstances. This is a time of great upheaval—a time particularly ripe for grounded theory research." As a call for action, I urged grounded theorists and PhD students to turn aside from tired and over-studied phenomena and consider this wide-open opportunity to advance important knowledge. What I did not suspect at the time was that global society was at the mere beginning of a swirling maelstrom of change and that theories discovered in 2020 might need to be modified in order to be useful in the future.

Modifiability, one of four criteria of rigor in classic grounded theory, suggests that theories are not precious or inviolate. This criterion requires that theories be reshaped as new data emerges. Glaser (1978) wrote that even though basic social processes remain in general, their variation and relevance is ever-changing in our world. A grounded theory must be constantly ready for quick modification in order to help explain surprising variations. Glaser further proposed that through this approach, the *tractability* of a grounded theory over social life is maintained and the theory secures its continuing relevance. Let me give an example. Many issues of the Grounded Theory Review over the years include papers written by health care professionals, the majority of which focus on nurse and physician relationships, decision making, and direct patient care. Today, some of these theories may be less relevant because the Covid-19 pandemic has brought into sharp focus the tenuous connection between health care ethics and practical reality. The stark reality today is that hospital staff must balance the traditional duty to care for individual patients against the duty to protect themselves and their families from the dangers of Covid-19. In addition, the harrowing choices forced upon health care professionals during this pandemic has created an ethical turning point whereas the duty of health care workers to focus on each patient has sometimes necessarily pivoted to a utilitarian view of maximizing the collective good (i.e., who has the greatest need for this last this bed, this last ventilator, this last infusion. . .). New data from the changing healthcare workforce, when applied to extant theories, can modify them to improve their usefulness in today's world. In addition to discovering new grounded theories, the challenge today is for researchers and PhD students to examine extant grounded theories in the light of changing social and structural processes and modify the theories to fit the new data; work to explain,

predict, and interpret what is happening; and maintain relevance when new core problems and processes continue to emerge.

In this issue you will find Glaser's *The Practical Use of Awareness Theory* that focuses on the importance of writing a grounded theory that can be applied in a useful manner. *Awareness of Dying* was one of four monographs that culminated from a six-year funded research program titled *Hospital Personnel, Nursing Care and Dying Patients* (Glaser & Strauss, 1968). In *Awareness of Dying,* Glaser and Strauss (1965) identified different levels of patients' awareness of their impending death and the effects these levels of awareness have on patients, families, nurses, physicians, and their ensuing interactions. They discovered four distinctly different awareness contexts: closed awareness, suspected awareness, mutual pretense awareness, and open awareness. Using *Awareness of Dying* as an example, Glaser calls for a reality-focused approach that includes real-life illustrations and comfortable language familiar to those for whom the theories apply, thus making the theories more accessible and useful when applied to practice. As I write this, I think about the millions who have died from Covid-19 in hospitals worldwide. I also think about the health care workers at those bedsides and the burdens they carry when patients are dying all around and families are not allowed to visit. I remember how a nurse supported a family member who had difficulty accepting her mother's impending death, even though the awareness context was open. According to another nurse who watched, the nurse "put on her PPE, entered the room, and video called the daughter. She talked for a few minutes and then laid down on the floor and slid under the patient's bed so the woman could see her mother's face one last time" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 21, 2021). New data like this can serve to modify, strengthen, or extend the theory of awareness of dying.

Also included in this issue are seven methodological and theory papers from grounded theorists around the globe. We are pleased to disseminate these papers in the hope that they can be useful in application and helpful to those who are novice grounded theorists.

Emily Cashwell's timely paper, *Recruitment and Data Collection in the 21st Century* describes how she used electronic media to recruit and interview participants. Cashwell suggests that even though certain topics of study and certain populations or people may make it inherently easier to recruit online and to approach with the option of using audio and video conferencing software, the coronavirus pandemic increased restrictions on researchers' in-person data collection activities.

Kara Vander Linden and Patrick Palmieri propose that current qualitative evaluation guidelines are too general to identify a manuscript with an inadequate study design. Vander Linden and Palmieri's paper identifies essential methodological criteria for reporting a classic grounded theory study. They further suggest that the classic grounded theory criteria outlined in their paper should be incorporated into existing guidelines and included as a classic grounded theory study design extension in the EQUATOR framework to support the existing qualitative reporting guidelines.

In a short paper entitled, *Collaborative Grounded Theory,* Kara Vander Linden and Catherine Tompkins describe how the researchers' professional relationship began as a mentor/mentee one and transformed into co-researchers using grounded theory. They

explain how they navigated each stage of the process of conducting a grounded theory study using a collaborative and interdisciplinary approach. The paper also presents some key takeaways for researchers to consider when working collaboratively.

In a paper entitled *Personalizing Wellness: A Classic Grounded Theory* Kari Allen-Hammer explains how individuals create wellness. Allen-Hammer discovered a three-stage process which revealed a voluntary, self-led learning and change process toward a personal vision of wellness. She found that wellness is not a stagnant objective to be obtained but rather an alive and dynamic interaction of experiences and processes to be lived.

Kianna Marie McCoy and Susan Braude Stillman studied fathers of children with autism. In the paper entitled, *Absenting: Fathers of Children with Autism Face the Future*, the authors define *absenting* as the father's fear of what will happen to his child with autism when he, the father, is no longer living. McCoy and Stillman found that fathers of children with autism anticipate their future absence in three ways: 1) preparing financially, 2) preparing for future living, and 3) preparing the child to live life to the fullest.

In a study with universal implications, Alan Kim-Lok Oh discovered *A Theory of Securing.* Oh's theory explains the role of our feelings of insecurity in forming selfhood. He proposes that when feelings of insecurity are explored honestly with trusted-others and acted upon with their guidance, we continuously become a better version of ourselves.

Judith Wright, Robert Wright, and Gordon Medlock's theory, *Evolating: A Grounded Theory of Personal Transformation,* describes the phases of learning and transformation that emerged from the study of historic transformers and exceptional students. The authors discovered a multiphase process through which individuals consciously engage in their own transformation and attain otherwise improbable levels of human potential. The data indicate that evolating among exceptional students who engage in all the phases predictably leads to a deeper, more accomplished life of greater meaning and purpose. The theory also provides a framework for strategizing learning and growing as well as explaining periods of stagnancy and ineffectual efforts to change attempted by both individuals and institutions.

For those who are interested in learning more about modifiability and other aspects of classic grounded theory, Glaser's books are available for purchase through the Sociology Press website at www.sociologypress.com.

Alvita Nathaniel, PhD

Editor

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The Practical Use of Awareness Theory

Barney Glaser, PhD

Editor's note: Through examples found in their seminal theory, *Awareness of Dying,* Glaser and Strauss (1965) demonstrated how to develop and write a classic grounded theory in a way that is applicable to practice. *Awareness of Dying* was one of four monographs that culminated from a six-year funded research program titled *Hospital Personnel, Nursing Care and Dying Patients* (Glaser & Strauss, 1968). In *Awareness of Dying,* Glaser and Strauss identified different levels of awareness of impending death and the effects these have on patients, families, nurses, and physicians. They discovered four distinctly different awareness contexts: closed awareness, suspected awareness, mutual pretense awareness, and open awareness. In other words, to what degree does the patient know that he or she is dying and how do others participate in that knowledge. Glaser and Strauss found that awareness contexts affected many elements of medical and nursing care and relationships among staff, patients, and families. In discussing their theory, Glaser and Strauss emphasized the importance of usefulness, clarity, and parsimony in the development of grounded theories. Indeed, through a review of the literature, Andrews and Nathaniel in 2009 confirmed that the theory continues to be useful in practice. Glaser and Strauss's chapter has been edited and reprinted several times. In various forms, this paper was published as a chapter in in *Awareness of Dying* (1965) and subsequently in *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (1967). *As* reprinted here, the chapter has been gently edited for clarity and context from the version found in *Applying Grounded Theory: A Neglected Option* (Glaser, 2014) and includes Glaser and Strauss's original footnotes. It is included in this issue of Grounded Theory Review as an example of the practical usefulness of a substantive grounded theory.

In this chapter we shall discuss how our substantive sociological theory has been developed in order to facilitate applying it in daily situations of terminal care by sociologists, by doctors and nurses, and by family members and dying patients. The application of substantive sociological theory to practice requires developing a theory with (at least) four highly interrelated properties. The first requisite property is that the theory must closely *fit* the substantive area in which it will be used. Second, it must be readily *understandable* by lay persons concerned with this area. Third, it must be sufficiently *general* to be applicable to a multitude of diverse, daily situations within the substantive area, not just to a specific type of situation. Fourth, it must allow the user partial *control* over the structure and process of the substantive area as it changes through time. We shall discuss each of these closely related properties and briefly illustrate them . . . to show how our theory

incorporates them, and therefore why and how our theory can be applied in terminal care situations.[1]

Fitness

That the theory must fit the substantive area to which it will be applied is the underlying basis of the theory's four requisite properties. It may seem obvious to require that substantive theory must correspond closely to the data, but actually in the current ways of developing sociological theory, there are many pitfalls that may preclude good fitness.[2] Sociologists often develop a substantive theory—theory for substantive areas such as patient care delinquency, graduate education—that embodies without his realization, the sociologist's ideas, the values of his occupation and social class, as well as popular views and myths, along with his deliberate efforts at making logical deductions from some formal theory to which he became committed as a graduate student (for example, a theory of organizations, stratification, communication, authority, learning, or deviant behavior). These witting and unwitting strategies typically result in theories too divorced from the everyday realities of the substantive area, so that one does not quite know how to apply them, or in what part of the social structure to begin applying them, or where they fit the data of the substantive area, or what the propositions mean in relation to the diverse problems of the area. The use of logical deduction rests on the assumption that the formal theory supplies all the necessary concepts and hypotheses; the consequences are a typical forcing and distorting of data to fit the categories of the deduced substantive theory, and the neglecting of relevant data which seem not to fit or cannot be forced into the pre-existing sociological categories.[3] In the light of the paucity of sociological theories that explicitly deal with change,[4] logical deduction usually is carried out upon static theories which tends to ensure neglect, distortion, and forcing when the deduced theory is applied to an ever-changing, everyday reality.

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[1]Applied theory can be powerful for exactly the reasons set forth by John Dewey, some years ago: "What is sometimes termed 'applied' science… is directly concerned with … instrumentalities at work in effecting modifications of existence in behalf of conclusions that are reflectively preferred…. 'Application is a hard word for many to accept. It suggests some extraneous tool ready-made and complete which is then put to uses that are external to its nature. But… application of 'science' means application *in*, not application *to*. Application *in* something signifies a more extensive interaction of natural events with one another, an elimination of distance and obstacles; provision of opportunities for interactions that reveal potentialities previously hidden and that bring into existence new histories with new initiations and endings. Engineering, medicine, social arts realize relationships that were unrealized in actual existence. Surely in their new context the latter are understood or known as they are not in isolation." *Experience and Nature* (Chicago: Open Court Publishing Company, 1925), pp. 161-162.

[2] For many years, Herbert Blumer has remarked in his classes that sociologists perennially import theories from other disciplines that do not fit the data of sociology and inappropriately apply sociological theories developed from the study of data different from that under consideration. Cf. "The Problem of the Concept in Social Psychology, "*American Journal of Sociology* (March 1940), pp. 707-719. For an analysis of how current sociological methods by their very nature often result in data and theory that does not fit the realities of the situation see Aaron V. Cicourel, *Method and Measurement in Sociology* (New York; Free Press of Glencoe, 1964).

[3] Our position may be contrasted with that of Hans L. Zetterberg who, after some exploratory research to determine problems, bypasses development of substantive theory and goes directly to formal theories for help. He says, "We must know the day-by-day issues facing the practitioner and then search the storehouse of academic knowledge to see whether it might aid him." *Social Theory and Social Practice* (New York: Bedminster Press, 1962), p. 41.

[4] This is noted by Wilbert Moore in "Predicting Discontinuities in Social Change," *American Sociological Review* (June, 1964), p. 332 and in *Social Change* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1963), Preface and Chapter 1.

Clearly, a substantive theory that is faithful to the everyday realities of the substantive area is one that is carefully *induced* from diverse data gathered over a considerable period of time. This research, usually based primarily on qualitative data gathered through observations, interviews, and documents and perhaps later supplemented by surveys, is directed in two ways—toward discovering new concepts and hypotheses, and then continually testing these emerging hypotheses under as many diverse conditions as possible. Only in this way will the theory be closely related to the daily realities (what is actually "going on") of the substantive area, and so be highly applicable to dealing with them. After the substantive theory is sufficiently formulated, formal theories can be scrutinized for such models, concepts and hypotheses as might lead to further formulation of the substantive theory.[5] We have described how we have proceeded in developing our theory to fit the realities of terminal care in hospitals. Readers who are familiar with this area will readily be able to judge our degree of success in that enterprise.

Understanding

A grounded substantive theory that corresponds closely to the realities of an area will be understood and "make sense" to the people working in the substantive area. This understanding is very important since it is these people who will wish either to apply the theory themselves or employ a sociologist to apply it.[6] Their understanding the theory tends to engender readiness to use it, for it sharpens their sensitivity to the problems that they face and gives them an image of how they can potentially make matters better, either through their own efforts or those of a sociologist.[7] If they wish to apply the theory themselves, they must perceive how it can be readily mastered and used.

In developing a substantive theory that fits the data, then, we have carefully developed concepts and hypotheses to facilitate the understanding of the theory by medical and nursing personnel. This, in turn, has ensured that our theory corresponds closely to the realities of terminal care. Our concepts have two essential features: they are both analytic

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[5] Thus, in contrast to Zetterberg who renders his data directly with a formal theory, we first develop a substantive theory from the data which then becomes a bridge to the use of what formal theories may be helpful. By bridging the relation of data to formal theory with a carefully thought-out substantive theory the forcing, distorting, and neglecting of data by rendering it with a formal, usually "thought up," theory is prevented in large measure. See Zetterberg, *op cit,* Chapter 4, particularly pp. 166-178.

[6] In contrast, both Zetterberg and Gouldner imply by their direct use of formal theory that the practical use of sociological theory is the *monopoly* of the Sociologist as consultant, since, of course, these formal theories are difficult enough to understand by sociologists. Zetterberg, *op cit,* and Alvin W. Gouldner, "Theoretical Requirements of the Applied Social Sciences, "*American Sociological Review*, Vol. 22 (February 1959). Applying substantive theory, which is easier to understand, means also that more sociologists can be applied social theorists than those few who have clearly mastered difficult formal theories to be "competent practitioners of them." Zettterberg, *op cit,* p. 18.

[7] Another substantive theory dealing with juvenile delinquency, in David Matza, *Delinquency and Drift* (New York: Wiley, 1964), provides a good example of our point. This is a theory that deals with "what is going on" in the situations of delinquency. It is *not* another rendition of the standard, formally derived, substantive theories on delinquency which deal intensively with classic ideas on relations between culture and subculture, conformity, opportunity structures, and social stratification problems, such as provided in the formal theories of Merton and Parsons and as put out by Albert Cohen and Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin. As a result, two probation officers of Alameda County, California, have told us that at last they have read a sociological theory that deals with "what is going on" and "makes sense" and that will help them in their work. Thus, they can apply Matza's theory in their work!

and sensitizing. By *analytic* we mean that they are sufficiently generalized to designate the properties of concrete entities—not the entities themselves—and by *sensitizing* we mean that they yield a meaningful picture with apt illustrations that enable medical and nursing personnel to grasp the reference in terms of their own experiences. For example, our categories of "death expectations," "nothing more to do," "lingering," and "social loss" designate general properties of dying patients which unquestionably are vividly sensitizing or meaningful to hospital personnel.[8]

To develop concepts of this nature, which tap the best of two possible worlds—abstraction and reality—takes considerable study of one's data.[9] Seldom can they be deduced from formal theory. Furthermore, these concepts provide a necessary bridge between the theoretical thinking of sociologists and the practical thinking of people concerned with the substantive area, so that both parties may understand and apply the theory. The sociologist finds that he has "a feeling for" the everyday realities of the situation, while the person in the situation finds he can master and manage the theory. In particular, these concepts allow this person to pose and test his "favored hypotheses" in his initial applications of the theory.[10]

Whether the hypotheses prove somewhat right or wrong, the answers still are related to the substantive theory; use of the theory helps both in the interpretation of hypotheses and in the development of new applications of the theory. For example, as physicians (and social scientists) test out whether or not disclosure of terminality is advisable under specified conditions, the answers will be interpretable in terms of awareness contexts. This, in turn, will direct these people to further useful questions as well as lead to suggestions for changing many situations of terminal care.

In utilizing these types of concepts in [*Awareness of Dying*], we have anticipated that readers would almost literally be able to see and hear the people involved in terminal situations—but see and hear in relation to our theoretical framework. It is only a short step from this kind of understanding to applying our theory to the problems that both staff and patients encounter in the dying situation. For instance, a general understanding of what is entailed in the mutual pretense context, including consequences which may be judged negative to nursing and medical care, may lead the staff to abandon its otherwise unwitting imposition of mutual pretense upon a patient. Similarly, the understanding yielded by a close reading of our chapters on family reactions in closed and open contexts should greatly aid a staff member's future management of—not to say compassion for—those family reactions. A good grasp of our theory, also, will help hospital personnel to understand the characteristic problems faced on particular kinds of hospital services, including theory own, as well as the typical kinds of solutions that personnel will try.

Generality

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[8] See Rensis Likert and Ronald Lippitt, "The Utilization of Social Science," in Leon Festinger and Daniel Katz (eds.), *Research Methods in the Behavioral Sciences* (New York: Dryden Press, 1953), p. 583.
[9] On sensitizing concepts see Herbert Blumer "What is Wrong with Social Theory," *American Sociological Review,* 19 (February 1954), pp. 3-10, quote on p. 9.
[10] Zetterberg has made this effort in choosing concepts with much success, *op cit,* p. 40 and *passim.*

In deciding upon the analytic level of our concepts, we have been guided by the criteria that they should not be so abstract as to lose their sensitizing aspect, but yet must be abstract enough to make our theory a general guide the multi-conditional, every-changing, daily situations of terminal care. Through the level of generality of our concepts, we have tried to make the theory flexible enough to make a wide variety of changing situations understandable, and also flexible enough to be readily reformulated, virtually on the spot, when necessary, that is, when the theory does not work. The person who applies our theory will, we believe, be able to bend, adjust, or quickly reformulate awareness theory as he applies it in trying to keep up with and manage the situational realities that he wishes to improve. For example, nurses will be better able to cope with family and patients during sudden transitions from closed to pretense or open awareness if they try to apply elements of our theory so one continually adjusts the theory in application.

We are concerned also with the theory's generality of scope. Because of the changing conditions of everyday terminal situations, it is not necessary to use rigorous research to find precise, quantitatively validated, factual, knowledge upon which to base the theory. "Facts" change quickly, and precise quantitative approaches (even large-scale surveys) typically yield *too few* general concepts and relations between concepts to be of broad practical use in coping with the complex interplay of forces characteristic of the substantive area. A person who employs quantitatively derived theory "knows his few variables better than anyone, but these variables are only part of the picture."[11] Theory of this nature will also tend to give the user the idea that since the facts are "correct" so is the theory; this hinders the continual adjustment and reformulation of theory necessitated by the realities of practice. Because he is severely limited when facing the varied conditions and situations typical of the total picture, the person who applies a quantitatively derived theory frequently finds himself either guideless or applying the inapplicable—with (potentially) unfortunate human and organizational consequences. This kind of theory typically does not allow for enough variation in situations to take into account the institution and control of change in them. Also, it usually does not offer sufficient means for predicting the diverse consequences of any action, done with purpose, on those aspects of the substantive area which one does not wish to change but which will surely be affected by the action. Whoever applies this kind of theory is often just "another voice to be listened to before the decision is reached or announced" by those who do not comprehend the total picture.[12]

Accordingly, to achieve a theory general enough to be applicable to the total picture, we have found it more important to accumulate a vast number of *diverse* qualitative "facts" on dying situations (some of which may be slightly inaccurate). This diversity has facilitated the development of a theory that includes a sufficient number of general concepts relevant to most dying situations, with plausible relations among these categories that can account for much everyday behavior in dying situations. Though most of our report is based on field observations and interviews, we have used occasional data from any source (newspaper and magazine articles, biographies and novels, surveys and experiments), since the criterion for

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[11] Gouldner (*op cit*, pp. 94-95) considers in detail the importance of testing the favored hypotheses of men who are in the situation. However, we suggest that the person can test his own hypotheses too, whereas Gouldner wishes to have a sociologist do the testing.
[12] Zetterberg, *op cit*, p. 187

the credibility and potential use of this data is how they are integrated into the emergent substantive theory.[13]

The relations among categories are continually subject to qualification, and to change in direction and magnitude due to new conditions. The by-product of such changes is a correction of inaccuracies in observation and reintegration of the correction into the theory as it is applied. The application is thus, in one sense, the theory's further test and validation. Indeed, field workers use application as a prime strategy for testing emerging hypotheses, though they are not acting as practitioners in a substantive area. In the next section, by illustrating how our theory guides one through the multifaceted problem of disclosure of terminality, we indicate how one confronts the total picture with a theory that is general enough in scope to be applicable to it.

This method of discovering and developing a substantive theory based on a multitude of diverse facts tends to resolve two problems confronting the social scientist consultant, who, according to Zetterberg, is "dependent on what is found in the tradition of science" and, when this fails, is apt to "proceed on guess work" so as not to "lose respect and future assignments."[14] Our method resolves these problems in large measure because it is not limited by the dictum that Zetterberg's consultant must follow: "only those details were assembled by the consultant and his co-workers that could be fitted into the categories of sociology, *i.e.,* phrased in sociological terminology."[15] As stated earlier in the section on fitness, we do not believe that the categories of sociology can at the outset be directly applied to a substantive area without great neglect, forcing, and distortion of everyday realities. A substantive theory for the area must first be *induced*, with its own general concepts; and these concepts can later become a bridge to more formal sociological categories if the latter can be found. As Wilbert Moore has noted, however, we still lack the necessary formal categories to cope with change adequately.

Control

The substantive theory must enable the person who uses it to have enough control in everyday situations to make its application worth trying. The control we have in mind has various aspects. The person who applies the theory must be enabled to understand and analyze ongoing situational realities, to produce and predict change in them, and to predict and control consequences both for the object of change and for other parts of the total situation that will be affected. And as changes occur, he must be enabled to be flexible in revising his tactics of application and in revising the theory itself if necessary. To give this kind of control, the theory must provide a sufficient number of general concepts and their plausible interrelations; and these concepts must provide him with understanding, with situational controls, and with access to the situation in order to exert the controls. The crux of controllability is the production and control of change through "controllable" variable and "access" variables.

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[13] *Ibid*

[14] This theme on integration into a theory is a source of confirming a fact or a proposition is extensively developed in Hans L. Zetterberg, *On Theory and Verification in Sociology* (New Jersey: Bedminster press, 1963).

[15] Zetterberg, *Social Theory, op cit,* pp. 188-189.

Controllable variables. Our concepts, their level of generality, their fit to the situation, and their understandability give whoever wishes to apply them, to bring about change, a *controllable theoretical foothold* in the realities of terminal situations. Thus, not only must the conceptual variables be controllable, but their controllability must be enhanced by their integration into a substantive theory which guides their use under most conditions that the user is likely to encounter. The use of our concepts may be contrasted with the unguided, *ad hoc* use of an isolated concept, or with the use of abstract formal categories that are too tenuously related to the actual situation.[16]

For example, the prime controllable variable of our study is the "awareness context." Doctors and nurses have much control over the creation, maintenance, and change of awareness contexts; thus, they have much control over the resultant characteristic forms of interaction, and the consequences for all people involved in the dying situation. Also, the interactional modes we have specified are highly controllable variables; doctors and nurses deliberately engage in many interactional tactics and strategies.

If a doctor contemplates disclosure of terminality to a patient, by using our theory he may anticipate a very wide range of plausibly expected change and consequences for himself, patient, family member, and nurses. By using the theory of awareness contexts developed in *Awareness of Dying* he may judge how far and in what direction the patient's responses may go and how to control these responses. By using the theory of awareness contexts, he may judge what consequences for himself, nurses and patients will occur when the context is kept closed; and by referring to the theory, he may weigh these against the consequences that occur when the context is opened. Also, he may judge how advisable it is to allow the characteristic modes of interaction that result from each type of awareness context to continue or be changed. From these chapters he also may develop a wider variety of interactional tactics than ordinarily would be in his personal repertoire. If maintaining a closed context will result in too great a management of assessment (an interactional mode) by the nurse—which might decrease the patient's trust in the whole staff when he discovers his terminality—it may be better to change the context to allow the nurse to respond differently.

The doctor may also review awareness context theory for judging to what degree opening the context by disclosure will lead to problems in controlling family members, and how the disclosure may affect their preparations for death. Resting this decision upon our theory allows him much flexibility and scope of action—precisely because we have provided many general concepts and their probable interrelations closely linked to the reality of disclosure, in order to guide the doctor in considering the many additional situations that will be affected by the disclosure. Simply to disclose in the hope that the patient will be able to prepare himself for death is just as unguided and *ad hoc* as to not disclose because he may commit suicide. To disclose because the patient must learn, according to formal theory, "to take the role of a terminal patient," is too abstract a notion for coping with the realities of the impact of disclosure for all people concerned.

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[16] *Ibid*, p. 139. This dictum is based on the idea: "The crucial act here is to deduce a solution to a problem from a set of theoretical principles." Theoretical principles refer to laws of formal theories.

This example brings out several other properties of controllable variable and, thus, of our substantive theory. First, the theory must provide controllable variables with *much explanatory power*: they must "make a big difference" in what is going on in the situation to be changed. We have discovered one such variable—awareness contexts. As we have reiterated many times, much of what happens in the dying situation is strongly determined by the type of awareness context within which the events are occurring.

Second, doctors and nurses, family and patients are already purposefully controlling many variables delineated in our substantive theory. While the doctor exerts most control over the awareness context, all these people have tactics that they use to change or maintain a particular awareness context. The patient, for example, is often responsible for initiating the pretense context. However, all these people are, in our observation, controlling variables for very limited, *ad hoc* purposes. Our theory, therefore, can give staff, family, and patients a broader guide to what they tend to do already and perhaps help them to be more effective.

Controllable variables sometimes entail controlling only one's own behavior and sometimes primarily others' behavior—the more difficult of the two. But, as we have tried to show, control usually involves the efforts of two parties; that is *control of the interaction* between two people by one or both. In the dying situation it is not uncommon to see patient, family, doctor, and nurse trying to control each other for their own purposes. Those who avail themselves of our theory may have a better chance in the tug-of-war over who shall best control the dying situation.

In the hospital, material props and physical spaces are of strategic importance as variables which help to control awareness contexts and people's behavior.[17] We have noted how doctors and nurses use spatial arrangement of rooms, doors, glass walls, rooms, and screens to achieve control over awareness contexts. By making such controllable variables part of our theory, we have given a broader guide to the staff's purposeful use of them. Thus, to let a family through a door or behind a screen may be more advisable than yielding to the momentary urge of shutting out the family to present a scene. Letting in family members may aid their preparations for death, which in turn may result in a more composed family over the long run of the dying situation.

Access variables. The theory must also include access variables: social structural variables which allow, guide, and give persons access either to the controllable variables or to the people who are in control of them. To use a controllable variable, one must have a means of access to it. For example, professional rules give principal control over awareness contexts to the doctor; therefore, the nurse ordinarily has a great deal of control in dying situations because of her considerable access to the doctor through or from whom she may

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[17] At a lower level of generality, in much consulting done by sociologists to industrial firms, hospital, social agencies, and the like, what is usually offered by the sociologists is "understanding," based upon an amalgam of facts intuitively rendered by references to formal theory and some loosely integrated substantive theory developed through contact with a given substantive area over years. (Sometimes this is abetted, as in consumer research, by relatively primitive but useful analyses of data gathered for specific purposes of consultation.) Providing that the amalgam makes "sense" to the client and that he can see how to use it, then the consultation is worthwhile. Conversely, no matter how useful the sociologist may think his offering is, if the client cannot "see" it then he will not find the consultation very useful. See also Zetterberg, *op cit*, Chapter 2.

try to exert control over the awareness context. Professional rules forbid her to change the context on her own initiative, they require her to maintain the current one. Thus, the organizational structure of the hospital, the medical profession, and the ward provide degrees of access to control of awareness contexts by both doctor and nurses—and our theory delineates this matter. Family members have more access to private a physician than to a hospital physician; thus, they may have more control over the former. Sometimes they can demand that their private physician keep a closed awareness context because of the control they exert over him through the lay referral system (upon which he may depend for much of his practice).[18] The patient has little access in the closed context to a doctor in order to control changes of context. However, like the nurse he has much access to everyday cues concerning his condition—they exist all around him and he learns to read them better and better. Thus, his access to strategic cues gives him an opportunity to control his situation—and we have discussed at length how he can manage cues to gain controls. Access variables also indicate how best to enter a situation in order to manage a controllable variable while not otherwise unduly disrupting the situation. Thus, we have delineated the various alternatives that a nurse may use to gain control over the "nothing more to do" situation in order to let a patient die.

Conclusion

Throughout our monograph we have indicated many strategic places, points, and problems in dying that we feel would profit from the application of our theory. By leaving these short discourses on application *in context* we trust they have had more meaning than if gathered into a single chapter.

We have made this effort to establish a "practical" theory also because we feel, as many sociologists do and as Elbridge Sibley has written: "The popular notion that any educated man is capable of being his own sociologist will not be exorcised by proclamation; it can only be gradually dispelled by the visible accomplishments of professionally competent sociologists."[19] By attempting to develop a theory that can also be applied, we hope to contribute to the accomplishments of sociology. Social theory, in turn, is thereby enriched and linked closely, as John Dewey remarked 30 years ago, with the pursuit and studied control of practical matters.[20]

Two properties of our type of an applied theory must be clearly understood. First, the theory can only be developed by trained sociologists, *but can be applied by either laymen or sociologists*. [Editor's note: in the decades since the original publication, Glaser, especially, taught, mentored, and acknowledged those of other disciplines in the foundations and procedures of grounded theory.] Second, it is a type of theory which can be applied in a substantive area which entails *interaction* variables. Whether it would be a useful type of theory for areas where interaction is of no powerful consequence (that is, where large scale parameters are at issue, such as consumer purchase rates, birth control,

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[18] Elements of 'material culture" should not be neglected in development of substantive theory. Gouldner suggests they are the "forgotten man of social research." *Op cit,* p. 97.

[19] On the lay referral system, see Eliot Friedson, *Patients' Views of Medical Practice* (New York: Russel Sage Foundation, 1961), Part Two.

[20] *The Education of Sociologists in the United States* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1963), p. 19.

the voting of a county, desegregation of a school system, and audiences for TV) remains unanswered.

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Personalizing Wellness: A Grounded Theory Study

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Abstract

The impetus for exploring how people created wellness using classic grounded theory rose from an interest in understanding behavior that shaped a health-conscious lifestyle. The grand tour question was, "what does wellness look like to you; how do you see yourself cultivating that in your life?" Thirty-three data samples were collected from interviews, a diary, and field observations. The substantive theory of personalizing wellness outlined three stages in forming a health-conscious lifestyle. Stage 1, Awakening a Vision of Wellness, begins the change process through experiencing disruption and personal discovery. Stage 2, Integrating Strategies, involves assuming responsibility by prioritizing wellness and handling complexity associated with one's inner and social life. Stage 3, Living Wellness, represents mastery levels of personal responsibility maintained through lifelong learning, sustaining energy resources, radiating vibrancy, and sharing wisdom. Coach-practitioners may utilize this theory for determining stage-appropriate interventions that support health-conscious behaviors.

Keywords: autonomy, coaching, health-conscious, self-determination, flow

Introduction

Personal responsibility in health has gained traction during the last three decades as individuals take ownership of their wellbeing by increasing health-conscious behaviors (Kraft & Goddell, 1993; Wiese et al., 2010). Health-conscious refers to "individuals who lead a 'wellness-oriented' lifestyle [and who] are concerned with nutrition, fitness, stress, and their environment. They accept responsibility for their health" (Kraft & Goddell, 1993, p. 18). A consumer-driven market for health-promoting goods and services prompted the healthcare industry, albeit hesitantly (Fulder; 1993), to take notice of shifting trends from disease management (Fulder, 1993; Kraft & Goddell, 1993; Wiese et al., 2010) to "using medical knowledge to prevent disease by altering lifestyle behaviors such as eating, sleeping, exercising, and smoking" (Kraft & Goddell, 1993, p. 19). Some researchers have highlighted the concern that research focusing continually on disease rather than on the experience of health or wellness will only continue to spotlight the disease process and experience and hinder understanding of the process and experience of health and wellness (Antonovsky, 1987; Fulder, 1993).

Antonovsky (1987) addressed the fundamental differences between studies that focus on the science of disease versus the science of health, mainly concluding that whatever the study focuses on will determine the questions, hypotheses, methods, and conclusions that guide the study. The motivation behind this study was initially to understand the health behaviors of people who, hypothetically, contributed to and helped sustain the "*historic change in public choice*" (Fulder, 1993; p. 108) in their quest for wellness. It became evident from the data that the main concern for participants in the study was relieving suffering by personalizing their approach to creating wellness to meet individual needs, preferences, interests, and wellness values, forming a dynamic *relationship-to-self*. Relationship-to-self refers to recognizing and responding to meeting needs, preferences, interests, and wellness values. Personalizing wellness introduces a three-stage process of developing a personal approach to living a wellness lifestyle.

Theory Development

This classic grounded theory study was conducted by a doctoral student at Saybrook University (Author, 2018). Wellness lifestyles were the topic area of research. Preconception was limited by not conducting a preliminary literature review and journaling to set aside personal biases and preconceptions, as Glaser (1998) recommended. Also, under the mentorship of the dissertation committee chair, when preconceptions appeared in the doctoral students' work, the mentor addressed the issue, and the student corrected course. In this manner, preconceptions and personal biases were acknowledged and let go to reduce and eliminate interference in the study.

Criteria for selecting adult participants were based on observing the participant exhibiting behaviors that the author perceived as wellness orientated before the invitation to participate in the study. Observed behaviors included, but were not limited to, meal choices, mind-body practices, energy therapies and, biomechanical therapies (Jones, 2005). The author conducting the study was immersed in multiple community environments where these observations were possible.

Consenting participants were asked the grand tour question, "what does wellness look like to you, and how do you see yourself cultivating that in your life?" Later the question evolved to "tell me about wellness in your life." Concurrent data collection and analysis began for this study at the outset of the first interview. For this study, 33 data samples were coded and analyzed according to the CGT process and integrated accordingly. The data included six interviews lasting 1-1.67 hours, audio-recorded, transcribed (as required by the university), and line-by-line coded as data (Glaser, 1978). Twenty-two additional field observations of those interviewed were coded as data. A detailed wellness diary written during the course of a year by a participant was coded as data, along with four anonymous field observations of people not interviewed also coded as data. Data collection lasted approximately 2.5 years, whereas constant comparative analysis and theoretical sampling guided data collection.

Coding and constant comparative analysis were used to produce codes and discover theoretical patterns when weaving the concepts back together using constant comparative analysis. Memo writing captured the relationships among concepts. Memos were sorted to create a theoretical outline which was used to organize the theory.

Personalizing Wellness

Glaser (1978, 2001) instructed that the main concern is present through the duration of the grounded theory study, though only becoming conceptually recognizable by the constant reworking of the data via the constant comparative analysis process. Constant comparative analysis revealed the main concern for participants in this study: relieving suffering, which resolves by *personalizing wellness*--an autonomous process that involves cultivating a self-led, wellness-oriented lifestyle, with attention given to acknowledging and integrating personal interests, preferences, needs, and wellness values into one's lifestyle (Author, 2018). Within personalizing wellness, wellness is characterized by feelings of openness, motivation, focus, creativity, strength, flexibility, and connection. Wellbeing is the aimed purpose of personalizing wellness and is defined as an internalized sensation of joyful contentment and openness towards life's experiences. *Personalizing wellness* includes three stages of subsequent development: Awakening a Vision of Wellness, Integrating Strategies, and Living Wellness, together resembling a framework of discovery, integration, and mastery.

Personalizing wellness commences at an intersection of discomfort and desire and moves forward when individuals recognize themselves as experts of their experience and in possession of a personal vision that elicits self-led action. Thus, simultaneously transforming discomfort and suffering by leaning toward the possibility of wellbeing via action. Awakening a vision of wellness is experienced as an epiphany of wellbeing, providing experiential guideposts to aim for when personalizing wellness. Introspection, self-evaluation, and exploration are behaviors associated with Stage 1. Stage 2, integrating strategies, is characterized by establishing and stabilizing wellness-oriented behavior systems. Stage 2 deals with handling complexity, internally and externally. The final stage, living wellness, is a culmination of knowledge, skills, and behaviors. Personal mastery expresses as an alive, fluid, dynamic expression of intentional wellness-oriented living and results in one sharing wisdom and teaching others how to live a wellness-oriented lifestyle.

Stage 1: Awakening a Vision of Wellness

Stage 1, *awakening a vision of wellness,* begins the change process with a catalyzing agent, disruption. Experiencing a disrupter and personal discovery are two distinctive yet dynamic behaviors that arouse awakening a vision of wellness.

Experiencing a Disrupter

Experiencing a disrupter interrupts routines and thinking patterns and is a disconcerting experience that most people prefer to avoid. Disrupters are significant disturbances that destabilize routines, grab attention, instigate inquiry, and motivate decisions. These disrupters lead to an examination of one's behaviors and their impact on one's wellbeing.

In grabbing attention, experiencing a disrupter forces attention to the quality and conditions of one's interior and exterior life, namely as it affects wellbeing. Conditions that are problematic in the first place and being coped with grab attention and magnify a problem. Uncomfortable feelings may manifest as overwhelm or fear, especially if the problem is life-threatening or can create or compound a disability. Fractured routines pronounce limitations or barriers associated with suffering. Grabbing attention breaks through habitual thinking patterns drawing attention to a desire to relieve suffering. The momentary awareness leaves a

lasting impact, instigating inquiry.

Instigating inquiry mitigates the effects of stress associated with the influx of feedback when insights emerge. Instigating inquiry is uncovering unconscious or unacknowledged issues related to the consequences experienced in the disruption. It is employed by asking questions inwardly and toward others, such as professionals, family, and friends, and examining the problem. Two types of knowledge become accessible for decision-making when instigating inquiry. First, factual knowledge examines the explicit behaviors that led to the predicament. Second, intuitive knowledge captures insights from experiences and offers glimpses of solutions—empowering individuals onward. Intuitive knowledge may be more impactful when motivating behavior than factual knowledge because it is experienced emotionally. The personally derived intuitive knowledge anchors meaning and urgency, motivating decision-making about the problem. Taking responsibility is not fully present in behaviors, but the idea of personal responsibility begins to form in one's thinking, and feelings of empowerment (possessing personal power) grow. For those beginning personalizing wellness, experiencing a disrupter serves as a wake-up call.

Personal Discovery

Following disruption, individuals seek to understand themselves better through personal discovery. Personal discovery is an introspective and exploratory behavior toward making conscious one's interests, preferences, needs, and wellness values by reflecting, exploring, and experimenting. It sets the foundation for implementing wellness behavior systems later (Stage 2 behavior).

Reflecting is a thought process of considering present conditions, past choices, known consequences of those choices, forgotten or neglected ideas, and memories. Reflecting aims to understand self-image, feelings of self-worth, sabotaging behaviors, and ideas related to wellness. Reflecting increases awareness of needs related to wellness. Reflecting occurs through thinking, writing, art-making, conversations, and mindfulness, focusing on witnessing one's experience. Reflecting enhances developing self-awareness and accessing inner resources. One participant reflected that three years of seeking help from medical providers to resolve a chronic health issue had proved to be fruitless. Having exhausted all medical options, she reflected, "what am I doing? Am I causing this"? These two questions were pivotal in shifting the participant's attention toward behavior and lifestyle.

Reflecting activities evolve into exploring activities as individuals seek to understand their inner psychological-psychoemotional environment and know options in the exterior environment that may add value to their quest for wellness. Exploring within personal discovery aids in familiarizing with the internal and external environment. Exploring includes (a) making conscious interests associated with wellness, (b) preferences for how to engage in wellness activities, as well as preference for the environment one desires to be in, including the social environment, (c) needs associating with psychological, emotional, physical, social, and spiritual concerns, and (d) wellness values which directs participation in meaningful activities cohesive with one's value system.

Exploring leads to experimenting, adding experience-based, direct knowledge to the repertoire of possibilities for wellness-building activities. Experimenting is exposure to novel behaviors via direct experience. All interviewed participants in the study cited spontaneous flow states when experimenting as pivotal in crystalizing dynamic visions of wellness. A vision of wellness is an inner resource that manifests as imagined ideas, impressions, and a felt-sense experience that transforms into a guiding aim for behavior. Within personalizing wellness, flow state is an engaged, focused presence in the moment, whereas a simultaneous peripheral awareness and an embodied sensation of coherence and connection with the environment are experienced. A sudden "knowing" experienced as an epiphany provides an embodied reference point for wellness, enabling self-led action for the personalizing wellness process.

One participant said:

The club gives you feedback of that golf shot, it's like a vibration in your hands, and you feel the absolute perfection of that golf shot…finding that bliss is like finding perfection…finding that bliss is to know you are in perfect harmony with the world… that's the feeling I was able to get into…I got to where I could go there at will.

The embodied sensation of the vision of wellness serves as an orientation, aligning vision and motivating action. Orienting toward a vision of wellness maintains aim, while engagement in wellness behaviors develops coherence, increasing perception of capability, and challenges further development. The direct experience associated with experimenting provides direct knowing to individuals—direct knowing influences and helps resolve the dilemma regarding 'who is the expert' in one's wellness, a concern affecting motivation within personalizing wellness. Resolving the dilemma of expert empowers self-led behavior, initiating momentum toward the vision of wellness with purpose. Finely attuned attention to internal feedback provided through experience shapes wellness behaviors in concrete ways, making the wellness experience personally their own and provoking ownership towards one's wellness. Ownership of wellness completes the first stage in personalizing wellness and shifts individuals into the second stage, Integrating Strategies.

Stage 2: Integrating Strategies

Stage 2, *integrating strategies* begins when individuals initiate prioritizing wellness and handling complexity in their lives. Integrating strategies are behaviors individuals do to create an effective system that supports a wellness lifestyle and includes prioritizing wellness and handling complexity.

Prioritizing Wellness

Prioritizing wellness places the behaviors associated with wellness front and center in an individual's attention, and they learn and integrate wellness-orientated behaviors into daily routines. Imagery and sensations spark memory of the vision of wellness, which remains a guiding focal point throughout stage two. The vision of wellness fades from conscious awareness but reappears periodically, most often when experiencing flow states. Experiencing flow provides feedback that serves two purposes. First, the input informs the vision of wellness, resulting in its dynamic quality. Second, the input includes information used when self-evaluating progress in

personalizing wellness.

Establishing a primary wellness behavior initiates the routine to integrate wellness-oriented behaviors. It involves doing a central wellness-oriented behavior to establish familiarity, routine, and a base for furthering integration. Commonly, flow-inducing activities from experimenting direct establishing a primary wellness behavior. For example, one participant experienced a flow state while experimenting in a community ecstatic dance class and later engaged in the same wellness behavior (dancing) when establishing a primary wellness behavior. The experimental activity developed into a weekly commitment. The participant said, "It started with one class. I first joined a 12-week series."

Generating momentum moves wellness-oriented action forward, signifying that prioritizing wellness is proceeding. The cumulative effects of establishing a primary wellness behavior build energy and momentum of wellness behaviors keep the personalizing wellness process in motion. The doing of the primary wellness behavior summons ongoing and iterative engagement for individuals. The circular feedback of engaging generates momentum of the primary behavior. In the previous paragraph's dancing example, participation in weekly dance classes generated momentum over three consecutive years for the participant. In the participant's words, "[the] next thing I knew, I had been dancing for three years in multiple committed groups lasting twelve weeks each. …showing up every Tuesday night for two hours."

Other such phenomena of generating momentum of wellness behaviors appeared throughout the data. Generating momentum is regulated by establishing rhythms.

Establishing rhythms emerges from needs to prevent burnout and monotonous pacing of engagement in wellness behaviors. Sensitivity to subtle feedback from one's perceptions, emotions, physical feelings, and coherence with the wellness vision, guide establishing rhythms. Establishing rhythms honors need that allows for variations and fluctuations in personal energy and activity levels and rests on developing a receptive and responsive relationship-to-self. It also helps maintain structure for action because of the responsiveness to fluctuating needs without demolishing the behavioral structure created. Establishing rhythms helps mitigate the change process when integrating new behaviors, perceptions, and experiences. Establishing rhythms regulates the personalizing wellness process, aiding in maintaining vitality, interest, and connection in continuing the process. Well-established rhythms may be a pivotal factor in graduating to stage three of personalizing wellness. One participant established rhythms by first tracking personal energy levels daily through charting various indicators in a journal. The participant later used the data to determine which lifestyle activities to engage in and when.

Handling Complexity

Integrating and maintaining a wellness lifestyle within the complexity of modern life challenges the personalizing wellness process. Handling complexity involves managing competing priorities of one's life while simultaneously integrating strategies and maintaining one's commitment to a wellness lifestyle. Competing priorities create adversity for individuals and test commitment to prioritizing wellness. Individuals may spend years in stage two due to handling complexity and working out prioritizing wellness. Knowledge development during stage two builds the scaffolding for competency in personalizing wellness. When handling complexity, three common experiences

occur: hitting a wall, relapsing, and recovering.

Hitting a wall occurs when individuals advance when generating momentum yet have not sufficiently established rhythms to regulate the change underway. Competing behaviors signal a need for developing sensitivity to nuance for one's preferences, needs, interests, and wellness values. It also involves appraising and jettisoning incongruent behaviors to prioritizing wellness. It takes time and experimentation for individuals to develop self-awareness in these areas. Some continue at it, eventually resolving the conflicts involved in handling complexity. Some do not and instead relapse into habitual behaviors that lead to the crisis experienced in stage one.

Relapsing is falling back into habitual patterns and losing touch with the vigor and energy of self-led discovery. One fundamental behavior associated with relapsing is letting go of self-led action on one's behalf and behaving reactively rather than through intentional choice. For some, this occurs in favor of indulgences intended to satisfy an unmet need, which is where developing sensitivity to nuance, signaling preferences, needs, interests, and wellness values becomes relevant. Excessive indulgences may include working, sexual activity, substance or alcohol use, or food intake. For others, relapsing involves self-deprivation behaviors, all of which were seen within the data.

The relationship-to-self and relapsing dynamic manifest when unexpected life challenges occur. Habitual response patterns to life's challenges may interfere with personalizing wellness. Contributing factors to relapsing are surprising or troubling events, new or unhealed trauma (physical or psychological), loss, a significant change (positive or negative), and impulsivity related to overconfidence or grandiose perceptions about oneself. Relapsing may also signal a loss of meaning and purpose in personalizing wellness; hence releasing self-led action. When individuals experience feeling well within themselves over an extended amount of time, the sense of urgency for continuing wellness-oriented behaviors diminishes for some.

Recovering is a series of conscious choices that involve reprioritizing wellness. Reestablishing connection to meaning and purpose through reestablishing a primary wellness behavior, generating momentum, and reestablishing rhythms are the means for reprioritizing wellness. Flow is reexperienced through an instigating behavior, triggering a feedback sensation perceived coherence with the vision of wellness. Experiencing flow ignites comprehension of necessary behaviors for getting back on track with personalizing wellness and quickens recovery. It may take several iterations of relapse and recovery for a comprehensive enough awareness of the dynamics that influence the relationship-to-self for behavior to change. Repeated exposure to experiencing flow develops awareness of which behaviors contribute to remembering the feeling of wellness and which behaviors diminish the sensation of wellness.

Stage 3: Living Wellness

Stage 3, *living wellness,* signifies mastery in personalizing wellness and is an adaptive and dynamic expression of deliberately living a wellness-oriented lifestyle. For those individuals consistently prioritizing wellness, their experience of making wellness happen becomes a reality. Persistent attention toward a quality relationship-to-self catalyzes the living wellness reality. A deep sense of care and devotion to demonstrating care in the way one lives is vibrantly present in stage three. Consistent persistence and personal ownership for one's wellbeing are key

properties in living wellness. Five main behaviors characterize living wellness: lifelong learning, mastering energy resources, ritualizing wellness, radiating vibrancy, and sharing wisdom.

Lifelong Learning

Self-led discovery and learning and applying solutions to problems form the matrix of lifelong learning. Lifelong learning is continuous learning and deepening study in wellness and beyond that are personally relevant and for helping others. Curiosity and personal ownership for wellbeing motivate lifelong learning. Commitment to developing practical knowledge over one's lifetime maintains the iterative nature of lifelong learning. One participant addressed lifelong learning this way: "It sounds crazy, but to not be well is almost a gift so that we're able to find how to live toward what we've steered away from."

Mastering Energy Resources

By the time one has reached living wellness in stage three of personalizing wellness, individuals have developed an acute sense of embodied knowledge. In contrast, one can predict wellness needs based on sensory and explicit knowledge of where one is in their energy cycle, in terms of the day, weeks, months, and year and respond to the feedback provided through the knowledge. When integrating strategies in stage two, specifically when establishing rhythms, individuals developed sensitivity towards their physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs when regulating energy began more intentionally. Mastering energy resources at this stage is a refined version of using rhythms to regulate energy. Restoration behaviors help master energy resources. The key behaviors associated with mastering energy resources include sensitivity to cues, awareness of needs, and congruent action. These behaviors are in development throughout the personalizing wellness process, though the finely attuned awareness coupled with action becomes a significant lever in governing self-led behavior in Stage 3. Nearly habitual responsiveness helps to carry through the self-regulation behavior of mastering energy resources. In this way, a reinforcing loop strengthens personalizing wellness.

Ritualizing Wellness

Self-care and devotion to living well manifest in Stage 3 as ritualizing wellness which is approaching one's life and self-care with reverence. By now, individuals refer to wellbeing and wellness as synonymous with spiritual experience. Self-care practices can be any number of activities impacting various human experiences; psychological, physical, spiritual, and social. Multiple behaviors are sequentially stacked together during the practice period forming an overall ritual and initiating varying degrees of flow state experiences in the process. The flow state evokes feelings of connection and coherence, deepening the sense of reverence and feeding into the meaning and purpose of activities. A participant shared,

> It seems like there's a heightened ability to perceive what's occurring in, in all fields, like in another person and in myself and in the environment…overall it feels like an increased experience of aliveness…on the path to experiencing wellness is really an opportunity to be alive. Like to find how to be alive!

Radiating Vibrancy

Radiating vibrancy is a consequence of a way of living, punctuated by an embodiment of prioritizing wellness, life-long learning, mastering energy resources, and ritualizing wellness. Radiating vibrancy is the visibly attractive, robust, stable, and joyful expression of living wellness. It appears as bright shining eyes, an easy smile, and a glow to one's skin, with shoulders relaxed, easy movements, bouts of spontaneous laughter, and full-bodied presence, as observed in participants in Stage 3. When radiating vibrancy, individuals in this stage attract followers who have a keen interest in learning from those who have managed to embody a vibrant expression of living well. Presently, individuals model living wellness to others, who may become devoted followers in the modern-day version of clients or students. An embodied knowing of living wellness evolves into an outpouring of knowledge through sharing wisdom.

Sharing Wisdom

Expertise through knowledge and experience accumulates as wisdom, and a readiness to share that wisdom casually and professionally arises. A dynamic process of encounters and interactions with others unfolds the held wisdom in incremental, as-needed, small bites of suggestions that others may incorporate in personalizing wellness. Some of the sharing occurs informally through modeling and casual conversations. Sharing wisdom also occurs deliberately through formalized means such as therapeutic, educational, and supportive professional channels. When sharing wisdom occurs through professional channels, individuals have assumed responsibility as a leader by teaching, coaching, and assisting others in their pursuit of wellness. Assumption of responsibility as a leader may support individuals in ongoing learning and feed personalizing wellness.

Conclusion

The main concern present through the duration of this grounded theory study was relieving suffering. The antidote for resolving the problem of suffering is personalizing wellness. Personalizing wellness is the distinctive, self-guided process of embodying a wellness-oriented lifestyle, with consideration given to acknowledging and integrating personal interests, preferences, needs, and wellness values, all of which mitigates through relationship-to-self. Though the process involves many peaks and valleys and starts and stops, for those who continue to act on their behalf for the benefit of wellness, the iterative process gives way to a transformed expression of living wellness, one of embodied living wellness. Personalizing wellness occurs through a three-stage process, whereas a pattern of behaviors shaping a lifestyle that is unique to the individual unfolds over time. Individuals prioritize wellness because of awakening a vision of wellness after a catalyzing experience, whereas individuals decide to solve the problem(s) experienced. A network-type foundation of behaviors forms while integrating strategies which include developing skills in handling complexity. With the ongoing engagement of wellness behaviors in personally meaningful ways over time, one's life transforms by self-led personalizing wellness, and living wellness becomes a reality.

Discussion

Generated by an intrinsically motivated commitment to an inner vision, the ever-evolving and dynamic relationship-to-self mitigates the personalizing wellness theory. Though ample literature dedicated focus on models, frameworks, and theories of health promotion and health behaviors,

no literature regarding a straightforward process that explains human behavior when making wellness happen was found. However, several theories earned relevance to the theory of personalizing wellness: transpersonal crisis, agentic theory, self-determination theory, flow state theory, transtheoretical model of change, experiential learning theory, and adult learning theory. Each will be briefly explained in the next subsections.

Transpersonal Crisis

Triggered by a crisis that is transformed into a catalyzing event, personalizing wellness begins when an individual wants to relieve the suffering associated with the crisis. The experience of suffering creates a psychological opening for some individuals, and a mental representation for wellness rises into awareness. In a qualitative study using a phenomenological approach (Taylor, 2017), 32 individuals experienced a crisis involving turmoil or suffering as a common precursor to permanent psychological change. In Taylor's study (2017), participants' experiences were characterized by periods of intense suffering followed by abrupt shifts in perception. In other related research, transpersonal crisis, also known as spiritual emergency, may indicate that an individual is undergoing a natural-evolutionary development process during periods of intense suffering (Grof & Grof, 2017). Transpersonal crisis (Grof & Grof, 2017) implies that one has the "potential for emotional and psychosomatic healing, creative problem-solving, personality transformation, and consciousness evolution" (p. 30).

A literature review (Reidy, 2013) examined characteristics of human awakening associated with transpersonal crisis, notably coinciding with the personalizing wellness concept of experiencing a disrupter, as ending denial by confronting and embracing reality. Grof and Grof (2017) also stated that individuals must be willing to "undergo the pain of confronting underlying experiences" (p. 31) to relieve the suffering associated with transpersonal crisis. Reidy's (2013) awakening concept included enhancing awareness and developing personal agency, which closely resembles personal discovery in the theory of personalizing wellness. To advance from Stage 1 to Stage 2 in personalizing wellness, individuals confront the current reality of suffering they experience and its influencing factors. Additionally, they must summon personal agency to do something about the problem of suffering.

Agentic Theory

Agentic theory (Bandura, 1977) provides insight regarding the autonomous and self-guided behaviors present in personalizing wellness. Social cognitive theory suggests that individuals are instrumental in constructing the course their lives take (Bandura, 1977, 2018). Self-efficacy, defined as the perceived capabilities one has about their ability to act, at varying levels of challenge, to achieve acting on a specified course of action (Bandura, 1977). Throughout personalizing wellness, self-efficacy influences decision-making and action.

Self-efficacy underpins motivation and foretells achievement and performance (Bandura, 1977, 2004, 2018). In agentic behavior, one's functioning and life circumstances occur via three properties: forethought, self-reactiveness, and self-reflectiveness (Bandura, 2018). Forethought is demonstrated through self-initiated motivation and guidance to plan, adopt goals, and visualize outcomes of such actions (Bandura, 2018). In personalizing wellness, individuals act on their behalf, often without a guide, by formulating plans, adopting a series of goals, and using their

vision of wellness as the intended outcome of their aim. The second property, self-reactiveness, relate to self-regulation within a greater system of self-governance. Adoption of standards for the self-governing system evolves from self-evaluation of performance (Bandura, 2018). The property of self-reactiveness manifests in prioritizing wellness through establishing rhythms in the second stage and mastering energy resources in the third stage; all are variations of self-regulation in personalizing wellness. The third property in agentic behavior is self-reflectiveness, whereas individuals reflect on their efficacy of "given challenges, the soundness of their thoughts and actions, their values and the meaning and morality of their pursuits" (Bandura, 2018, p. 131). Within the personalizing wellness theory, individuals adapt to emergent challenges and situations while evaluating their choices affecting or regarding wellness-related behaviors.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

As a meta-theory, SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2002) explains an integrative perspective regarding behavior and motivation, resembling aspects of the personalizing wellness theory. Organismic perspective underlies the SDT theory, which views humans as active organisms possessing a disposition toward developing and mastering challenges, contingent upon nutriments being available. Nutriments are the beneficial effects of fulfilling the innate requirements of basic needs (Ryan & Deci, 2002). Optimal expression is related to the fulfillment of innate requirements. The basic needs Ryan and Deci (2002) identified are competence, relatedness, and autonomy.

Competence

Competence is feeling confident and effective in doing and having opportunities to express one's capacities (Ryan & Deci, 2002). In personalizing wellness, increasing competence motivates engagement in activities as one learns wellness behaviors. The absence of competence impedes some individuals from taking action for short or long periods when learning new wellness behaviors. However, the initial crisis experienced at the onset of the process motivates action early on, despite competence-related concerns. When individuals progress through the stages, the development of competence underlies progress.

Relatedness

Relatedness is the social aspect of psychological needs. Relatedness is caring about and relating to others, and it provides a sense of belonging and security with others (Ryan & Deci, 2002). In personalizing wellness, relatedness may influence engagement in wellness activities. For some, being a part of a social group motivates behavior to engage in wellness behaviors. For others, discovering they belong within a group is an unexpected but positive side effect of doing wellness behaviors.

Autonomy

Autonomy is the self-regulation of behavior based on personal interests and self-endorsed values (Ryan & Deci, 2002). Solving the problem of suffering via personalizing wellness is ameliorated through self-guided and self-regulated actions. Autonomy is "being the perceived source or origin of one's own behavior" (Ryan & Deci, 2002, p. 6). Individuals in personalizing wellness use intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation refers to doing an activity for enjoyment or

interest, while extrinsic motivation refers to doing something because it leads to a particular outcome. Autonomy is a core feature motivating the personalizing wellness when individuals decide to act and stop waiting for others to resolve their problem of suffering. Fulfilling the need for autonomy provides intrinsic motivation in a highly personal area: health and wellbeing.

Flow State Theory

Experiencing flow carries through the personalizing wellness process. Flow state is an optimal state of functioning in cognitive and physical performance (Csíkszentmihályi & Csíkszentmihályi, 1988; Nakamura & Csíkszentmihályi, 2014). Though initially associated with positive psychology, researchers have situated flow state within the framework of cognitive psychology for understanding flow components and cognitive processes (Simlesa et al., 2018). Additionally, new developments posit flow as "a dynamic psychological process rather than a mere state (Simlesa et al., 2018, p. 234). Being "in the zone" is a familiar axiom for flow state. Experiencing flow may be an essential ingredient for human wellbeing (Simlesa et al., 2018). Increased flow frequency improves the quality of life through increased concentration, creativity, and positive emotions (Nakamura & Csíkszentmihályi, 2002). Simlesa et al. (2018) cited flow as being so important for human wellbeing that it deserves to be "requisite for contributing to the improvement of human lives" (p. 233). The personalizing wellness theory discovered flow as a common motivator for wellness behavior.

Transtheoretical Model of Change

Personalizing wellness explains a process of voluntarily changing behaviors over time. The Transtheorectical Model (TTM) similarly explains a voluntary process of change over time. It includes a five-stage process of change (DiClemente & Prochaska, 1982), five levels of psychological problems in the change process (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1984), and decisional balance (Velicer et al., 1985), which illustrates motivational aspects of change. Aspects of TTM related to the personalizing wellness theory will be explained next.

Processes of Change

Processes of change explain *how* individuals change (Prochaska & Velicer, 1997). Five behavioral (i.e., counterconditioning, helping relationships, reinforcement management, self-liberation, and stimulus control) and five experimental processes (i.e., consciousness-raising, dramatic relief, environmental re-evaluation, self-reevaluation, and social liberation) form processes of change (Biddle & Nigg, 2000). Behavioral and experiential processes of change exist in each stage of personalizing wellness. Biddle and Nigg (2000) demonstrated that individuals commonly engage in experiential processes of change *earlier* in the change process when supporting exercise-involved activity and behavioral change *later* in the process. Experiential discovery processes primarily occupy Stage 1 in personalizing wellness, whereas behavioral change mainly occurs in Stage 2. Experiential processes of change involve acquiring information independently through experience (Burkholder & Nigg, 2001). Experiential processes in personalizing wellness provoke personal discovery, eliciting the vision of wellness. Behavioral change follows awareness induced by experiential processes in personalizing wellness.

Stages of Change

TTM stages of change involve five levels: precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, and maintenance. TTM stages of change do not explain how or why people move across the stages but rather explain *when* people change related to motivation (Prochaska & Velicer, 1997). Personalizing wellness explains a progression of behaviors through a three-stage process: awakening a vision of wellness, integrating strategies, and living wellness. Each stage represents when change occurs in personalizing wellness.

Decisional Balance

Decisional balance relates to the decisional and motivational aspects of change (Velicer et al., 1985). Considerations include costs and benefits of doing or not doing particular behaviors when temptation, the urge or desire to engage in behaviors that threaten to derail intentions, arises. Self-efficacy, discussed in agentic theory, influences decisional balance (Velicer et al., 1985). Throughout personalizing wellness, evidence of decisional balance is noticeable in Stage 2, Integrating Strategies, when prioritizing wellness and handling complexity.

Experiential Learning Theory

According to Kolb (1984), experiential learning can be understood best as a process, much like personalizing wellness. Kolb (1984) identified experiential learning theory as "a holistic, integrative perspective on learning that combines experience, perception, cognition, and behavior" (p. 21). The personalizing wellness theory experience informs, motivates, and integrates ideas and feedback related to the learning process.

Adult Learning Theory

Learning is a "basic human endeavor" (Merriam & Bierema, 2013, p. 24) and occurs throughout personalizing wellness. The foundation of ALT includes behaviorism, humanism, cognitivism, social cognitivism, and constructivism. ALT rests on two main pillars: andragogy and self-directed learning.

Andragogy

Andragogy (Knowles, 1973; Merriam & Bierema, 2013) is concerned with adult learning and adult learning environments. Andragogy is defined as the "art and science of helping adults learn" (Knowles, 1980, p. 43). According to Knowles (1973, 1980), six ideas influence andragogy. First, self-directed behavior arises out of an independent self-concept. Next, experience accumulates as resources for learning. Third, social tasks adults have to deal with influence readiness for learning. Fourth, adult learning is tied to the immediacy of use, focusing on problem-centered learning rather than subject-centered learning. Fifth, internal motivation directs adults to learn. Sixth, adults need to understand the reasoning behind learning something.

Self-directed behavior propels individuals toward realizing interests, preferences, needs, and wellness values when personalizing wellness. When integrating strategies and establishing a primary wellness behavior, familiarity from experience influences actions. Adults faced with the problem of suffering, make choices to learn how to relieve suffering. Having to confront the truth of one's reality regarding wellness, or lack of wellness, creates interest and readiness to learn wellness behaviors. The vision of wellness motivates learning behavior.

Self-Directed Learning

Knowles (1975) defined self-directed learning as a personal characteristic and a process. As a characteristic, Knowles (1975) said self-directed and autonomous behavior may result from a predisposition. When defined as a process (Knowles, 1975), self-directed learning is initiated by individuals, with or without the help of others who assess learning needs, goals, and resources for learning while also choosing and implementing learning strategies and performing self-evaluations of learning outcomes. The characteristic and process features of self-directed learning are evident in the personalizing wellness process.

Implications for Practice

The theory of personalizing wellness reveals that individuals actively seek personalized solutions to their wellness-related problems. Autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2002) and experiential learning (Kolb, 1984) are two core properties of personalizing wellness, with crisis (Grof & Grof, 2017) and flow states (Csíkszentmihályi & Csíkszentmihályi, 1988) being mobilizers in the process. Practitioner attunement to the core properties and mobilizers of the personalizing wellness process can be leveraged to enhance support to clients through the stages, whether through therapeutic relationships, such as healthcare, mental health, substance abuse treatment, or personal development relationships such as life or wellness coaching. The following paragraphs present implications for practice.

A vision of wellness motivates a reduction of problematic behaviors and increases beneficial behaviors for wellbeing. Mental health and substance abuse practitioners may benefit their clients by utilizing consciousness-raising (Prochaska & Velicer, 1997) processes to assist their clients in recognizing their vision of wellness as a starting point in treatment. Keeping in mind the vision of wellness is dynamic. It is key that self-agentic (Bandura, 1977, 2004, 2018) behavior be respected by practitioners and allow for autonomy and self-efficacy to shape the personalizing wellness process. Engagement in the personalizing wellness process affords individuals opportunities to confront problematic issues. Throughout the study, self-agentic behavior directed confrontation with physical and mental health problems, including substance abuse. A deliberate avoidance or reduction in substance and alcohol use occurred for some individuals where individuals recognized interference to one's vision of wellness. Additionally, those who learned to invoke flow states increased motivation for wellness behaviors.

Leveraging behavioral change through personalizing wellness orients the professional helping relationship to respect the voluntary process of self-led change. Many helping professionals believe in the Rogerian adage to meet their clients *where they are* [emphasis added] (Rogers, 1983). However, if a helping professional is unfamiliar with their client's personalizing wellness process, they may miss a valuable perspective regarding client-centered care. For instance, a client who knows there is a problem but lacks belief in a personal vision of wellness will not take action to solve their problem (Bandura, 2004; Prochaska & Velicer, 1997). A practitioner can help the individual solve the problem of belief. Individuals who *do not believe* (Bandura, 2004) may not have awakened a personal vision of wellness. Nevertheless, it is not enough to tell a client they should believe in a vision of wellness; a client must *experience* [emphasis added] a vision of wellness to activate intrinsic motivation.

Several therapeutic actions may instigate awakening a vision of wellness. Modes of therapeutic actions (MTA) cause something to happen to improve some condition (Jones, 2005). Practitioners aware of the personalizing wellness process and who possess a working knowledge of various MTAs (Jones, 2005) can facilitate experiential interventions. For clients who have not awakened a vision of wellness, a practitioner may utilize specific consciousness-raising (Prochaska & Velicer, 1997) activities with clients to promote awakening a vision of wellness. Once the problem of a vision of wellness resolves, practitioner and client attention can shift toward exposure of wellness lifestyle activities and later towards developing competence in the next stage of personalizing wellness, where attention shifts toward building healthy habits. Practitioners have an essential role in possessing diverse knowledge of MTAs across fields while appropriately discriminating recommendations of MTAs with awareness of contraindications and cautions associated with the MTAs and the client. If the personalizing wellness process is honored by professionals working with clients, they may better provide client-centered care, enhancing intrinsic motivation and commitment to personalizing wellness.

Experiencing flow states is a mobilizer in personalizing wellness via intrinsic motivation. Practitioners may invoke curiosity with clients by educating them on how wellness-related activities can provoke "highly enjoyable psychological states" (Kowal & Fortier, 1990, p. 356) through flow state. Training in flow states is not needed to experience it. Nearly all people are likely to have experienced flow spontaneously within their lifetime. However, in personalizing wellness, those who recognized the flow state phenomenon in their experience developed regular practices to invoke flow and thus advanced through the stages. Practitioners knowledgeable in the flow state framework may lend vital informational support relevant to clients' experiences and motivate health and wellness behaviors. In this regard, specific training in accessing flow states could reduce time experimenting. Worth noting is that many mind-body approaches may induce flow states such as dancing, tai chi, qi gong, and yoga. Numerous other activities do, too, such as gardening, writing, running, walking, sporting, biking, and art-making. The key to flow state activation is engagement (Nakamura & Csíkszentmihályi, 2014). Exposure to health and wellness activities that induce flow state and education about flow state may enhance autonomy for individuals while also aiding clients in developing life skills that support wellness.

The ideas offered in this section concerning implications for practice are not comprehensive but offer a starting point for consideration. The most compelling areas of interest for future practice and scholarship involve the relationship between autonomy, experiencing flow, consciousness-raising, and change behavior. TTM literature pointed to engagement in experiential processes involved in consciousness-raising endeavors as essential factors in the change process (Prochaska & Velicer, 1997). Practitioners who apply the implications presented here can utilize a practical approach toward helping their clients develop wellness lifestyles.

Limitations and Future Research

Limitations exist in this study. Criteria selection for the study were based on the researcher's perception of wellness behaviors. Some of those perceptions were informed by the researcher's education in integrative health science and former profession in addiction treatment. Additionally, actual behavioral changes over time were not captured but rather perceived change as self-reported by interviewees. Albeit, the fracturing of data and constant comparative analysis

created categories that participants themselves were not aware which structured a conceptual story grounded in data. A longitudinal study focused on observed behaviors, and an increased number of data sets may produce greater parsimony of the theory. Another limitation of this study is that a doctoral student and novice in research methodologies completed the research. The study is limited to the skills of the researcher at the time of writing up the theory. Glaser's (1978, 2009) support toward novice researchers as ideal candidates for conducting CGT studies allows generous room for learning via the practice of conducting research. He said CGT is

> done best in the hands of the novice PhD and MA candidates because not only of their quest for relevancy, in the face of extant literature that does not fit, work or is not relevant, they are still open to "whatever," still enthusiastically learning, still unformed by QDA methods, lack QDA identity protection, and their skill development fledgling status is uniquely suited to skill development required in the GT process. (Glaser, 2009, p. 1)

Conclusion

This study sought to reveal how individuals created wellness and discovered a three-stage process which revealed a voluntary, self-led, learning and change process toward a personal vision of wellness named personalizing wellness. Wellness is not a stagnant objective to be obtained but rather an alive and dynamic interaction of experiences and processes to be lived.

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Collaborative Grounded Theory

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Abstract

This article describes how two researchers' professional relationship began as a mentor/mentee relationship and transformed into co-researchers using grounded theory. We explain how we navigated each stage of the process of conducting a GT study using a collaborative and interdisciplinary approach. The article also presents some key takeaways for researchers to consider when working collaboratively.

Keywords: collaborative, co-researchers, interdisciplinary, grounded theory

Introduction

This article presents how two researchers' professional relationship evolved from a mentor/mentee relationship into co-researchers using grounded theory (GT). While the topics of collaborative and interdisciplinary research teams have been extensively researched and written about for many years (Abramo et al., 2009; Oliver et al., 2018; Tkachenko & Ardichvili, 2020), little is written on collaborative, interdisciplinary research teams using GT.

Authors have cited many reasons for the increased use of collaborative and interdisciplinary research teams. Some reasons include the increased pressure to publish within academia, the need to address increasingly complex problems, and access to resources to name a few (Abramo et al., 2009; Oliver et al., 2018; Tkachenko & Ardichvili,

2020). There are also numerous articles that focus on the advantages and drawbacks of the use of collaborative and interdisciplinary research teams (Oliver et al., 2018; Tkachenko & Ardichvili, 2020). The experiences of the authors of this article align with the previous findings but this article focuses on the unique aspects of collaborative and interdisciplinary research teams using GT.

In this article, the authors described how our relationship began as a mentor/mentee relationship and transformed into co-researchers. We present how we navigated the various stages of the process of conducting a GT study using a collaborative and interdisciplinary approach. The article ends with some key takeaways for researchers to consider when working collaboratively.

How Our Relationship Began

From 2007 to 2009, Dr. Cathy Thompkins[1] was a John A. Hartford Foundation Geriatric Fellow who provided resources for faculty development. With these resources, she decided to become skilled in a different research method, grounded theory, for a study she was preparing on grandparent-headed households. As a gerontologist, she was interested in the relationships between grandparents and grandchildren when a grandparent was the primary care provider.

Through the fellowship, she had funds to hire a mentor to teach her GT. She first contacted Dr. Simmons who referred her to Dr. Kara Vander Linden, who at the time was a recent graduate and mentee of Dr. Simmons. While Kara had been mentoring doctoral students using GT for 2 years, she had never mentored an experienced researcher. With Cathy's understanding of this, Kara mentored Cathy using the same approach she used with her students. Cathy in turn taught what she was learning to her research assistant. Later Cathy served on GT dissertations committees with Kara. Now, 14 years later, Kara and Cathy are still collaborating.

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[1] The authors of this article are the two researchers, but to make it clear about our working relationship and how it evolved, we refer to ourselves in the third persons.

The Mentor/Mentee Relationship

As Kara does with all her mentees, she recommended that Cathy read the seminal books, specifically the *Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (1967), *Theoretical Sensitivity* (1978), and *Doing Grounded Theory: Issues and Discussions* (1998). Kara and Cathy met regularly to discuss Cathy's questions about the books. Kara said, "My goal was and still is to be an experienced role model, who provides encouragement, advice, coaching and moral support to learners who want to learn, and more importantly, DO grounded theory" (Vander Linden & Tompkins, 2021). The real way to learn grounded theory is by doing it (Glaser, 2011)

"Phillis Stern has dubbed minus mentors, academics who want to learn to do grounded theory but who do not have immediate access to face-to-face mentors" (Gynnild & Martin, 2011, p. 1). However, as Kara and Cathy's experience will demonstrate, mentor/mentees do not have to meet face-to-face to have an effective mentoring relationship or to be collaborative researchers.

How the Relationship Transformed

Over time the mentor/mentee relationship transformed into that of co-researchers. It went from Kara teaching Cathy how to do GT to doing classic GT together. The rest of this article will explain what that looked like.

Neither the mentor/mentee relationship nor the relationship as research collaborators has been face-to-face. In 14 years of working together, Kara and Cathy have only seen each other in person once. The rest of the time the relationship has been long-distance with Kara in California and Cathy in Virginia.

In addition to the distance, Kara and Cathy have also been at different stages in their personal and professional lives throughout the relationship. In the beginning, Kara was starting her career and her family in California. Cathy was about 15 years into her career and in the middle of raising her two girls in Virginia. Much of our relationship has been the juggling of careers and family while doing research on the side. However, it is something

both are dedicated to doing, and having a collaborator provides accountability helps keep the research moving forward.

After 2 years, the John A. Hartford Foundation Geriatric Fellow funding ended, but Kara and Cathy agreed to keep working together and it was at that point the relationship transformed into being collaborative co-researchers. Kara took a more active role in the process of conducting the study. The subsequent sections will explain how the collaborative relationship worked within each stage of conducting a GT study as outlined by Simmons (n.d.).

Preparation Stage

The preparation stage had many of the same elements as any classic GT study: selecting a topic, navigating the IRB, and limiting preconceptions. One added area unique to a collaborative project is negotiating roles.

Selecting a Topic

The study topic, selected by Cathy prior to Kara's involvement, was kinship care in grandparent-headed households. Kinship caregiving is when the relative, most often grandparents, takes on the primary responsibility of a grandchild because the biological parents are unable to for various reasons (Hayslip et al., 2019; Smith & Palmieri, 2007). Sometimes those reasons include incarceration, drug addictions, or a plethora of other reasons, but the grandparents are often from very vulnerable populations without many resources (Hayslip et al., 2019; Smith & Palmieri, 2007). As a gerontologist, Cathy is passionate about improving the quality of life for older adults.

Institutional Review Board

While Cathy has done many projects where she needed to work with her university's Institutional Review Board (IRB); there can be challenges when working across universities in a collaborative research project. For example, Cathy and Kara's IRBs require CITI training, but sometimes it is challenging to get that training recognized by one institution to be recognized by the other institution.

Another challenge is that sometimes two different IRBs come to different conclusions, and researchers must work with them to get the project approved. This process has improved since the implementation of reliance agreements. However, even with the use of reliance agreements, it can take longer to get research projects approved by the IRB.

Negotiating Roles

Another issue to address during the preparation stage when working collaboratively on different projects is each person's respective roles with the projects. Since transitioning from mentor/mentee to collaborators, Kara and Cathy spoke about authorship and how to divide up the various tasks within the research project, including data collection, data analysis, and writing up the theory which will all be discussed later.

Limiting Preconception

One challenge for researchers, who are well established in a field, is limiting preconceptions. Cathy acknowledged that this was hard. She said,

> I had to forget everything I knew about kinship care and older adults, which seemed a bit odd to me because for the last 15 years I had been doing nothing but studying older adults and learning about kinship families. . . . But I worked really hard at it. It was hard for me to do, but it's a skill that you develop over time. (Vander Linden & Tompkins, 2021)

Avoiding a preliminary literature review also felt odd to Cathy at first since it was different from how she had previously conducted studies. Glaser (1998) provided six reasons for avoiding a preliminary literature review that can be loosely grouped into two areas: (1) not allowing the literature to block the emergence of concepts from the data, and (2) not knowing what literature is relevant prior to the emergence of the theory from the data. However, after experiencing how concepts and theory can emerge from data, Cathy really embraced the idea of using literature as data and allowing it to earn its way into a study.

While many collaborators work with colleagues within their own field, Kara and Cathy's fields were different; Cathy's area of specialization is social work and Kara's is education. Neither Cathy nor Kara were familiar with the literature and theories that inform each other's fields. Coming from different fields resulted in an advantageous pairing because we were able to see each other's areas of preconception which has influenced our thinking during the years about the idea of setting aside preconceptions and strategies. Coming from different fields is an added benefit of doing collaborative GT. Two researchers with different knowledge and training backgrounds can help each other recognize preconceptions. It is often easier to see someone else's preconceptions and they can help us become aware of our own.

Data Collection

Participants were recruited and data were collected primarily in Virginia, the area surrounding Washington, D.C., and Baltimore, Maryland, where there are large populations of grandparent-headed households. To help with recruitment, $25 grocery gift cards were offered.

Interviews were collected by Cathy and a graduate student research assistant. Initially, the plan was to interview the grandparents and the children separately which is why Cathy and her assistant attended every interview. However, with every family interviewed, the grandparents did not want the grandchildren interviewed without them being present. Approximately 15 families were interviewed during the course of about a year. Cathy and her assistant also went back to the families using theoretical sampling to collect more data when more questions arose as the data were analyzed.

As the data were collected, it was transcribed so that Kara, Cathy, and her assistant could analyze it. Kara would go over the transcripts and then Kara and Cathy would talk about how to not let preconceptions enter the interviews such as avoiding leading questions.

At one point, Cathy and her assistant collected multiple interviews before coding the previous ones because many grandparents wanted to participate to receive the $25 grocery

gift card. Kara used this desire as a teachable moment to discuss theoretical sampling, explaining the importance of allowing the analysis of previous data to direct future data collection (Glaser, 1978). Kara taught Cathy and then Cathy taught her assistant. This process follows a nested model of mentoring (Fouché & Lunt, 2010).

Data Analysis

Our relationship fully transformed into co-researchers during data analysis. While still teaching Cathy the process, Kara actively engaged in the process of data analysis with Cathy.

Kara and Cathy would each code and memo independently, but then meet via video conference calls to discuss their works. We would read each other's work, write comments, and ask questions which always stimulated more memoing on both of our parts as we discussed what we were seeing emerge from the data. We also talked about who and where the next piece of data should come from, deciding where to theoretically sample next. As noted previously, Cathy and her assistant did most of the interviewing, but we engaged in the process of open and selective coding, constant comparative analysis, and memoing together.

Ideas are fragile and they can easily be lost if a researcher talks about them (Glaser, 1978). One technique we used was to record our calls. Cathy would have her assistant listen to the recordings and capture the ideas so that we could work with them further. This helped us not lose ideas as we talked about the research.

During this process, it was interesting to see how our fields of study affected how we coded the data. We became more aware of how much we can be influenced by our own preconceptions and by the language and the concepts that are from within our fields. As mentioned previously, being co-researchers from different academic backgrounds can help with identifying and minimizing preconceptions.

Kara's work with numerous doctoral students using GT was also beneficial. Kara was able to use her students' works as examples for Cathy. We began to see theoretical ideas

from our study intersecting with concepts from the students' studies. There were times when we used theoretical sampling to examine how similar theoretical concepts from other studies fit within a new substantive area.

After engaging in substantive coding (open and selective coding), sorting was used to begin to group concepts in relation to each other as they became saturated, where no new variation was found. This stage led to the discovery of two possible theoretical coding families. Sorting generated more memos, especially about the relationships between the concepts. Like with coding, we would both sort, memo, and work on the theoretical outline that was emerging. We would share our work with each other and discuss what we were seeing as we sorted and developed a theoretical outline. We would explain our rationale for where we put each concept in relation to the other concepts. As previously mentioned, we would record our calls to capture ideas. This whole process generated more memos.

The stage of sorting concepts is like putting together a puzzle. Finding the right spot for each concept so that it works in relation to the other concepts in explaining the overall pattern of behavior being used is important in generating a fully integrated theory. Through our conversations, the pieces came together. The process was not quick because we were both busy with many personal and professional responsibilities. However, this process kept us committed and helped us think through the logic and organization of the theory as it developed.

Kara admitted that one mistake she made in first mentoring Cathy was not thinking about the difference between developing a theory for journal publication versus for a dissertation, where an unlimited page limit might exist. Kara and Cathy recognize now that they went much further than they needed to for one publication which will be explained in the next section.

Writing Up and Presenting

Two researchers analyzing data produced many pages of memos. While GT may take longer than some other research methods, the data and the process of analyzing the data lead to a

richness and depth of theoretical understanding that researchers might not get from other methods. Because of the scope of the research, the amount of data, concepts, and memos, we began to realize as we sorted the concepts that we had two related theories that we could develop into manuscripts for publication. Cathy has also presented this work at various conferences.

One theory, *Compounded Complexity*, used the 6Cs coding family (Glaser, 1978) addressing contextual factors affecting grandparent-headed households. It explains multiple factors that affect the context and challenges within kinship care families, and especially grandparent-headed households. This theory was published in a premier gerontology journal.

Getting it published within a top-tier journal was not without a struggle. There was a lot of back and forth with edits. One of the reviewers was familiar with Straussian GT but not with classic GT. Many of the comments and requested edits did not align with classic GT. We had to respectfully address the comments and help the reviewer better understand the differences between the two versions.

The second theory that emerged from the data was a process theory that explains the process of taking on the responsibility of being a kinship caregiver. It is called Doing One's Best: Becoming a Kinship Caregiver and has been published previously in the Grounded Theory Review. Thus, as is evident, Kara and Cathy have had a successful relationship as co-collaborators using GT.

Conclusion: Key Takeaways

We want to leave the reader with some key takeaways regarding a collaborative GT study:

1. Having a collaborator provides accountability to help keep the research moving forward.

2. Defining roles within the project is helpful but as researchers progress through the study a redefinition of roles may be needed.

3. Collaborators from different fields provide a useful opportunity to become aware of preconceptions, especially those based on one's academic area.

4. The process of individually coding, engaging in constant comparative analysis, and memoing and then comparing the codes and memos, helped generate a lot of memos, raise the level of abstraction and move the project along as there was a synergy created in the process.

5. Collaborative research is exciting and provides an enthusiastic environment, especially when you have the correct partner.

   We hope that you, the reader, will consider beginning your own collaborative grounded theory study.

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Absenting: Fathers of Children with Autism Face the Future

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Abstract

Absenting is defined as the father's fear of what will happen to his child with autism when he is no longer living. The core variable, absenting, was discovered from data based on the main concern of fathers of children with autism. This is the first time in the literature that *absenting* has been used in association with fathers of children with autism. Fathers of children with autism face the future to resolve absenting in three ways: 1) preparing financially, 2) preparing for future living, and 3) preparing the child to live life to the fullest. Conditions affecting absenting are the severity of the disability and gender of the child. During the process of resolving their main concern, fathers experience self-transformation. This process includes three linear stages: 1) reaching out to the community, 2) balancing family relationships, and 3) helping others. Understanding the theory of absenting can help guide treatment and support for the child and family.

Keywords: fatherhood, autism spectrum disorder, caregiving, classic grounded theory

Introduction

Fatherhood is underrepresented in academic philosophy and even less prevalent when considering the roles and experiences of fathers who are raising children with autism (Mitchell & Lashewicz, 2016). Gaining information on the perspectives of fathers is key to understanding what it is like to raise a child with autism. Furthermore, the information contributes to a framework in which clinicians can understand and support fathers more effectively. Flippin and Crais (2011) suggested that perceiving and highlighting the "role of fathers" (p. 25) is important due to the unique contribution that they make to the child's development. Having the father's perspective can offer insight that provides clinicians with information on resilience, family and childhood development, and positive aspects of parenting.

While many research studies have focused on the role of the mother in parenting a child with autism, obtaining information from fathers can provide a more holistic view of how autism affects the family unit. Understanding the perspectives of fathers through a classic grounded

theory study provided insight and understanding about how fathers contribute to raising children with autism, how they are coping, and what they are gaining from the experience.

The discovered core variable, absenting, which was the main concern of fathers in this study is defined as the fear of what will happen to the child with autism when his or her parents are no longer living. In other words, when the parents are absent, will the child be cared for in the same way he or she was while the parents were living? The fear of absenting consumed the father's thoughts and actions. The resolution to absenting led each father to face a future full of unknown variables and then begin to prepare for that future. Each father wanted to ensure that their child had enough money for future expenses, a safe place to live, and a good quality of life. As fathers attempt to resolve this life-long concern, they go through a process that brings about self-transformation. This process begins as the father first reaches out to his community for help and support, second turns inward to focus on family and marital relationships, and third shifts his focus to helping others.

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into the experience of father's raising a child with autism. Classic grounded theory was applied to gain insight into the main concerns of fathers, what they are doing to resolve those concerns, and how raising a child with autism has affected their lives and the lives of their family members.

Participants who qualified for this study were fathers of children with autism. The fathers were recruited via social media (Facebook) and word of mouth. Eventually, 10 fathers were interviewed for this study.

Primary data for this study were collected by interviewing fathers of children with autism. Interviews were conducted in the fathers' homes or by telephone. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed and coded to identify emerging data points. As interviews were finishing and saturation was emerging, a literature review was conducted and additional data was gathered to determine if the additional data helped to support the theory of absenting. Based on Glaser's (1998) suggestion that "all is data" (p. 8), information was gained from documentaries, websites, and social media related to the experiences of fathers of children with autism.

The initial interview was conducted with one father of triplets with autism. This interview led to other interviews as referrals were received and fathers agreed to participate. Eventually, the core variable which was the main concern of fathers of children with autism was identified. Themes that arose in the initial interview influenced the direction of the following interviews. As the core variable was determined and similar themes were found within each interview, subsequent interviewees were asked to confirm the core variable and associated themes.

Each interview was recorded and notes were taken during the interviews to help in following up with the interviewee on certain concepts and to watch for emerging themes. During the interviews, the notes helped to guide follow-up questions to clarify and support elaboration on certain concepts.

Substantive coding, which included open and selective coding, was used to organize the data and support the emergence of the core variable. After the data were coded and a core

variable was established, additional codes were added to shape the theory. For example, *absenting*, the fear of what will happen to the child with autism when the father is no longer living, became the core variable. Selective coding led to the emergence of the resolution of absenting and additional variables or concerns associated with absenting. Theoretical sampling was conducted to support the emergence of similar data points and qualities to support the developing theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

During the process of coding, memoing, and sorting, a constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) connected the data to conceptual ideas that supported the development of the theory of *absenting*. Various trends and data points were discovered during the interview process that helped to create the structure of the theory. Analyzing and comparing the data established the main concerns of fathers, how they were resolving those concerns, and the impact of the concerns and resolutions on the father and the family unit.

Glaser's theoretical codes were used as a guideline to help shape the theory of absenting. Glaser (1978) taught that a basic social process describes social patterns of society which are observed, contemplated and organized during the research process. The theory of *absenting* was found to be a basic social process (Glaser & Holton, 2005) that includes stages of a process that fathers experience while trying to resolve their main concern about raising their child with autism.

Theory of Absenting

The core variable that was discovered through interviewing fathers in this study was labeled *absenting*. The future is full of unknown variables, and many fathers are deeply concerned about the overall well-being of their children when the parents are no longer living and able to control or influence the future wellness of their children. The absenting process begins with the initial speculation of autism and continues to varying degrees throughout the life span of the child. The theory of absenting explains how constant worry about the future becomes a process that influences the father's interactions with his community and family and eventually transforms his views, beliefs, and sense of self.

Kanjilal (2014) defined *absenting* as "being away" (p. 11). In this grounded theory study, absenting is used to define the core variable, which is concern about what will happen to the child when the parents are no longer living. This is the first time in the literature that the term *absenting* has been used to describe this particular concern of fathers of children with autism. Specifically, the core variable, *absenting*, is the fear of how one's child will be cared for and what the child's overall quality of life will be when the father or mother is no longer alive and able to supervise the care of the child. This concern was constantly on the minds of most of the fathers of children with autism who were interviewed in this grounded theory study and drove many of the decisions that they made for themselves, their family, and their child with autism. One father said, "The death [concern] is the one that you cannot control, and that's what is extremely scary. . . Not a single day goes by without that thought crossing my mind."

Facing the Future

Facing the future became the resolution to absenting. Three main categories emerged as fathers spoke of facing the future. First, the fathers were worried about finances to meet the living

expenses of their children with autism. Second, they were concerned about who would take on the role of caregiver when they were gone. Third, and most important, they were concerned about the overall quality of life that their child would have as an adult. These subcategories of absenting, were the constant drive behind the actions the fathers took to help prepare their child now and into the future to have a happy and fulfilling life.

Preparing Financially

The first category of resolving the concern of absenting that emerged from this grounded theory study was that many of the fathers expressed concern about future finances needed to support the child with autism. Rosanhoff (2014), Associate Director for Public Health Research with the entity Autism Speaks, stated that, when calculating the total costs associated with autism throughout the lifespan, the bulk of the costs are found in adulthood. Costs associated with adulthood may include housing, health care, salary for a caregiver(s), food, clothing, hobbies, and other costs. Some fathers in this study had started to find alternative ways of making and saving money for the future. Some assumed that they would be the ones to take care of the child with autism as an adult, followed by the child's siblings; others were more open to looking at alternative living situations.

The estimated costs associated with taking care of a child with autism after the parents are deceased, according to one father, may be in the millions. According to some of the fathers in this study, many unknown factors can affect this cost, such as the skill level of the caregiving adult; who cares for the autistic person, such as a family member or a governmental program; or the area in which the autistic person resides. Planning for unknown situations and costs that are potentially out of reach for most families was a great concern for the fathers in this study. Some fathers noted that financial planning can be very stressful and commented that money alone cannot guarantee that the child will be safe and cared for adequately. One father shared his thoughts about the future and his finances:

When I first started looking into real estate investing, I wanted to do it because I wanted to find a job that made a lot of money. But I would say it's completely transformed my motivation for doing a lot of what I do, because my main motive, my primary motive, is no longer to make money for the sake of money, by my primary motive is to make money for the sake of providing long term for a child . . . and I've done numbers and seen studies that it requires about three million dollars to support a person with special needs for their entire lifetime. And, I don't have nearly that much money for myself to retire on, much less [for him].

Preparing for Future Living

The second category of trying to resolve the concern of absenting was the worry of preparing the child for his or her future. Participants expressed concern about preparing the child to live as independently as possible as an adult. Most were more concerned about who would take on the responsibility of managing that care when they were gone. They communicated concern for the child's safety and well-being when they were no longer in control of their child's care. They wanted to ensure that their children would be in safe living situations with caregivers who cared for them. When pondering about his son's future living situation, one father commented,

We don't even know what his future looks like in terms of who's going to be his support in the future. We're pretty sure his sister's going to be a big part of it, but what will his future look like when he's around people who are not as mindful or forgiving or trusting or—that don't have that same relationship with him as we do?

Preparing the Child to Live Life to the Fullest

The fathers in this study wanted their children to live fulfilling lives, in addition to being safe and protected. This desire is the third category associated with the resolution of absenting. Most of the fathers spoke of hoping that the adult child with autism would have an opportunity for some type of employment. Having the child contributing to society and being happy were very important to most of the fathers in this study. "We need to take a step back so we can evaluate what is going to make her happiest in the long term," stated one father. When talking about his son's future and referring to a hobby that the son enjoyed, another father stated:

We're trying to steer that in a productive direction where he could turn that into a marketable skill, that he can do something like that and enjoy doing it, do what he enjoys doing for the rest of his life, but do it by adding value to other people. And maybe, doing it in a social situation where he can include other people, and have other people be a part of that.

Having the son or daughter with autism become a productive member of society and have a meaningful life was very important to most of the fathers in this study. According to many of the fathers, the opportunity to learn skills that could become marketable was viewed as something that could increase the happiness and well-being of the child.

Some fathers reported that they had begun to worry about their future absence when they first began to understand autism. They noted that this fear or concern never leaves the back of their minds. Absenting forces them to reevaluate their careers, become mindful of the relationships with their children in ways that they might not have done otherwise, and leads to the desire to reach out to help others in a variety of ways.

Conditions and Consequences That Influence Absenting

"Theoretical codes describe the world to us theoretically and can span all current perspectives depending on how they are chosen and combined" (Glaser, 1978, p. 72). Conditions and consequences were chosen to outline what conditions were associated with absenting and how these affect the core variable or main concern of the father. Conditions that affect absenting are the gender of the child and the level of severity of the child's autism. Many unknown variables exist in any child's future; however, with a child with autism, the concern about the future of the child is exponentially greater, especially if the child is considered to be in the "severe" range and is not able to communicate effectively. The condition of severity and the inability to communicate produced the greatest concern for these fathers. Fathers of female children with autism had greater apprehension about the child's safety in the future. The consequence of both conditions of gender and the severity of the autism were associated with a higher intensity of concern with regard to absenting.

Gender of the Child

The concern for safety was very real for the fathers in this study, especially for the fathers of female children. Fathers of both male and female children expressed fear of what will happen to the child during aging, but there were a few differences associated with gender. In this study, the fathers of daughters expressed concern about the daughter's physical and sexual safety; the fathers of sons did not mention concerns about sexual safety. One father shared,

> There's a lot of good people in the world, but there's a lot of bad apples, too. And the bottom line when you have daughters is, one of the things you worry about is . . . specifically rape. Even a normal person has a hard time after something like that happens. . . . But now imagine that your child, something that happens to her, how is she going to express that? It's going to be difficult for her to express that, "Hey, something just—someone did something wrong to me." I think if it was a boy, then—not that it can't happen to men in this world—but it would be less of a concern.

The literature supports these fathers' fears about safety. "People with intellectual disabilities are sexually assaulted at a rate seven times higher than those without disabilities" (Shiparo, 2018, para. 6). Children with autism are a vulnerable population, considering that about 30% of those with autism have an intellectual disability (Baio et al., 2018) and most children with autism struggle with social situations.

Fathers of males were less concerned about their child's physical safety then the fathers of females. Fathers of males were concerned about their children's safety but they were more concerned about what might happen if their sons were in a challenging situation in public and could not communicate clearly with others. Some fathers were also worried about what might happen when their son was stronger than the mother or other children and still had "meltdowns." Some fathers were concerned about how the male child would struggle with puberty and sexuality without the cognitive ability to understand how to control their body.

Future living conditions seemed to be a more intense concern for fathers of females. Having their daughters cared for outside of the family did not seem to be an automatically safe option for any of them. However, they were also unsure of who in the family would be willing and able to take on the responsibility. Additional gender differences may be explored in greater depth in future studies.

Level of Severity of Autism

In the theory of absenting, it appears that the intensity of concern is in direct correlation with a sense of helplessness, with the inability to control what happens in the future. The data suggested that fathers who classified their child as being more severely affected tended to have a greater intensity of concern about the safety of the child now and in the future, compared to fathers whose children were older and higher functioning. The intensity of stress also seemed to be higher when the child had more severe symptoms, such as minimal verbal skills and significant emotional challenges. For example, some fathers elaborated on the child's "meltdowns" in public that could affect the safety of the child and those around him or her.

When thinking about the severity of a person with autism, one might consider independence or skill level, which could determine what type of support the person might need in the future. Fathers in this study wondered whether their child might be able to live independently or have some type of gainful employment. They also wondered whether their child would be able to care for his or her daily living tasks, such as grooming and cooking, or be able to maintain proper health and nutrition. Some fathers commented that, for a child with a more severe level of autism, many independent living skills can be difficult and can cause great concern about the future.

The outlook and end goals were also very different for fathers who had children who were higher functioning versus those who had children who had more severe autism. Fathers of children who were higher functioning had more expectations and optimism about the opportunities in which their children were involved, compared to fathers of children with more severe autism. The intensity of concern was less among fathers of children who were higher functioning and their level of hope for their child's future seemed to be higher.

The intensity of the fathers' concerns was also affected by the inability to control what would happen after the father and mother were no longer living. Many unknown variables can affect a child's situation, such as programs for adults with autism and individual needs or skill levels, and can determine how much or what type of support the adult with autism will need. The question of how much money each family will need is dependent on what type of support the child will need in the future and what governmental resources will be available. The child with more severe autism will need more resources and support than a child who is higher functioning. However, regardless of the functioning level of the child, the concern about being absent in the future was consistent among the fathers in this study. Even the fathers who had children who were higher functioning and had more opportunities expressed concern about their child's future when they were no longer present and able to affect what might happen to or for the child.

The Process of Absenting

The process associated with the resolution of absenting (Glaser, 1978) includes three linear stages. These stages occur throughout the child's and father's lives that shape and eventually transform the father. These stages are described here in three sequential categories: (a) community outreach, (b) balancing family relationships, and (c) helping others. Each father in this study shared experiences in all three categories.

The process begins with community outreach that leads to an increased sense of awareness regarding family and eventually to increased introspection of self. As the father goes through the process of absenting, a change occurs that eventually transforms the way he views himself, others, and the world at large. This transformation has led many fathers to desire to go beyond helping and supporting their own child to wanting to help others in the autism community. The process begins with the speculation that one's child has autism. From this speculation the parents turn to their community for help. The father therefore connects with a new community of professionals, and gains membership in the world of autism.

Stage 1: Community Outreach

The first stage in the process associated with absenting is community outreach. The first stage begins with reaching out to the community for a diagnosis of autism and to gain support for the child. Often, parents of an undiagnosed child with autism suspect that there is something different or even wrong with their child when the child is a toddler. Most children are diagnosed at around the age of 3 years 10 months (Christensen et al., 2016). Perhaps the child is not reaching certain development milestones; the child may have delayed language or struggle with diet, reflux, or fussiness. When parents suspect that something is not typical, they usually contact a professional in the community, such as a pediatrician or teacher, and eventually seek information and advice from professionals to obtain a diagnosis. After the diagnosis has been made, services begin and the family is surrounded by community professionals for many years to come, if not for the duration of their lives. The process associated with absenting begins with the outreach to the community for support and guidance.

Stage 2: Balancing Family Relationships

The second stage in the process associated with absenting is balancing family relationships. Preparing the child with autism for the future requires time and effort, which at times places a strain on family relationships. Each father in this study described how he was trying to balance the time spent with his child with autism and the time invested in the other relationships within his family.

Autism was new to each father in this study. Although they had been aware of autism, they did not know what to expect when it affected their own family. Most of the fathers spoke about the challenges that autism brought to their marriages and to their other children. These fathers were open about the challenges that they experienced, along with the positive aspects of raising a child with autism. They had a deep awareness of the strain that having a child with a disability could bring to their marriages; many were proactive in finding ways to keep themselves and their marriages healthy. They were also mindful of the potential impact on the relationships among their children, depending on the chronological stages of their children. Each father tried to balance the relationships within the family, aware of what he needed to do to keep the family functioning on a healthy level. While it was not always possible (some fathers reported strained relationship between siblings and even with their wives), they all had great awareness about these relationships. Building the relationships in the family became extremely important as the parents realized that sibling may one day take over the role of caregiving.

Stage 3: Helping Others

The third stage in the process is helping others. In the theory of absenting, the process of a father's connecting to the community and learning to balance family life leads to the desire to reach out and help others. For many of the fathers, this process led to expanding their focus beyond the scope of helping their child to one of wanting to help others in similar situations. Some wanted to teach others what they had learned along their journey, one father helped to open a school for children with special needs; others wanted to establish more resources for adults with autism. Each father expressed different ways in which he had the desire to help others who were sharing their journey of raising children who had autism.

The process of trying to resolve his concern of absenting provides opportunities for growth and eventual progression of self. This occurs after gaining support and experience though his own challenges and successes while raising his child with autism. Fathers learn to reimagine their future along with their child's future. Each father spoke of experiences with fatigue and stress when talking of raising their child/children with autism. Many fathers reported becoming more mindful of relationships and learning to celebrate small successes of their children. All of these experiences led the fathers to reflect on their situation. Many chose gratitude to guide them through the journey of raising their child with autism. They began the process of transformation, often influencing their views on faith, religion, and politics, while granting them more introspection, awareness, and empathy.

Discussion

A literature review was conducted to compare and contrast the theory of absenting with the current body of literature. The review of literature pertinent to the focus of this study addresses (a) fathers of children with autism, (b) stages of raising children with autism, and (c) the alignment of absenting themes in this study and in the literature.

Fathers of Children with Autism

Shave and Lashewicz (2016) suggested that the growing population of children with autism provides a reason to explore fatherhood, since most interventions for children on the spectrum are not conducted with the father in mind. The experiences of fathers who have children with autism are absent from the current body of literature (Burrell et al., 2017; Hannon & Hannon, 2017). The limited number of studies that have looked at the father's participation in therapy and education have shown positive outcomes and helped to define the roles and concerns of fathers regarding their child with autism. Flippin and Crais (2011) suggested that including fathers in intervention can help to reduce the stress of the mother and potentially "lead to positive collateral effects for families of children with ASD" (p. 35). A deeper understanding of the perspectives, needs, and current opportunities for involvement of fathers is needed to support fathers and families of children with autism, as well as the person with autism.

Dardas and Ahmad (2015) reported that in the past few decades the focus has shifted to fathers' participation in their children's growth and development. They further stated that, due to the era of paternal discovery created by "social, political and economic issues" (p. 626), fathers have been shown to be increasingly engaged in rearing their children and participating in household duties. This may apply to fathers of children with autism, especially when they are involved in their child's intervention.

During the review of the literature conducted for this study, the term *absenting* was not found to be used to describe this phenomenon. However, multiple studies on fathers of children with autism and intellectual disabilities have reported fear or concern about the future (Davys et al., 2017; Donaldson et al., 2011; Pottas & Pedro, 2016). For example, Burrell et al. (2017) found that independence was a primary concern for fathers regarding the future well-being of their children. In this study, fathers said that supporting their child's skills for independence involved the child learning basic life skills and also learning skills to help the child find a way to gain employment in the future.

The child's integration and acceptance into society was also important for these fathers. This is similar to findings reported by Donaldson et al. (2011) that fathers worried about whether their children would be able to live independently as adults and looked for ways to integrate their child into society to find acceptance and some type of "normalcy."

Understanding the child's diagnosis, including the severity of the condition, led some fathers to shift their expectations and hopes for the future of their child. This theme was reported by Pottas and Pedro (2016) in their study of fathers of children with autism. When sharing concerns about their child's future, the fathers in that study mentioned worrying about future care for their child and how they could "secure a future" (p. 552) for their child. These findings are consistent with the theory of absenting.

Stages of Raising Children with Autism

Absenting is a basic social process that contains linear stages that fathers experience during their journey of raising a child with autism. The process associated with the theory of absenting includes establishing community outreach, balancing family relationships, and helping others. Other studies have described similar stages that fathers experience while raising a child with autism. Vacca (2006) conducted a study on parents of children with cerebral palsy and identified five phases that parents experienced:

Normative phase (expecting a healthy child)

Self-study phase (self-blame for the birth of the child with a disability)

Acceptance phase (realization of the disability and embracing the child)

Determining quality of life phase (examination of marital relations, mental health)

Planning for the future phase (considering job changes, moving, future births) (p. 68)

Vacca (2013) replicated that study with fathers of children with autism to see whether the same phases were present. He found that four of the five phases pertained to fathers of children with autism: "normative phase, acceptance phase, determining quality of life phase, and planning for the future phase" (pp. 88-89).

Absenting Themes Aligned with the Literature

Balancing family relationships is an important challenge for fathers of children with autism. The time required to take care of a child with autism often takes from the time that the father can spend with his other children and his spouse (O'Halloran et al., 2013). In a study conducted by Keller et al. (2014) on the relationships of fathers of sons with autism, the fathers were found to be highly involved with the success and development of their sons, sometimes at a cost to the father's personal life and relationships with his spouse and other children.

Creating a balance between nurturing the relationship with one's spouse, other children, and oneself is a delicate balance for fathers. Hock, Timm, and Ramisch (2012) found that parents went through two phases after receiving a diagnosis of autism for their child. The first phase they

called "tag team" (p.411), described as a shift in focus on the child as the parents work as a team to meet the needs of the child. Hock et al. explained that this allowed parents to increase their team effort in parenting, which resulted in more positive family structure and routine but did not afford parents the opportunity to focus on their personal relationship. The second phase was called "deeper intimacy and commitment" (para. 14), which was a shift to focus on the parenting relationship based on the parents' realization that a strong marital relationship was healthy for the family. These findings are similar to the absenting stage of balancing family relationships.

Learning to alter expectations was a way of coping for some fathers of children with autism. Mitchell and Lashewicz (2015) found that some fathers learned to replace their former vision of leisure activities with new activities that they could enjoy together. Some fathers had expectations of certain activities that they would do with their children, which were similar to activities that they had done with their fathers (Keller et al., 2014). Not being able to participate in sports with their children, especially their sons, was a challenge for fathers. Often, with the diagnosis came a sense of loss and shock (Burrell et al., 2017), followed by a grieving process to redefine hopes and expectations (Mitchell & Lashewicz, 2015; Keller et al., 2014). One study found that fathers had to learn to "reconstruct" their understanding of fathering (Shave & Lashewicz, 2016). Hannon (2014) found that fathers had to learn to communicate in different ways with their children with autism but found satisfaction when they were successful.

In one study, it was discovered that a fundamental aspect of strengthening the father and child's relationship was through "interaction/communication" (Donaldson et al., 2011, p. 202). Along with altering expectations, fathers learned to change perspectives. When summarizing the experiences of fathers who have children with autism, Burrell et al. (2017) stated that fathers learned to alter their perspective as they realized that they could not change their circumstances. Having a new perspective offered these fathers a way to reflect on the positive aspects of raising a child with autism. Altering expectations and perspectives can help fathers to accept the condition of autism, which can be an important coping strategy for fathers (Burrell et al., 2017; Hannon, 2014). In the theory of absenting while the fathers attempted to resolve their concern for the future, they learned to alter expectations and celebrate small success in their children.

Many examples in social media refer to fathers who are sharing their experiences, speaking out, and creating educational and job opportunities for children with autism. As a therapist, McCoy, one of the authors, has personally worked for two men who created schools for children with autism because they were not satisfied with their community's educational options. They saw that not only could they help their own child have a brighter future through giving him or her an improved educational opportunity; they could help many other children with autism to have the same benefit.

These fathers' process in trying to resolve their concern about absenting creates a tapestry of connection and growth. While the sample size in this study was small (10 fathers), all shared similar experiences. Each father cared deeply for his child and wanted what was best for him or her now and in the future. The concern about absenting continued to drive their current actions and, during the process, these fathers had transformed in ways that they had not anticipated. It is noteworthy that each father had found in the process something for which to be grateful and that many had expanded their desire beyond their own child to want to help others.

Suggestions for Further Research

Research on fathers of children with autism is limited, as mothers have been the chief focus of research and intervention (Donaldson et al., 2011; Keller et al., 2014; Meadan et al., 2015). Further research into the theory of absenting might expand the substantive area by interviewing fathers who are divorced, fathers of various races and cultures, fathers with daughters, fathers of older adult children with autism, and fathers with a greater range of financial means. These areas should be examined if they evolve from the data as directed by theoretical sampling.

Adding to the literature, this grounded theory study revealed the progression of fathers through the process associated with absenting. Further research into these areas might be helpful to broaden understanding of how fathers are coping with and resolving their concern about ultimately not being able to control their child's future when they are no longer present.

Derived from the data from this study, researchers who seek to deepen the theory of absenting might consider the changing role of the fathers throughout the child's life span, the importance of teaching independent living skills, better support and engagement of fathers in interventions, and exploration of how gratitude and helping others affects the psychological well-being of fathers.

Interviewing fathers and mothers together to identify similarities and differences could add depth to the theory of absenting. The theory of absenting may also apply to fathers of children with a wide range of disabilities and to fathers of children who are developing typically. Exploring the differences and similarities between fathers of children with various developmental disabilities and fathers of children with autism or children with typical development with regard to absenting could be insightful.

Clinical Implications

Clinical implications derived from the theory of absenting may include (a) involving fathers in treatment that supports fathers in recognizing where they are in the process associated with absenting, (b) recognizing the chronological stage of the child and concerns that might be associated with that stage, (c) empowering fathers to communicate and connect with their children, (d) supporting the balance of family relationships, and (e) focusing on the child's independent life skills, talents, and potential job opportunities.

Actively involving fathers in interventions for their child can strengthen the father-child relationship, potentially reduce the mother's stress, and empower fathers with skills to forge stronger family connections. Applying the theory of absenting could support fathers' concerns about the future by providing solutions for independent living skills and job skills. As mentioned in this study and in the literature review, fathers are very interested in having their children gain independent living skills and potential employment skills, in addition to shared activities that increase connections and relationships. Independent living skills and job skills should be a strong focus in intervention and education so that persons with autism are given the most opportunities for their futures.

Being mindful of where the father is in his stage of the process associated with absenting can be helpful in intervention planning by the clinician. For example, when the child is newly

diagnosed, the father may need resources to support his learning curve as he navigates help for his child. When his focus shifts to his family, the interventionist would be wise to recognize and support the balancing of family relationships. This may include bringing siblings into treatment sessions to support sibling relationships and/or helping parents to gain access to needed respite services. Fathers may need support in finding ways to cope with everyday challenges and with reimagining the future. Each clinician should keep in mind ways to support the mental health and development of the entire family when applying the theory of absenting.

The interests of children and fathers should be considered when planning and implementing interventions. This is an opportunity for occupational therapists to find shared occupations or activities that are therapeutic and meaningful for both the child and the father. In addition, relationship-based therapy such as DIR/Floortime (Greenspan et al., 1998) can be key in building and supporting a strong bond between the father and the child.

Limitations

The studies cited in the literature review represent diversity in global representation of what fathers of autism are experiencing. The reviewed studies were conducted in Africa, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States. While the fathers lived in many areas of the world, they generally expressed similar concerns and experiences. However, many authors have suggested a need for more racial diversity in research on fathers of children with autism. Racial, economic, and familial diversity were delimitations within this study. While demographic data were not collected in this grounded theory study, it is important to note that all of the fathers in this study were married and none reported significant financial struggles. All reported concerns about finances regarding their child's future but did not report being currently impoverished. Both of these points are noted because fathers who are divorced may have different concerns and go through a different process from that of fathers who are married. Finances may also influence the process that fathers experience while raising a child with autism. An additional delimitation might be that, of the 10 fathers who were interviewed, only 3 had daughters. Interviewing more fathers of daughters might have added data to the study. Interviewing parents of adult children would be beneficial in understanding all chronological stages associated with the theory of absenting. A strength of using grounded theory is that the theory can always be amended when new data are discovered.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) stated that a sound theory that "corresponds closely to the realities of an area will make sense and be understandable" (p. 239) to the substantive group. To ensure that the theory of absenting fit the substantive area of this study, half way into the conducting of interviews, the fathers were asked if they agreed with the developing theory of absenting. Each father agreed that his largest concern was the wellbeing of their child after they were no longer living. While the theory of absenting fits the substantive group of fathers, additional family members, and those working with children with autism were not interviewed and therefore could not comment the fit of the theory of absenting to fathers of children with autism.   Additional research from additional family members and those working with fathers of children with autism could add further dept to the theory of absenting.

Conclusion

Involvement by fathers in research and clinical practice will enrich the study of support for the child with autism. As the theory of absenting reveals, growing interest and focus on fathers can be a support and strength to the whole family system. With the understanding of the process associated with absenting, clinicians can be sensitive to the concerns of fathers and be informed on how to prepare the child with autism to live life as independently as possible. Facing the future, the resolution of absenting should be considered while developing treatment planning when working with fathers. The three categories to consider are preparing financially, preparing for the future life of the child with autism, and preparing the child to live life to the fullest. While clinicians may not be actively engaged in helping fathers to prepare financially for their child's future, being mindful of the financial burden of autism is important. As the theory of absenting clearly reveals, the fathers' main concern focuses on the future adult life of their offspring. To support fathers, clinicians should start working on independent living skills to help the child with autism to develop employment skills as early as possible. It is vital that clinicians and researchers find ways to collaborate with fathers to support young adults with autism to contribute to their community through job opportunities and/or volunteer opportunities to enrich their lives and the lives of others. This will in turn support fathers in their process. It is hoped that this theory will be helpful to families who are beginning the journey of parenting a child with autism, as well as to clinicians who seek to support families along the way. Classic grounded theory methodology was an exciting methodology that granted flexibility and creativity to follow the data and gain insights into autism.

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Evolating: A Classic Grounded Theory of Personal Transformation

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Abstract

The phases of learning and transformation emerged from this classic grounded theory study of historic transformers and exceptional students revealing the theory of evolating: a multiphase process through which individuals consciously engage in their own transformation and attain otherwise improbable levels of human potential. The theory defines a 6-phase, non-linear process with stages of yearning, engaging, revelating, liberating, rematrixing, and dedicating. While many adults experience the early phases, few proceed through rematrixing and dedicating. The data indicate that evolating among exceptional students who do engage in all the phases predictably leads to a deeper, more accomplished life of greater meaning and purpose. The theory also provides a framework for strategizing learning and growing as well as explaining periods of stagnancy and ineffectual efforts to change attempted by both individuals and institutions. The theory has been used to structure the experiential and academic educational programs of the Foundation, including a graduate-level university curriculum in transformational coaching and leadership and an organizational consulting practice. Further contributions of the theory for the fields of learning psychology, business education, coaching, transformational leadership, and organizational change have been identified as areas for further study, based on this research.

Keywords: Classic Grounded Theory, Transformation, Personal Growth, Change, Evolating, Yearning,

Introduction

The desire for transformation and growth is a common yearning within the human experience. While many individuals may aim for excellence, very few are successful in attaining the highest levels of internal development to realize lives of ever-increasing quality, greatness, and meaning.

Understanding what distinguishes the journey of the most accomplished can benefit all adults as well as the educators, coaches, and leaders who work on behalf of their growth.

For more than 35 years in the academic setting, we've studied well-known transformers and observed, mentored, and supported extraordinary individuals in their progression to advanced levels of development and leadership. In this study, we decipher the stages of personal growth and learning that are unique to the highest achievers among us.

Using classic grounded theory (CGT), we analyzed the interviews of exceptional individuals to gain insight into their experiences, phases of growth, and cycles of progress. This multistage, non-linear journey emerged in the theory of evolating: a six-phase process of yearning, engaging, revelating, liberating, rematrixing, and dedicating. Although many adult individuals may encounter and progress through the first four of these stages, fewer advance through all six stages.

In the primary stage of yearning, individuals often experience a vague dissatisfaction or motivational impulse that obscures deeper longing underneath. This impulse clarifies with growing social-emotional learning and extends beyond mere wanting or goal setting to deeper here-and-now expression that can yield a lifelong focus on inner growth. Yearning propels the individual into engagement where action, discovery, and a more profound self-knowledge tap new levels of yearning. Revelating follows engagement and is marked by a wide array of learning, from simple lessons to deeply affecting lessons that shift an individual's view of what is possible. In liberating, individuals continue their transformation by breaking away from deeply ingrained ways of seeing and believing and engage in new, more empowering ways of thinking, feeling, and acting that further redefine their sense of self. Following liberating, select individuals progress to rematrixing, strategically liberating, and dedicating. It is during these phases that they attempt the important work of applying new perspectives to their life. This may lead some to reassess their values and dominant beliefs and re-conceptualize and change how they see, act, and identify themselves. Those who progress into the phase of dedicating recognize that transformation is continuous through the duration of life. They embrace growth as a lifelong process with the capacity to change both individuals and the wider, global community.

Methodology

We began this study as an inquiry to explore the deeper process of transformation experienced by our most successful students.

CGT differs from other grounded theory (GT) approaches in its design, which guards against researchers forcing preconceptions or predefined theories onto data (Glaser, 1992, 2013). CGT emphasizes the importance of researcher objectivity and the qualities of openness and "not-knowing" in approaching the field of study (Glaser, 1992, 2013; Rieger, 2018). CGT emphasizes a rigorous process of constant comparative analysis and theoretical sampling and saturation, ensuring that concepts earn their way into the theory and are clearly grounded in data (Glaser, 1978).

Selection of Participants

As faculty, we observed certain students engaged more fully in the learning process and benefited significantly more from programs than did average students. They demonstrated significant, discontinuous transformational moves that seemed highly unlikely and couldn't be explained by learning and growing in and of themselves given the students' original set of thinking, feeling, acting, and professional accomplishment.

We were curious to explore the ways in which exceptional students engaged in the program and created extraordinary outcomes in their lives. Judith Wright, the primary researcher of this study, secured IRB approval from Fielding Graduate Institute and engaged an outside researcher to ensure greater independence and less potential researcher bias in the selection of study participants and initial data gathering (Wright, 2008). The team relied on a process from positive deviance research to identify participants operating above the norm of our student population (Seidman & McCauley, 2003). This process required open-ended interviews with potential participants to determine who best represented the group of exceptional students—the positive deviants. A total of 12 participants were selected from beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels of participation in our programs.

Data Collection

Participants met for three days for approximately 20 hours of discovery learning that generated almost 400 pages of interview data. Beginning with a grand tour question, our open-ended interview process followed the CGT approach and focused on emergent methods.

Researchers used open coding, memoing, theoretical sampling, selective coding, and constant comparison of concepts with data and with other concepts to identify emerging theoretical constructs and to identify researchers' potential biases and projections that could bias the coding effort. The research team, trained in CGT analysis, met periodically to review and discuss findings and explore the core concepts emerging from these data and to ensure concepts earned their way into the theory.

The Emerging Theory of "Evolating"

The theory that emerged from these data described a transformational process that consisted of clearly defined phases and foundational conditions, dimensions, and predictable manifestations. The phases are not strictly linear, as each phase can be iteratively interconnected with any other phase under specified conditions. The key phases of the transformation process are the following:

- Yearning—a deeply felt affective motivation to experience life more fully. This was identified as a primary motivation that drives the learning process through all phases, and includes specific yearnings to matter, to connect with others, and to make a difference. Yearnings are distinguished from urges, desires, and cravings in that they are internally focused on meeting fundamental human needs rather than externally focused on seeking gratification exclusively from external sources.

- Engaging—actions taken in response to yearning and that address and also influence, deepen, and/or spur further yearning.

- Revelating—discovering, becoming newly conscious and aware of limiting beliefs and patterns, and actively seeking new truths about oneself and the world as well as revealing more of one's self.

- Liberating—where one becomes free from aspects of their prior conditioning and becomes free to create their life in a more empowering and expanding way.

- Rematrixing—where one integrates and grounds the insights of revelating and the actions of liberating by identifying one's current operating systems. . .reevaluating values and beliefs. . . seeing one's life through new lenses . . . and changes how one views or identifies oneself. This is accomplished through strategic liberating and intentional practice.

- Dedicating—the commitment to evolating as a way of life. . .and the decision to engage fully in life and take responsibility for living fully (Wright, 2008, pp. 34-38).

"Evolating" emerged as the core concept that had the most grab for participants and that best explained what was happening through this multi-phased transformational process. The linguistic origin of evolating is in the Latin verb, *evolare*, which "indicates a non-gradual upward movement, flying up or out, the act of flying away" (Wright & Wright, 2013, p. 6).

The notion of a "non-gradual upward movement" suggests that the process is not simply a smooth evolution from one state to another, but rather includes periods of dislocation and radical change. Evolating is formally defined as "the conscious engagement in one's own evolution in a way that embraces chaotic or extreme transformation. It is the conscious engagement in one's own evolution with the intent to transform" (Wright & Wright, 2013, pp. 1-2).

Evolating as a Basic Social Psychological Process

The dominant theoretical framework for evolating is what Glaser refers to as a basic social psychological process or one in which a core problem is "processed out" through a progression of stages or phases (Glaser, 1978, 1998). The core problem or concern is the inner conflict between the yearning-based imperative to grow and realize our inherent potential (Wright & Wright, 2013) and the matrix of limiting beliefs, cognitive distortions, moods, behaviors, and addictions that block this impulse. In evolating, this core problem is processed through the phases of yearning, engaging, revelating, liberating, rematrixing, and dedicating. Optimally, these phases culminate in a state of ongoing personal transformation when dedicating repeatedly follows rematrixing.
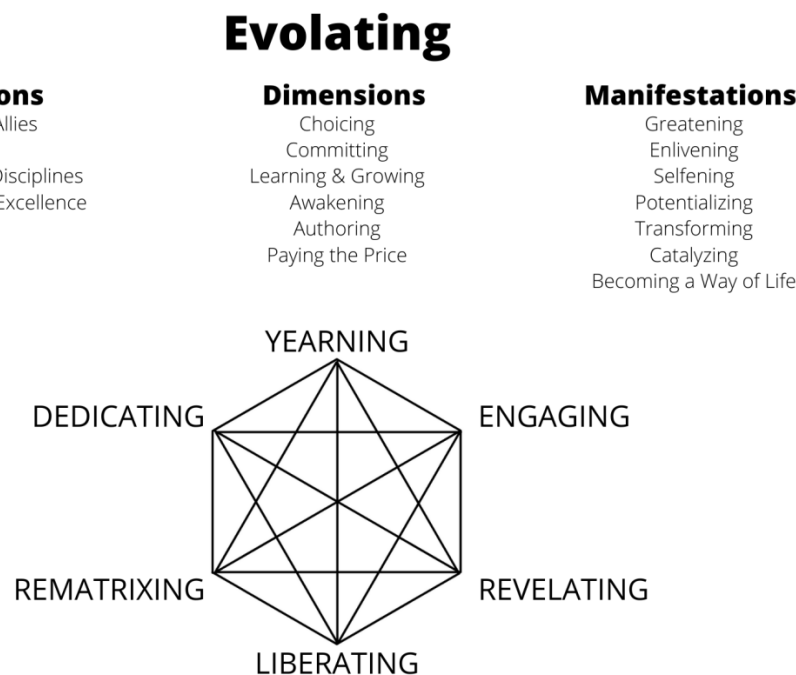
Yet, the process is not strictly linear. Each phase can precede or follow any other phase under specified conditions as defined in the theory. For example, a moment of insight (revelating) can tap a yearning to engage in further testing and application of the insight, leading to new acts of liberating or rematrixing, generally interspersed with subsequent yearning. Or a liberating experience undertaken spontaneously can motivate a process of reflection and self-discovery (revelating), which in turn can activate a yearning to explore new ways of being (rematrixing). Under specified conditions, any phase can be preceded by any other and can result in a transition

to any of the other phases. Glaser (1978) referred to this dynamic as the interactive theoretical framework, which adds an additional theoretical framework to evolating.

Subsequent constant, comparative CGT inquiry into each phase revealed the key conditions, dimensions, and manifestations that characterized the process across all phases of transformation. With this context, we can more easily see the relationships among the constructs and variables that define each phase and the interconnections between the phases. What follows is our analysis of the phases with their respective properties, stages, dimensions, and manifestations.

Figure 1

Phases of Evolating with Dimensions, Conditions, and Manifestations

Evolating

Conditions	**Dimensions**	**Manifestations**
Culture of Allies	Choicing	Greatening
Tools	Committing	Enlivening
Structures and Disciplines	Learning & Growing	Selfening
Commitment to Excellence	Awakening	Potentializing
	Authoring	Transforming
	Paying the Price	Catalyzing
		Becoming a Way of Life

YEARNING

DEDICATING — ENGAGING

REMATRIXING — REVELATING

LIBERATING

Conditions, Dimensions, and Manifestations of Evolating

Conditions of Evolating

CGT research identified several conditions as key to yearning-based transformation that results in the outcomes we observed. These included a culture of allies; structures, disciplines, and tools; and a commitment to excellence. These are necessary conditions without which the evolating process does not take place.

Culture of allies

A community of dedicated co-voyagers is a fundamental condition of evolating. It provides the *context* to optimize the learning process and simultaneously emphasizes the *content* of social-

emotional learning as its focal point. Students learn the fundamental relational skills of being present with one another, being empathically aware of responses and points of view, and holding each other with positive regard. This variable is present through all the phases of evolating. However, it's most prominent during the revelating phase when learning requires that students give and receive feedback to see their current state of functioning and orient themselves toward the vision of who they can become.

Structures, disciplines, and tools

Optimal living requires specific structures, disciplines, and tools to guide daily living with transformational intent. In our study, the environment included such resources as seminars and trainings, coaching, learning labs, and growth assignments. Study participants also engaged in a structured curriculum of performative learning assignments that supports individuals in challenging limiting beliefs and orienting toward new possibilities for themselves.

As challenging limiting beliefs is a key focus of the program, relevant structures, disciplines, and tools also included templates for identifying and modifying self-limiting beliefs and cognitive distortions as well as tools for implementing intentions to change habitual behavioral patterns (Gollwitzer, 1999) and structured processes to enhance conscious, purposeful living and leadership development.

While these activities were available to all students, participants' engagement and results surpassed other students' engagement. They developed structures and disciplines to participate in and benefit more fully from these activities. These included but were not limited to developing vision, designing strategies, planning and tracking their progress, and engaging support.

Commitment to excellence

Finally, a commitment to excellence is a key motivational factor that fosters the evolating process and personal transformation. The participants in this study were all exceptionally strong in this area, engaging at deeper levels in their growth assignments than others. Commitment to excellence inherently leads to transformational learning and growth as it requires that an individual stretch into new areas that they had previously thought impossible.

Excellence in this context does not primarily refer to task and technical skill performance, although these factors are included. It refers rather to the excellence in living well, which is about developing the evolating skills that lead to living an excellent life.

Dimensions of Evolating

The key dimensions of evolating across all the phases include choicing, awakening, authoring, committing, learning and growing, and paying the price (Wright & Wright, 2013). These dimensions come into play in each phase as individuals progressively develop their levels of skill.

"Choicing" involves the skill of consistently choosing options that lead to further growth and learning. In each moment, we have the choice between stasis and growth. We can choose to do what we typically do based on our established habits and preferences, or we can make the

growth choice to do something novel. Those that excel in the evolating process consistently make growth choices that lead to yearning-based engaging, revelating, liberating, and eventually, rematrixing and dedicating.

"Awakening" is defined as the perpetual state of becoming more alive, present, conscious, and engaged (Wright, 2008). Participants in this study demonstrated a heightened aliveness and awareness of their emotions and yearnings in the here-and-now, which spontaneously motivated their choices to learn and grow and to author greater, more expansive lives.

"Authoring" is the integration of choicing and awakening as a process of consciously creating one's life. Committing is the progressive process of consciously creating one's life as a deliberate practice. Initially, study participants began by committing to more narrow goals such as feeling better, solving an immediate problem, or reaching a goal. As they continued to engage, discovered more about themselves (revelate), and took action to challenge their limiting beliefs and self-limiting behaviors (liberating), their commitments broadened and deepened. In the phases of rematrixing and dedicating, participants deepened their commitment to becoming more fully their authentic selves–that is, selfening. They dedicated themselves to principles, values, and a sense of higher purpose that facilitated their emergence as transformers and leaders (Wright, 2008). They became strong influencers and leaders and operated with a sense of purpose and mission in all areas of their lives.

The two final dimensions of evolating include ongoing learning and growing and being willing to pay the price: to sacrifice or invest time and resources to fully engage in the process. Our findings indicate that all dimensions are essential properties of the transformational process. Each one involves skills that need to developed in order to support the evolating process. The degree to which individuals develop these skills to a level of excellence is the primary determinant of genuine transformational growth.

Manifestations of Evolating

The theory identifies seven manifestations of evolating that reflect fundamental outcomes of the transformation process. These include greatening, enlivening, selfening, potentializing, transforming, catalyzing, and evolating as a way of life (Wright, 2008).

Greatening is a powerful explanatory variable in the study. The exceptional participants lived lives of increasing quality, velocity, productivity, breadth, and depth (Wright, 2008). They experienced ever-expanding depth, meaning, and results in many areas of their lives: ever-greatening sense of self, relationship intimacy, career success, and leadership influence. At one point during data analysis, greatening appeared as a potential core variable. After further analysis, it was clear that evolating was about more than increasing quality, velocity, productivity, breadth, and depth of experience—it was about the transformational process that resulted in greatening.

The other key manifestations identify predictable outcomes of the evolating process:

Enlivening—becoming increasingly more vital, more present, and experiencing life more fully and vividly.

Selfening—continually expanding their sense of self, self-knowledge, self-expression, self-acceptance, genuineness, and authenticity.

Potentializing—continuing to experience and create more possibilities, discovering and developing more of their gifts and talents, taking advantage of more opportunities, developing more and more as they expand their potential.

Transforming—knowing something they didn't know before, doing something they wouldn't have done before, becoming someone they wouldn't have been before; transforming their worldview, ways of thinking and believing, and behavior; transforming themselves, their relationships, their jobs, and other areas of their lives; a continual process of emerging.

Catalyzing—becoming a change agent for others in their lives, catalyzing the growth and development of others, becoming natural leaders and contributors, being a positive influence on the world around them.

Phases becomes a way of living—internalizing and integrating the phases of yearning, engaging, revelating, liberating, rematrixing, and dedicating where they become a way of life and a way of being.

Summary of Phases of Evolating

In summarizing the phases of evolating, we found that simply identifying the general characteristics of each phase was insufficient to provide the full explanatory power of the theory. We found that the data relating to each phase revealed sub-theories of conditions, properties, stages, and manifestations that profoundly influence the process and outcomes within each phase. As our larger purpose was to use the theory to enhance our student programs, identifying these critical variables proved to be essential. As such, the following sections provide an overview of these phase-specific sub-theories, each of which contributes to the overall explanatory power and utility of the theory. We've captured the details in summary charts to ensure that presentation of the theory is as parsimonious as possible without compromising the integrity of the theory.

The Phase of Yearning

Four categories of yearning characterized participant experiences: undefined longing, vague dissatisfaction, a problem to solve, or a goal to achieve. Undefined longing typically surfaced as "a feeling of, 'Is this all there is?'—a sensation of emptiness and or meaninglessness. . .a longing for something more in life" (Wright, 2008, pp. 54-58). Across all categories of yearning, there was a sense of something missing in life and wanting more. These included responses of feeling ambivalent about material success, sensing one's life was headed in the wrong direction, engaging in soft (or hard) addictions, and often blaming external circumstances or others for what wasn't working in their lives.

We identified two essential conditions and related skills for yearning that are foundational to yearning-based-learning. These manifested as the ability (1) to distinguish yearning from craving, and (2) to engage to satisfy longings, solve problems, and achieve goals. Yearning related to meeting deeper spiritual and existential-developmental needs, such as the yearning to exist, matter, be seen, belong, make a difference, and to create (Wright, 2006). Yearning awakens us to action. If we don't act or engage on our yearnings, evolating does not take place (Wright, 2008).

There are sufficient data to consider each phase a theory unto itself, with its own structure. It is beyond the scope of this article to provide further detail. By sharing the tables and graphics of aspects associated with each phase, we provide a high-level overview and a demonstration of the richness of evolating that warrants further study. Although every phase stands alone, each relates to the others in distinct ways. For a more detailed account of the content, see earlier work of Wright (2008).

Table 1

Categories and Conditions of Yearning

YEARNING	
CATEGORIES	**CONDITIONS**
• Undefined Longing	• Yearning vs. Craving
• Vague Dissatisfaction	• Acting on Yearnings
• A Problem to Solve	
• A Goal to Achieve	

The Phase of Engaging

Engaging is the process of consciously acting on yearnings to experience deeper satisfaction, accomplishment, meaning, and purpose in one's life. The theory indicates an engagement continuum from unconscious pseudo-engagement to deeply mutual, yearning-based engagement with oneself and others. Evolating takes place only when the person becomes conscious of their feelings, thoughts, and actions in the present moment; is able to identify and follow yearnings; and participates in activities or ways of being to fulfill those yearnings.

Table 2

Stages and Conditions of Engaging

ENGAGING	
STAGES	**CONDITIONS**
• Tasting	• Address True Yearnings
• Testing	• Risking
• Trusting	• Re-engaging
• Applying	- Consistent Successes
• Re-engaging	- Moving through Barriers
- Questing	- Consistent Support
- Presencing	

The Phase of Revelating

Engaging with yearnings orients a person inward toward what's happening within and between themselves and others in the present moment. It initiates a process of self-discovery. Specifically, it initiates the phase of revelating, where individuals engage in the process of discovering who they are in any given moment—including their vision of what is possible and the beliefs and barriers that limit their emergence (Wright & Wright, 2013; Wright, 2008).

Revelating is the phase in which the core conflict at the heart of the evolating process comes to focus. On the one hand, it is inspired by yearning, and orients a person toward becoming more fully themselves and living with greater purpose and meaning. These are the fruits of a dedicated, yearning-based engagement in life.

On the other hand, even as they yearn for *more*, a person approaches barriers of limiting beliefs and related fear responses, moods, soft addictions, rationalizing behavior, and so forth that would otherwise reinforce system stasis and ultimately system entropy. This represents the fundamental conflict between the internal growth imperative expressed by our yearnings and the matrix of limiting beliefs and related feelings, thoughts, and behaviors that are the legacy of our social conditioning (Wright, 2006).

A person in this phase of the learning process begins identifying and challenging their matrix of limiting beliefs and visioning who they are capable of becoming. This process of selfening—of becoming our authentic self—is an important manifestation of the evolating process that comes into focus during the phases of revelating and liberating (Wright & Wright, 2013; Wright, 2008).

Table 3

Stages, Conditions, and Manifestations of Revelating

REVELATING		
STAGES	**CONDITIONS**	**MANIFESTATIONS**
• Aha-ing	• Being around Truth	• Selfening
• Revealing	• Accepting Truth	- Self-knowing
- Transparency	• Engaging in Truth	- Self-accepting
- Genuineness		- Self-compassion
- Being Seen		• Clarifying Yearnings
• Dis-beliefing		
• Visioning		
• Awakening		
• Getting the Game		
• Embracing the Game		
- Re-Revelating		
- Being an Agent of Revelating		

The Phase of Liberating

The revelating phase completes itself in liberating action when a person has discovered a limiting belief to challenge and challenges that belief with actions such as assignments designed to evoke a hitherto denied yearning. Following the uncovered yearnings leads to new thoughts, feelings, and actions that play a role as the individual works to realize their emerging potential and move toward becoming their more genuine and authentic self. In the liberating phase, a person becomes

> more free to express themselves, to tell the truth, to express their emotions more freely, and to discover what they think, feel, and believe, rather than rely on prescribed roles or rely [exclusively] on unconscious programming from their families and early socialization. (Wright, 2008, p. 103)

It is the phase when a person steps into the process of authoring their life, operating from the freedom to "create their own life, consciously choosing their lifestyle, way of being, behavior, actions, and beliefs" (Wright, 2008, p. 105). In liberating, a person consciously engages in the process of living authentically and thinking critically about who they are becoming and the emerging values and principles they are choosing to live by.

Table 4

Modes, Stages, Conditions, and Manifestations of Liberating

LIBERATING			
MODES	**STAGES**	**CONDITIONS**	**MANIFESTATIONS**
• Breaking Free From • Becoming Free To	• Opening the Cage Door • Stepping out of the Door • Exploring the Unknown • Re-habitating • Re-Liberating	• Awareness • Risking • Audacity	• Self Expression • Authoring • Expansion • Flowing

The Phase of Rematrixing

Rematrixing is strategic liberating with the intent of transformational change and development. It is the phase when the incremental steps of revelating and liberating become the foundation for a conscious process of personal transformation across all areas of life. Rematrixing involves the active process of shifting the fabric of a person's life and ground of being—one's matrix—in order to incorporate and solidify the results of revelating and liberating (Wright & Wright, 2013; Wright, 2008). It is an ongoing process that occurs continuously and discontinuously. It is continuous with the processes of revelating and liberating as the phase where students consciously engage in their development with the intent to transform. At the same time, it is discontinuous and interactive and can occur incrementally and cumulatively at any point in the evolating process.

From rematrixing, a person can move into any other phase. During rematrixing, a person can re-awaken to new yearnings, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that were unimaginable from a previous perspective. Engaging in new ways of being can stimulate the individual to revelate at yet deeper levels with new emergent insights and enhanced personal transparency. Most importantly, this phase can lead a person to deepening dedication and commitment to their own process of becoming that is central to personal transformation. Likewise, the subsequent phase of dedicating influences the phase of rematrixing and all the other phases of the process, as a person deepens their levels of yearning-based engagement.

Rematrixing results in personal transformation and the transformation of the relationships, groups, teams, and organizations in which a person participates. Individuals at this level consistently expand their scope of vision and influence, often inspiring others by example and consciously engaging with others in a mutual journey of personal and systems transformation. It is during this phase that personal transformation tends to naturally progress into transformational leadership.

The stages of rematrixing include reorienting, restructuring, reforming, and reidentifying. During reorienting, a person recognizes and challenges their current matrix of beliefs, reweighs their values, and re-visions the life they yearn to create. This includes restructuring their current matrix in alignment with the vision of the new matrix they are creating. Such a step demands a

person exercise their cognitive skills of revelating, analyzing, and strategizing changes. These strategized changes manifest in liberating and rematrixing, leading the individual to re-form and reidentify their sense of self. These constructs represent the properties of personal transformation in this phase:

Table 5

Stages and Manifestations of Rematrixing

REMATRIXING	
STAGES	**MANIFESTATIONS**
• Reorienting	• Transforming
- Recognizing the Current Matrix	• Paying the Price
- Reweighing the Values	
- Re-visioning	
• Restructuring	
- Analyzing	
- Strategizing	
• Re-forming	
• Reidentifying	

The Phase of Dedicating

We recognized that rematrixing was not the final phase of the theory. Some participants made the leap to engage in this transformative process, only to fall back into old habits as the old matrix re-asserted itself and their disciplines waned. We found that dedicating was crucial to participants sustaining the process of rematrixing as an ongoing way of being.

Dedicating is the commitment to evolating as a way of life. At this point in the transformation process, a person realizes that evolating is not only something one does, but rather something one commits to as a way of life and a way of being. Without this commitment, transformation ceases and is generally limited and even lost. Dedicating involves the recognition that as people, we are in a process of continual becoming and that transformation requires a dedication to this ongoing process of self-development and personal evolution.

Evolating means embracing a life of constant challenge; learning, growing, and serving. There is no "retirement" from evolating. In this process, there is always more to learn, do, and experience, as well as more to gain and contribute to our world—all of which lead to a continually enriched and excellent life.

Table 6

Properties, Stages, and Manifestations of Dedicating

DEDICATING		
PROPERTIES	**STAGES**	**MANIFESTATIONS**
• Devoting	• Self-interest	• Evolating as a Way of
• Choicing	• Authoring	Life
• Persevering	• Serving	• Unique Contribution to
- Disciplining	• Agent of Evolating	the World
- Overcoming Blocks		
• Investing		
- Expending Resources		
- Paying the Price		
• Up-flipping		
• Purposing		
- Principled Living		
- Missioning		

Conclusion

Applications of the Theory

The theory has a broad range of applications—practical and theoretical—to effect small- and large-scale transformation throughout one's life. They range from the very specific, immediate, and practical to the larger, more abstract, and world-transformative possibilities. As a theory that explains, describes, and predicts stages of transformation, the theory is already being used as an effective and powerful guide in mapping individual growth and development.

The theory provides a dynamic model and a tool of self-evaluation for those undertaking their own personal development. By identifying the phases of development they have completed, the phase they are currently in, or the phase they have failed to enter, individuals can get a clearer view of the path they are on, the steps ahead, and the challenges they may face. Without the benefit of the evolating theory, those undertaking personal growth work may stop short of their potential because they fail to realize they need to repeatedly continue to another phase to get the results they desire. For example, a person who attends an introductory training but fails to experience real change in their life may now be able to see that they simply did not use their yearning to launch into the stage of engaging. By understanding this, they can choose differently.

Similarly, if a person has repeated insights and successes in revelating, but has not experienced a transformed life, they may find that they have not yet entered the rematrixing phase in which they set up systems that transform experiences and insights into an everyday reality.

The theory provides an important counterpoint to the quick fix mentality so prevalent in our culture. As a society, we promise easy solutions—buy a new car or dress or candy bar and you will be happy. The theory flies in the face of this dominant paradigm of simplistic, external solutions. Evolating shows what it really takes to live a great life, which provides individuals,

organizations, businesses, and institutions with a new framework and incentive to transform their behavior and ways of being.

As more individuals embrace their own evolating, the potential to transform personal relationships, families, businesses, organizations, and politics increases exponentially. Such transformations have already been effected by evolators in their own spheres of influence, sparking yearning in those around them. Evolators become agents of change who inspire evolating in others. Living their own great lives sets an example others may emulate.

Just as the theory can be used as a map to guide transformation and a diagnostic tool to pinpoint where development may be impeded, it may also be applied to larger systems or sets of systems. The theory may be employed by organizations and institutions through declarations of mission or commitments to a higher purpose. For example, the yearning of an organization may be expressed in its mission or purpose statement. An organization experiencing exponential growth may need to rematrix in order to put the new systems in place to leverage and sustain its new power and retool its original mission.

On an even larger scale, the theory represents a significant contribution to the literature that attempts to answer long-held, universal questions: How are we to live? How do we live a great life? How do we live the best life possible? Rather than allowing these questions to remain hypothetical, we can begin to apply the theory—and by applying it, evolve the theory itself. The application of the theory itself has the capacity to propel these universal questions into as yet unforeseen territory.

Contribution to Extant Theory, Research, and Practice

The theory of evolating expands upon central theories of psychology and transformational learning to provide an integrative understanding of the process of personal transformation. Aspects of Freudian developmental theory, Adlerian, humanistic, existential, and positive psychology are all found in the phases, dimensions, and manifestations of evolating. Evolating theory helps clarify a fundamental conflict in Freudian theory between the forces of socialization, that require suppression of our élan vital, and our emerging fundamental impulse of aliveness, the individual's yearning for more life and expanded self-expression (Freud, 1989; Hall, 1954/1999). It provides a structured understanding of and resolution to the fundamental human conflict between the imperatives of social conformity and the transformational imperative toward growth and expanded consciousness and self-expression.

It likewise emphasizes the central role of consciousness and increasing self-awareness as essential in tapping the often-unconscious, repressed yearning to experience greater aliveness that is foundational to the evolating process.

The notion of rematrixing in evolating theory also builds upon Alfred Adler's conception of social interest (Adler, 2011)—how we only become our best self when we have concern for others—which is what naturally happens as we engage in the dedicating phase of evolating, where the rematrixing process comes to lifelong engagement. This is the phase where we strategically continue to challenge our limiting beliefs and systems of defense that lock us into our

fundamental lifestyle, and where we develop a more expansive vision of who we can become. The stages of rematrixing and dedicating come to lifelong fruition in developing our sense of purpose and contribution to the world. Evolating naturally leads from individual self-interest to leading others as an agent of transformation.

Theories of humanistic and existential psychology build on these insights from Freud and Adler in further clarifying our fundamental imperative toward growth and transformation. Many of Abraham Maslow's aspects of self-actualizing people can be seen in manifestations of evolating, including the focus on a special motivation which he referred to as "being-motivation" that inspires self-actualization and self-transcendence (Maslow, 1968). The affect of yearning can be characterized as an example of being-motivation in orienting us toward our higher potentials.

The theories of existential and positive psychology also support this notion of an underlying transformational imperative (Wright & Wright, 2013). The dimensions of choicing and authoring our lives are central to theories of existential philosophy and psychology, including the notion that we are responsible for creating our lives and discovering our sense of meaning and purpose in our everyday choices (Frankl, 1959/2006; Sartre, 1943/2021; May, 1953; Yalom, 1980). Positive psychology likewise provides a theory of well-being that includes positive affect, engagement, relationships with others, accomplishment, and meaning—all of which are central to the process of evolating (Seligman, 2011/2013). While the theory of well-being emphasizes the independence and distinctness of each of these dimensions of a great life, evolating theory demonstrates how they are all integrally related as part of a unified process. Yearning can be seen as the core generative affect that motivates engagement, connection with others, the pursuit of excellence, and the discovery of personal meaning.

Evolating theory also expands upon the themes of transformational and experiential learning theory. Mezirow's theory of learning as transformation emphasizes shifts in point of view and habit of mind as defining features of transformational learning (Mezirow, 2000). Evolating theory adds a depth-dimension, focusing on shifts in our fundamental matrix or lifestyle as the foundational point of view and habit of mind that we are continually seeking to transcend.

Evolating theory also identifies yearning as the underlying motivation of this process. As we become conscious of deeper yearnings to matter, to be known and to know ourselves, and to make a contribution to the world, we naturally confront our limiting beliefs and resistances to growth and change as evidenced in revelating. This naturally creates what Mezirow (2000) referred to as "disorienting dilemmas" (p. 22) that motivate the learning process of personal transformation (Taylor, 2000). Evolating theory helps us better understand the nature of this motivation as an ongoing potential in each moment as we tap yearnings to become more than who we have historically been.

Evolating theory also provides a new framework for exploring the depth-dimension of transformational learning that has been addressed by a number of researchers, including most notably R. D. Boyd and John M. Dirkx (Boyd, 1991; Boyd & Dirkx, 1991; Dirkx, 2012). These studies focus on the "relational, emotional, and largely unconscious issues associated with the development of the individual, interpersonal interactions, and social development" (Dirkx, 2012, pp. 116-117). Evolating theory provides a new framework for research in this area, focusing on

transforming our fundamental matrix of apperceptions and limiting beliefs developed in childhood in our families of origin (Mosak & Maniacci, 1999).

Evolating theory also builds significantly on Vygotsky's theories of performative transformational learning. Evolating theory identifies a culture of allies as central to the learning process. It draws on Vygotsky's notions of the more-knowledgeable-other (MKO) as an agent of transformative learning, holding vision for what is possible for others and supporting them through the zone of proximal development (ZPD) where they are able to accomplish things that would not have been possible to do on their own (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986). Vygotsky's theories, like Adler's, earn their way into the theory as building blocks toward a general theory of personal transformation. In Vygotsky's framework and in evolating theory, transformation is a multi-dimensional process that transforms the individual, the teacher, the school or learning organization, and the world (Wink & Putney, 2002).

Revelating, phase three, also presents a new way of understanding the relationship between experience and conceptual reflection in personal transformation. The prevailing models of learning as transformation focus on shifting the learner's conceptual frame of reference rather their way of being. Mezirow (2000) makes this the defining feature of transformative learning. David Kolb (and later Elaine Cox) emphasized the experiential grounding of transformative learning but emphasize the dynamic of moving from the immediacy of experience to abstract conceptual reflection and then to action (Cox, 2013; Kolb, 1984).

Evolating theory focuses on personal transformation as a shift in our way of being, grounded in the immediacy of experience in behavior change. Revelating, liberating, and rematrixing explain a process of becoming more revealed to ourselves and others as we connect with our yearning to become more fully ourselves as we challenge limiting beliefs and follow yearnings. It focuses on sensory-grounded presence to ourselves as a process of emergence in the present moment and developing a vision of our becoming as the focus of personal transformation. As such it does not require abstraction from experience, but rather discernment of our process of emergence in the here-and-now and creating an experientially grounded vision and set of actions to facilitate that process of becoming.

Implications: The Power of the Theory

The theory has implications for individuals in groups, communities, organizations, and institutions alike—regardless of their endeavors, goals, or missions.

The theory explains why some individuals experience bigger lives, greater motivation, seemingly boundless energy, greater optimism and enthusiasm, and a sense of abundant potential, while others seem to languish or achieve less than desired results despite applying the same resources, energy, and time to similar activities. The theory can explain why some organizations and businesses thrive with vibrant, engaged, fully striving employees with a sense of purpose and commitment, while other organizations seem mired in dysfunction with unmotivated employees performing at lower levels with little sense of satisfaction and fulfillment.

The theory helps explain what motivates us and what doesn't—why throwing more money and quick fixes at problems is often ineffective, or why sometimes doing more, doing better, doing it longer and stronger doesn't necessarily work.

The theory explains why some individuals may "get stuck" in their personal growth work no matter how much they seem to be doing, while others in the same programs with similar resources seem to sail ahead, experiencing greater satisfaction and fulfillment. Just as it explains why some students are more successful than others, it may also explain why some employees thrive while others seem to languish, despite being given the same levels of remuneration and benefits.

The theory has been used to structure the experiential and academic educational programs of the Foundation, including a graduate-level university curriculum in transformational coaching and leadership and an organizational consulting practice. Further contributions of the theory for the fields of learning psychology, business education, coaching, transformational leadership, and organizational change have been identified as areas for further study, based on this research.

Areas for Further Study

The ongoing emergence and development of the theory has revealed a myriad of fertile areas for future research, each of which will contribute to an even more expansive and powerful understanding of what people experience as a great life, and the processes they undertake to generate it. Recommendations for further study include:

- GT research studies on each phase of the theory (yearning, engaging, revelating, liberating, rematrixing, and dedicating), theory subphases, and each of the dimensions, conditions, and manifestations. Our study introduced new data about these elements. Further research could uncover nuances and implications and generate greater understanding of, for example, the many interrelationships and influencers among the elements—phases to dimensions, dimensions to outcomes, phases to outcomes, and so forth.

- Studies of the tools that are utilized to live a great life. What are they? What impact do they have? Are certain tools more helpful at certain phases? Are certain tools more helpful across, rather than within, phases? If so, which and when? More research and data related to these points will enrich the theory and help to maximize the potential for evolating. The research can begin with a deep exploration of the current tools used by our foundation, given that those have already been proven to lead to evolating. It could then expand to other tools and technologies of development and change. These studies could spawn new, more effective tools to be utilized in support of the evolating process.

- On a practical level, a map or other diagnostic tool to assist individuals in identifying their progress on the path of evolating and clarifying their next steps to move toward experiencing a great life. This same mapping tool could then be used to serve those around them—family members, co-workers, and so forth—helping them to awaken their

yearning and assist them on their quest for a great life. Such a tool could support larger organizations and institutions in their transformation, as well.

- Development of a curriculum that maps our current program to the theory and then restates it in a newly clear and potent way to guide students through the process of evolating. Embracing the theory itself could become a core part of the curriculum, further empowering individuals to take the reins of their own growth journey. Fostering a culture where the stages of evolating are understood and embraced will likely propel our foundation to its next stage of evolution.

- As an adjunct to the curriculum, a separate study might be conducted that focuses on students who have not fully engaged in the evolating process. CGT research could be conducted to formulate a general theory that then could be used both as a mapping and diagnostic tool to facilitate and support those students who wish to shift the trajectory of their growth and development and enroll them in the evolating process.

- The development and implementation of a curriculum to train faculty, leaders, and coaches in the theory, so that they can use it to guide students through the process of evolating and become more effective in their own leadership, coaching, and service.

- Exploring the implications of evolating for the theory and practice of transformational learning, including issues of motivation and psychological depth, the affective dimension of adult learning, and the experiential grounding of personal transformation.

- Exploring the contributions of evolating theory to the fields of learning psychology, coaching and leadership. Research in these areas is currently underway as we continue to develop our graduate-level curriculum in transformational coaching and leadership and related educational practices.

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Recruitment and Data Collection in the 21st Century: Implications for Grounded Theory

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Abstract

For many people, many aspects of daily life now occur online. Most individuals are well-versed in communication via email and social media, and many are experienced with audio and video conferencing software as a means to hold business meetings and to connect with family and friends. In addition, the coronavirus pandemic has shifted many aspects of modern life, and some universities have imposed research restrictions that prohibit face-to-face interviews. Because of these changes in the structure of modern social and professional life, researchers are faced with new opportunities and challenges in recruiting research participants and collecing data for their studies. Grounded theorists, in particular, are faced with challenges implementing the research design as it was originally developed within the context of these modern circumstances. This article explores social media and audio and video conferencing software as tools that a grounded theorist might consider for virtual participant recruitment and interviewing.

Keywords: recruitment, data collection, virtual interviews, virtual research environments

Introduction

Technology has opened new avenues for conducting research across vast distances. Within the last decade, researchers have begun to use one form of technology, social media, as a cost-effective way to recruit participants (Fenner et al., 2012) and an effective way to recruit people from within hard-to-reach populations (Gorman et al., 2014; Martinez et al., 2014). It is estimated that in the United States about 72% of people use social media (Pew Research Center, 2021); that number is 57.6% worldwide (Global Webindex, 2021). Further, as of 2016, 79% of internet users in the United States use the most popular social media site, Facebook, and research shows that usage is similar across demographic groups (Pew Research Center, 2016). While not a sole strategy for participant recruitment for every research study, social media may provide researchers with easy access to broad populations of interest and a non-coercive way to recruit interested participants.

Classic grounded theory (GT) is a research design in which all forms of data may be valuable (Glaser, 1978). However, many grounded theorists rely heavily on interviews as primary sources of data. Glaser (1998) described interviewing participants in person without recording interviews or taking notes and then, afterwards, recording field notes, coding, and memoing to prepare for the next day's research. However, while some researchers today have dedicated time to devote to research as a primary responsibility, many academics, students, and other researchers are trying to fit research into already full schedules and cannot devote time to research every day. Additionally, participants may be extremely busy, and it is not always realistic for researchers to expect people to be available for in person interviews. Further, for grounded theory students, recording and transcribing interviews may be a requirement of their doctoral programs; in the era of the coronavirus pandemic, virtual data collection and interviewing may be another requirement. Therefore, it is important for researchers, including GT researchers, to learn about possibilities for and successful application of virtual recruitment and data collection strategies. This article is based on personal experiences conducting a classic GT dissertation study, as well as subsequent grounded theory research, using social media and audio and video conferencing software platforms. In the sections that follow, I will address some of the ethical and practical issues that relate to virtual recruitment and data collection that may be relevant to researchers in general to provide context for a discussion about how these topics relate to grounded theorists specifically.

Deciding to Recruit and Collect Data Virtually

As is typical in a classic GT study, my research began within a substantive area of interest; in this case, the experiences of people who are highly sensitive. I had read research on the trait of sensory processing sensitivity (SPS), the academic term for the trait of high sensitivity, to meet graduate school requirements of a preliminary literature review. Sensory processing sensitivity is a trait found in anywhere from 10-35% of the population that includes greater depth of processing, a lower threshold for becoming overstimulated, a greater degree of empathy and emotionality, and a tendency to detect subtle details in the environment (Aron et al., 2012). Since individuals who are highly sensitive make up a smaller percentage of the population, I was likely to need to sample across a geographically diverse area to increase the chances of recruiting participants who related with my grand tour question. Also, I attended an online university, worked from my home, and moved during my research, leaving me with limited options locally for participant recruitment and data collection via in person interviews. Lastly, as previously mentioned, people are busier than ever and there has been an overall shift from more localized to more virtually-connected lives. Therefore, technological tools for recruitment and conducting interviews virtually were practical for me as a researcher and mostly easy and practical for interested participants.

Social Media Recruitment Process

I initially suggested in my application to my university's institutional review board (IRB) that I would recruit participants via Facebook. After some discussion about this strategy, I was encouraged to add another social media platform to balance out the risk of bias created by recruiting within my own social network. Therefore, I added the strategy of recruiting via Nextdoor, which is a localized community networking site. After IRB approval, I posted the

recruitment post to my Facebook page. The post explained that I was looking for participants to interview on my topic area of interest. I did not use the word "sensitivity" in my recruitment post; instead, I asked for interested participants who could talk about being "deeply affected by people and situations." It is a requirement of modern IRBs within the United States, to inform participants about the topic of the research. I honored this ethical imperative while avoiding sharing any more about what I was looking for or naming "sensitivity" as a concept.

In my recruitment post on Facebook, I asked people to contact me by email, phone, or Facebook messenger, either with questions about the research or to express their interest in participating in an interview. The post further requested that study participants share the post with others they knew who might be interested or to the share the post to their own Facebook walls. Since I have a private Facebook account, I had to make the post public to do this.

After posting to Facebook, I posted a recruitment post on Nextdoor in the "general" section. I had to select that I wanted both local neighbors and nearby communities to see the post to increase its reach. The post to Nextdoor similarly explained that I was looking for participants to interview who related with the general topic and requested interested participants contact me via email, phone, or Nextdoor private message. In both instances, I minimized risks by allowing participants to self-identify as interested in the topic and to choose whether they wanted to respond or forward the recruitment post to others.

Virtual Interview Design and Process

During my research project, I interviewed different participants via email, audio conferencing software, and video conferencing software. I offered all participants the choice to be interviewed via email so that they could have asynchronous communication with me if necessary or desired. I offered the choice initially to be interviewed via the audio-conferencing software FreeConferencePro, which would allow me to record interviews and was as simple for participants as dialing a phone number. Using this software also allowed me to conduct virtual synchronous interviews with participants without the need to exchange personal telephone numbers.

For practical reasons, after a few interviews, I switched to using the video conferencing software GoToMeeting and continued to offer email as an asynchronous communication option. GoToMeeting allowed me record interviews and had an option through which I could have them automatically transcribed. While GoToMeeting is designed for video conferencing, I only ever chose to use the audio component. I believed that this would foster a sense of privacy and make it more likely that I would "instill a spill" (Glaser, 1998, p. 111) in participants sharing about their personal, potentially vulnerable, experiences with the research topic. However, choosing not to offer a video component also meant that I likely missed visual cues that might have provided valuable observational data and that, in the absence of seeing each other, more effort was needed to build rapport with participants.

Ethical Considerations for Social Media Recruitment

Social media is widely used throughout the United States and the world. Thus, it offers a convenient way to access a broad range of people across vast distances. However, like any

form of participant recruitment, recruitment via social media also carries inherent risks; in this case, the protection of participant privacy and confidentiality were my biggest ethical concerns.

To protect the privacy and confidentiality of participants, I stated in my recruitment posts that I wanted people to contact me by email, phone, or through Facebook or Nextdoor private message, rather than to comment directly on my posts. I further informed interested participants that any comments on the Facebook recruitment post would be visible to others until I was able to delete them; this might allow others to become aware of individuals who were interested in participating. Nextdoor, on the other hand, allows users to disable comments on their own posts, which I did. Lastly, I stated that I would make every effort to delete comments posted on my Facebook recruitment posts as soon as possible.

Ethical Considerations for Interviewing Virtually

Ethical considerations of using audio and video conferencing software for data collection revolved around privacy and confidentiality of participants as well. I recorded interviews within the conferencing software to the cloud with participants' permission and then had them transcribed by a third party. While Glaser (1998) strongly advised grounded theorists to avoid recording interviews, it was a requirement of my doctoral program, as it is for many students doing dissertation research using GT. Most participants consented to the recording; for the few who did not, I took field notes and was still able to incorporate conceptual insights from their interviews.

To make participants aware of any risk of loss of privacy or confidentiality during the research project, I included a link in my informed consent document to the privacy policy of the conferencing software. I informed participants that recordings would be deleted from the cloud immediately after downloading them and deleted from my personal computer after transcription. Further, I let participants know that transcribed interviews would be de-identified and stored separately from informed consent documents or any other identifying information on my own personal, password-protected computer. Lastly, the transcriptionist signed a non-disclosure agreement.

Many of us, researchers or not, use audio and video conferencing software regularly. We must all do our best to make choices weighing the benefits and risks of using these services. De-identifying data, deleting recordings from the cloud, storing identifying information separately from de-identified data, having a transcriptionist sign a non-disclosure agreement, and providing links to the privacy policy of the software used for interviewing allowed participants to make an informed decision about whether they wanted to be interviewed in this way.

Practical Considerations of Social Media Recruitment

While I was successful in recruiting participants through both Facebook and Nextdoor, I faced several practical challenges in the process. First, I had to consider how I would be most likely to reach participants with experiences to share in response to my topic of interest. Since classic GT produces theory and is not used for verification, grounded theorists do not necessarily need to access a large or random sample. However, a strategy I may have used to

expand my reach, particularly if I was not reaching participants who identified with my topic area, would have been to purchase Facebook ads targeting people within my population of interest. Another option would have been to post recruitment materials, with group moderator permission, within specialized public or private Facebook groups centered around the population of interest.

Though I chose not to purchase Facebook ads or recruit in specialized Facebook groups, I was successful at reaching beyond my immediate group of acquaintances to access a broader population. One strategy that helped to reach a broader group of participants was to request in my recruitment post that people share the post to their own Facebook walls, and many friends and acquaintances chose to do this. As a result, people contacted me who had come across my recruitment post but who I had never met. Though I did interview some individuals from my own Facebook "friends list," most participants in my study were people with whom I was not very familiar or with whom I had limited contact. In contrast, I knew none of the participants I recruited through Nextdoor. Therefore, I believe that a combination of two forms of social media recruitment is supportive of recruiting a varied group of participants.

Another practical challenge of recruitment through social media was making decisions about frequency of posting. I wanted to attract the interest of potential participants who might relate with the research topic and to remind participants to reach out if they had originally seen my post with the intention to respond and then forgotten amid life circumstances. However, I did not want to post so often that others were bothered by my posting. Similarly, if potential participants expressed interest in my research but were subsequently slow in responding to messages, I was not sure when or how many times to follow up with them. A general strategy I used was to post recruitment posts every other week and to follow up once with participants who had previously expressed interest in participating.

Practical Considerations of Interviewing Virtually

Unlike scheduling in person interviews, scheduling interviews for virtual data collection meant that I had to schedule across time zones. On multiple occasions, this led to miscalculations and miscommunications about interview start times. Glaser (1998) suggested that interviews should be conversational, and the researcher should feel, to the participant, like a "trusted confidante" (p. 111). Rescheduling interviews due to calculation errors may erode trust and comfort from the beginning. Therefore, it is important to appropriately calculate and communicate meeting times, and it may be prudent to direct participants to a world clock meeting planner.

Another practical challenge of virtual interviewing was a lack of control over the environment. While in person interviews may be scheduled at a specific location of a researcher's choosing, thereby minimizing the risk of potential distractions, virtual interviews can occur anywhere. Therefore, if a participant chooses to set up their computer or call in from their phone in a crowded place, the researcher has little control over all the possible distractions to a free-flowing and open conversation. Further, virtual audio and video interviews often keep participants close to their main sources of communication. Therefore, participants may receive emails or text messages while being interviewed and momentarily lose focus. Unfortunately, this may even happen to the researcher, and it is important to close

applications on phones and computers and set both to "do not disturb" mode prior to an interview, if possible. Also, researchers may wish to provide participants with some interview suggestions prior to the meeting, including finding a quiet, comfortable environment in which the interview can take place.

An additional challenge I encountered during virtual interviews was lack of understanding of the technology; this was also true for participants. Some participants had a difficult time figuring out how to join our virtual meetings, particularly via video conferencing software. Also, in preparation for the first video meeting I conducted after switching from audio to video conferencing software, I emailed an invitation to the participant that included a link to join the meeting via their computer. My intention was that they could either use their phone or use headphones at their computer but that the interview would be conducted using only the audio component of the software. However, I did not realize that I had not disabled video sharing and that participant joined the meeting on video while I was on audio only. I informed the participant that I was going to be doing an audio interview and that they could continue sharing their video or turn it off. However, I learned from that incident that it was important for me to understand the technology better to set up a more seamless experience for my participants. When planning to conduct interviews virtually, researchers may wish to send a set of clear instructions on accessing the chosen software and may want to conduct one or two test meetings with colleagues to ensure appropriate settings are enabled or disabled prior to any interviewing.

The conversational flow of my audio interviews was organic and often evoked deep sharing from participants. However, Glaser (1998) also noted that "interviews without some observations are not embodied by behavior and in this regard not as grounded in meaning" (p. 109). I agree that something was lost in not getting to see the body language of my participants. Even though I recorded interviews, I also took casual field notes while listening, particularly noting moments of emotion or changes in ways of speaking to bring some element of present-moment observation to my interviews. In the future, I would consider conducting both virtual and in person interviews for the ease to myself and participants of the former and richness of data provided by the later. I would also offer participants the option of being interviewed virtually by phone or video to create the interview environment most comfortable to participants.

As far as building rapport with participants, audio interviews were not as much of a barrier as I thought they might be. We began interviews with some casual chatting and if participants were weary of connecting over the phone or being recorded at first, it did not seem evident ten minutes into each interview. I did discover that it is crucial to pause often to ensure the participant has finished sharing before asking any follow-up questions. Pausing is a tool that allows the participant more time to think and begin to speak again, as people tend to like to fill any moments of silence. Since participants could not see my body language, I used my voice and subtle sounds of affirmation to acknowledge that I was listening and interested. Even via technology, I found it easy to be listening and interested throughout the entirety of my interviews, so some of this was likely conveyed organically to the participants.

Making it Work for Classic Grounded Theory

Glaser did not write much about the process of recruiting research participants, as his large body of work has focused mainly on developing and articulating the classic GT research design. Glaser (1998) did, however, express disapproval of the use of certain forms of technology in the grounded theory process, such as taping interviews or using qualitative data analysis software. However, it is still possible to recruit participants virtually and then conduct interviews in person. Nextdoor, for instance, would be a beneficial site for this use.

One important consideration for grounded theorists interested in recruiting participants via social media is that, in grounded theory, all forms of data are seen as potentially valuable for theory development (Glaser, 1978). While recruiting participants via social media lends itself to meeting interested interview participants, it may not be the most appropriate way of searching for other sources of data. Therefore, if a grounded theorist wants to access secondary data, collect survey data, or conduct observations, other strategies may be needed in addition to social media recruitment.

Staying true to the GT methodology, I used emergent concepts for theoretical sampling. Just as I would have had I recruited participants or collected data in physical locations, I identified emergent concepts and determined where I needed to sample next. Through IRB modification, I changed my grand tour question multiple times and posted new recruitment posts requesting interested participants contact me to participate. Because of IRB regulations, I did need to identify my grand tour questions ahead of time; however, I wrote my recruitment posts as broadly as possible, avoiding introducing any obvious concepts, so as not to influence my interviews. I believe that theoretical sampling via IRB modification and social media recruitment was like what I would have done had I not chosen to recruit and interview participants virtually.

Regarding data collection, Glaser (1998) discussed four types of data that a grounded theorist may collect: baseline data, properline data, interpreted data, and vaguing out. He suggested that notetaking and recording of interviews makes it more likely that a participant will supply properline data, which is "what the participant thinks it is proper to tell the researcher" (p. 9). He did emphasize the importance of properline data but believed that recording interviews prevents breaking through the properline data to reveal more of what is going on for participants.

Obviously, some grounded theorists may choose to conduct in person interviews with no notetaking or recording, attempting to get participants to share their best description of their experiences in the casual comfort of the research conversation. However, for those whose daily lives make that challenging or those whose participants may be less likely to sit down for in person interviews, another option, especially for researchers not required to record interviews, is to choose to conduct interviews virtually without the use of recording software. For those required to record and transcribe interviews, virtual interviewing may be the most appropriate option. Further, at the time of this writing, the university I attended currently prohibits face to face interviews due to risks associated with the coronavirus pandemic. Therefore, it is practical and timely for researchers to understand the most effective ways to conduct virtual interviews while staying aligned with the basic tenets of classic GT.

Though I was required to record interviews for the purpose of being mentored on both interview and coding skills during my doctoral program, I was allowed to conduct some interviews taking only field notes, and I chose this option for participants who did not consent to the recording. IRB informed consent procedures through the IRB at my university are currently such that the casual conversations Glaser recommends may not be collected as sources of data. However, casual conversations, while not officially collected as data, did inform my thinking as concepts emerged in my theory. I also collected multiple stories and other sources of media, such as songs, on which I could code and memo without the need for informed consent procedures to better understand emerging concepts.

Another way that virtual interviews may be approached that may support the aims of the grounded theorist is to inform participants of the basic interview process and that grounded theorists care most about what the participant has to share about the topic area. My assumption beginning my own research was that the process of recruitment and obtaining detailed informed consent for participation, even for face-to-face interviews, would already have participants feeling potentially uncomfortable. In addition, some people, myself included, may become overwhelmed when asked a very broad question with no further instruction. Therefore, as part of the informed consent process, I explained to participants in casual conversation what I was going to do in the interview, including asking a very broad question and then listening to everything they wanted to tell me about that topic. I further explained that the interview would not proceed like others they might have experienced, where an interviewer asks a scripted list of questions, but that any follow-up questions I asked would attempt to understand more about what they were saying and what they meant. I made sure participants understood that there was no right or wrong answer in the interview; I explained that, for the purposes of GT, anything that was relevant to them would be relevant to me. I believe this put participants at ease, and my sense in most of my virtual interviews was that participants shared authentically and comfortably.

Implications for Practice

Recruitment via social media and virtual interviewing are viable options for researchers, including grounded theorists, in the 21st century. However, there are ethical and practical considerations for researchers that may aide them in the process of utilizing these strategies. During Facebook recruitment, grounded theorists may consider asking people to share recruitment posts to their own Facebook walls, purchasing Facebook ads, or posting recruitment materials to specific Facebook groups. While IRB requirements in some areas may include detailed informed consent procedures and informing participants of the initial topic of research, grounded theorists can phrase the topic in the recruitment posts or grand tour questions as broadly as possible, rather than introducing specific concepts, so that participants respond as authentically as possible with whatever thoughts occur to them. Further, explaining the grounded theory research process as a casual part of the informed consent process may help participants feel more at ease and be less likely to supply only properline data.

For virtual interviews, a grounded theorist may benefit from making recommendations to interested participants that they find a quiet location in which to participate. Further, it may be prudent to send instructions on accessing the audio and video conferencing software so that

participants are more familiar and comfortable with the process, and the interview experience can be a more seamless one. Researchers can use a world clock meeting planner to verify accurate meeting times with participants and send calendar invitations that feature converted times for both researcher and participant. Because IRB requirements may necessitate a detailed informed consent process for the collection of any data with human subjects, it may be beneficial for grounded theorists to collect sources of secondary data or to code blogs, videos, or other written materials that authentically express peoples' thoughts without the formality of modern research interviews.

Conclusion

As technology swiftly evolves, researchers have many new technological options to aid in all parts of the research process, including recruitment and data collection. Peoples' lives are increasingly located online and, while data may be rich from traditional in person interviews, certain topics of study and certain populations or people may be easier to recruit online and to approach with the option of using audio and video conferencing software. Further, while Glaser encouraged idea generation through data collected from casual conversations, modern IRB requirements in some locations currently make that impossible. Lastly, as the coronavirus pandemic shaped our lives in unexpected ways over the last year and a half, many researchers were restricted in data collection activities. Therefore, it is timely for classic grounded theorists to consider ways they might stay true to the methodology in the context of current circumstances.

Overall, I had a wonderful experience recruiting and interviewing participants virtually. Social media proved to be an effective starting point to reach interested participants, and then I was able to create some of the casualness and ease I wanted to create through conversations with participants prior to our interviews. Also, I was quite comfortable with the interview process, and most of my participants shared freely and deeply and aided my process of developing a theory that transcended my original area of interest. While virtual interviews may not be the standard, particularly in GT, they offer a tool for researchers to reach a wider audience, schedule more easily with busy individuals, and with which some researchers and participants both may be more comfortable. Therefore, as technological tools continue to be developed and online communications increase in frequency, it is worth it for researchers to at least have some ideas about how they might use these technologies in their own research.

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Theory of Securing

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Abstract

This article outlines the theory of securing. It explains the feelings of insecurity of ordinary people and how they secure themselves. Securing is a basic social psychological process of "becoming" where the person's selfhood is formed by how they continuously deal with their feelings of insecurity. This process has two interrelated stages: (1) instantaneous relieving and (2) honesting. When they engage instantaneous relieving and increasingly trapped in a vicious cycle, they become a lesser version of themselves. However, when they transition into honesting, they recover and continuously realize a better version of themselves. This theory has implications in helping professions and future research on personal growth and optimal functioning.

Keywords: feelings of insecurity, instant relief, self, becoming, honesty

Introduction

To feel secure is central in our lives. Our sense of security is easily affected and volatile. Feelings of insecurity are distressful and as the magnitude of these feelings increase over time, they become more painful to bear. Thus, feelings of insecurity are a main concern in life. The theory of securing explains how a person continuously resolves this main concern by securing themselves and thus determining their selfhood and their place in the world. This mid-range grounded theory is generated by generalizing the theory of pain resolving (Oh et al., 2016) outside of the substantive area in which the theory emerged.

Methodology

The goal of this classic grounded theory study is to extend the grounded theory of pain resolving in addiction and recovery (Oh et al., 2016) outside the substantive area of addiction and recovery. When generalized and transferred outside of the substantive area of addiction and recovery, the theory of pain resolving was modified by new data. Theoretical sampling was carried out on relevant literature that supplied secondary data "to provide as broad and diverse range of theoretical ideas" (Glaser, 1978, p. 150) on the extended area as possible. The literature that is used as secondary data in this study includes publications within and outside of the substantive area of addiction and recovery, those that share people's struggles and distresses in life either as an individual or a group within personal, relational, professional, and entrepreneurial domains. As the

internet is an abundant source of available secondary data to extend and expand the original theory, these publications were sourced from the internet. These publications include online articles that contain personal stories, reflections and opinions. A total of 143 online articles were sourced and collected from internet websites using Google search. The search was guided and directed by theoretical sampling. These online articles were sourced from various websites as per Appendix 1. Secondary data were also sourced from academic articles (i.e. Bigus, 1996; Carmona & Whiting, 2021; Shepherd, 2003; Wojciszke & Struzynska-Kujalowicz, 2007) and books (i.e Bromley, 1993; Brown, 2012; Forsyth, 2010; Maslow, 1971; Rogers, 1961, 1963; Sarno, 2001).

Theoretical sampling determines the direction of data collection where the process of data collection is "controlled by the emerging theory" (Glaser, 1978, p. 36). When the literature was reviewed, selective coding was carried out using main concepts from the original theory while "staying open [to new codes that may emerge and] keeping in mind the current categories" (Glaser, 1978, p. 47). Together with constant comparative method (Glaser, 1998) and memoing where "memos track the growth of conceptual ideas as they emerged" (Glaser, 2014, p. 60), new and existing concepts emerged, expanded and modified. Concepts and ideas in the new memos were constantly compared with the concepts in the original theory leading to a modified core variable to extend the original theory (Oh et al., 2016) to fit a wider range of people.

Memos that contain the outline of the full theory were constantly written to integrate new concepts and ideas that emerge to the original theory. Further insights were gained from these memos which led to new ideas, codes and data collection. Data collection was stopped when saturation of data was achieved. Memos were sorted and a modified outline of the mid-range theory emerged. Writing-up of the full theory was carried out in order to finalize the theory and "stop unending conceptualization [and] data coverage" (Glaser, 2012, p. 1) of the infinite accessibility and availability of data on the internet.

Pain resolving as the core variable identified in Oh et al. (2016) was modified with the emergence of *securing* as the core variable of the mid-range grounded theory. Following the emergence of feelings of insecurity as the main concern with security attributes as its concept, *securing* emerged as the action carried out by people in resolving their feelings of insecurity. According to Glaser (2007), new categories and properties arise to modify the theory to provide grab, fitness, workability, and relevance. Thus, from this study, new categories and concepts such as feelings of insecurity, security attributes, and securing (as the core category) emerged to modify concepts in the substantive grounded theory of pain resolving in addiction and recovery. They "do not change [the] meaning of the theory, they just extend and modify it and give a broader generalization" (Glaser, 2007, p. 80).

Securing

An ordinary person's major concern in their life is their feelings of insecurity where they perennially feel unassured and vulnerable because they perceive a lack in their mix of security attributes due to insecure experiences that occur throughout their lives. Thus, the person resolves this major concern by securing themselves continuously. Security attributes are personal characteristics and resources that are essential for a person's functioning and they specify the person's selfhood. The person's selfhood refers to their distinctive character. Alger (2014) stated: "Identity is a grouping of attributes, qualities

and values that define how we view ourselves, and perhaps how we think other people see us" (n.p.) and a loss of identity results in "increased levels of generalised anxiety, low self-esteem, depression, a loss of self-confidence, social anxiety, isolation, chronic loneliness, all of which threaten our ability to connect with other people" (n.p.).

Thus, securing is a basic social psychological process of "becoming." When the person is securing themselves, they are continuously resolving their distressful feelings of insecurity through gaining the security attributes that they perceive themselves lacking due to the insecure experiences that occur throughout their lives. Their selfhood is formed based on the mix of security attributes that they currently possess and how they secure themselves. As a result, the mix expresses their identity, existence and potential. Their identity refers to who they are, their existence, their life, and potential-- what they could possibly achieve and who they could possibly become. Rogers (1961) observed that it is a person's "tendency to actualize himself, to become his potentialities, to express and activate all the capacities of the organism" (p. 351). Any lack that they perceive in their mix of security attributes could be seen as their potential.

Each person is differentiated by their own distinctive mix of security attributes. These security attributes are inter-related and are associated to the person's (1) survival, their continuity of life; (2) connection, their bonds and interactions with others; (3) career and work, their job, vocation and occupation; (4) finance and possession, their assets; (5) education, their formal and informal training; (6) well-being, their health and fitness; (7) ability, their skills and capability; (8) image, the impression they present to others; (9) power, their capacity to direct and regulate themselves and influence others, (10) passion and purpose, their goals and interests; (11) validation; their social acceptance and respect, and (12) goodness; their virtues and morals. These security attributes are valued by the person and resources that help the person to function. The person's selfhood is self-organizing based on their mix of security attributes. It is activated by the person's securing process.

Securing has two inter-related stages: (1) instantaneous relieving and (2) honesting. The person has a natural tendency to engage in instantaneous relieving. However, a person may consciously implement honesting as a strategy to resolve their feelings of insecurity without getting trapped in instantaneous relieving.

When the person engages in instantaneous relieving, they gain instant relief for their feelings of insecurity. They utilize a combination of instant relievers to obtain the security attributes that they perceive themselves lacking due to the insecure experiences that occur throughout their lives. The instant relief is short term, and temporary. They feel more insecure as they persistently and increasingly perceive a lack in their mix of security attributes due to the insecure experiences that occur in their lives. They may experience continual losses in their mix of security attributes as they continue to pursue instant relief. Consequently, they are trapped in a vicious cycle. As a result, they progressively become a lesser version of themselves where they increasingly feel insecure, disempowered, dysfunctional, display immaturity, and disconnected as time passes. Rogers (1961) stated that they have a "static, fixed, unfeeling, impersonal type of functioning" (p. 66). They are not able to "engage with the world from a place of worthiness" (Brown, 2012, p. 37) and are "disengaged from active participation in normal social networks'' and "finally excluded from their social networks" (Bigus, 1996, p. 15). Death may be the person's instant reliever when their feeling of insecurity grows

more painful as their perception of lack and loss in their security attributes persists and increases.

Meanwhile, honesting is a strategy where the person consciously implements. While instantaneous relieving is fixated on short term relief for the person's feelings of insecurity, honesting as a strategy focuses on longer term resolution for the feelings of insecurity. It is a strategy where the person is being honest by connecting with trusted-others in order to support their recovering process. A person transitions from instantaneous relieving to honesting when their increased distressful feelings of insecurity led them to gain a moment of clarity that engaging in instantaneous relieving had brought them false feelings of security. It has increasingly made them feel insecure once these feelings of security wear out. Thus, they realize that their efforts in engaging in instantaneous relieving are futile. They may also realize that they might experience less distress if they seek help. In honesting, the person faces their feelings of insecurity and their vulnerability fully with their trusted-others with whom they have connections. They gain the security attributes that they perceive themselves lacking and/or lost through their connection with their trusted-others. Rogers (1961) observed that "helping relationships" (p. 40) are formed and they "usually are intended to facilitate growth" (p. 40). By implementing honesting, the person is increasingly free from instantaneous relieving and supported in their recovering process. In the recovering process, they continuously realize a better version of themselves. They increasingly feel secure, empowered, functional, display maturity and connected. Rogers (1963) described a "fully-functioning person [that emerged from a] helping relationship" (p. 22). A person may implement honesting without being trapped in instantaneous relieving when they have clarity that they need to seek help from trusted-others.

A person could also experience their feelings of insecurity as a unit of interconnected persons. Members of a unit experience, influence, contribute and reinforce one another's feelings of insecurity, ways of resolving these feelings (either instantaneous relieving or honesting) and selfhood in order to mutually form the unit's collective feelings of insecurity, resolution methods (either instantaneous relieving or honesting) and selfhood and vice versa. A unit is commonly a family, couple, group, organization or community. Thus, the securing process that is undergone by the person may apply to the unit which operates like an individual person interacting with their external environment. Forsyth (2010) identified the unit as a group with social identity that has "two or more individuals who are connected by and within social relationships" (Forsyth, 2004, p. 3). It has "a sense of we and us, as well as a sense of they" (Forsyth, 2010, p. 4).

The Major Concern: Feelings of insecurity

A person feels insecure when they perceive themselves lacking in their mix of security attributes due to the insecure experiences that occur throughout their lives. They are dissatisfied with their mix of security attributes and subsequently perceive and experience a deficiency and loss. Brown (2012) observed:

> everyone is hyper-aware of the lack. Everything from safety and love to money and resources feels restricted or lacking. We spend inordinate amounts of time calculating how much we have, want, and don't have, and how much everyone else has, needs and wants. (p. 24)

Feelings of insecurity are a person's distressful feelings of being unassured and vulnerable. They are comprised of a mix of the feelings of (1) inadequacy, not good enough and lesser; (2) un-belongingness, alone, unaccepted and unloved; (3) unsafety, unprotected; (4) worthlessness, low self-esteem; (5) emptiness, aimless; and (6) hopelessness, uselessness and powerlessness. Manifesting from these feelings are (7) distressful emotions and physical sensations. Common distressful emotions that a person experiences are shame, guilt, fear, anxiety, depression, resentment and anger. Together with these emotions, the person experiences aroused and tense physical sensations. These physical sensations are also part of the physical distress that the person experiences. Selva (2017) noted: "People get 'butterflies in the stomach' onstage or on a first date, while others who anger easily are described as 'hot-headed'" (n.p.).

Insecure experiences that occur throughout the person's life largely trigger and exacerbate their perception of lack in their mix of security attributes. These insecure experiences could be personally attributed and of by "others." Insecure experiences that are personally attributed are losses and deficiencies that originate from the person. Jordan (2018) shared: "I don't mean to be negative, but there is no cure for faulty connective tissue. No cure for your own DNA" (n.p.).

The insecure experiences by "others" undergone by the person are due to "others" that have intimate, close, familial, and social interactions and connections with the person. They may include judgment, abandonment, humiliation, enmeshment, abuse, aggression, controlling, rejection, non-approval, betrayal, and losses that are attributed to others. These insecure experiences by 'others' can also be set off and worsened by "others" who are engaging in instantaneous relieving due to their own feelings of insecurity and perception of lack in their mix of security attributes. The utility of instant relievers of "others" when "others" engage in instantaneous relieving are actions that could trigger these insecure experiences undergone by the person. Instant relievers are objects that people are engrossed to obtain the security attributes that they perceive themselves lacking due to insecure experiences that occur in their lives. As a result, they gain instant relief for their feelings of insecurity. As time passes, the increased feelings of insecurity lead the person to experience emotional pain. Insecure experiences that occur early in the person's life and throughout their lives could be traumatic to the person. Emotional pain forms a substantial part of the pain that is experienced by the person. Pain is the overall distress that the person experiences in their lives. It includes their physical and mental distress.

Physical and mental distress are physical and mental illnesses, diseases, disabilities, changes and conditions that are discomforting, hurting, diseasing, disabling, and debilitating to the person. The physical and mental distress experienced by the person may be insecure experiences that are personally attributed. This may also lead them to perceive a lack in their mix of security attributes, especially the security attribute that is associated with their well-being and thus leading them to feel insecure. Physical and mental distress may also be experienced by the person as a result of the utility of instant relievers when the person is engaging in instantaneous relieving. In the case of Helena in Childline (n.d), she shared that she was cutting herself to cope with her emotional pain due to sexual abuse.

Self-injury is a harmful way to cope with emotional pain, intense anger and frustration. While self-injury may bring a momentary sense of calm and a release

of tension, it's usually followed by guilt and shame and the return of painful emotions" and "possibility of fatal injury (Mayo Clinic, 2018, n.p.).

Sarno (2001, p.32) reported: "My work dealt with pain disorders that are direct result of anger-rage repressed and suppressed" by the person. The person who encounters insecure experiences by 'others' may also experience physical and mental distress. Furthermore, these insecure experiences by 'others' may also be contributed by the utility of instant pain relievers by 'others' who are also gaining instant relief for their own feelings of insecurity. For example, Helena would suffer physical and mental trauma due to the physical and sexual abuse of her teacher. And this abuse could be a result of the teacher's own preoccupation with sex activities with minors as a relief for himself.

Stage 1: Instantaneous relieving

When a person engages in instantaneous relieving, they are vicious cycling in gaining instant relief for their feelings of insecurity by utilizing a combination of instant relievers to obtain the security attributes that they perceive themselves lacking due to the insecure experiences that occur throughout their lives. Vicious cycling denotes a circular trajectory that traps the person in their distressful feelings of insecurity.

Instant Relief

The person gains instant relief for their feelings of insecurity by acquiring false feelings of security through (1) medicating, (2) escaping and (3) gratifying. These false feelings of security are the mix of the instant and temporary feelings of (1) comparable-to-or-better-than-others, (2) wantedness, (3) away-from-threats, (4) pride, (5) filling-into-the-void, and (6) anticipation. Manifesting from these feelings are (7) pleasurable emotions and physical sensations. Common pleasurable emotions and physical sensations that the person experiences are excitement and numbness.

When pleasurable emotions and physical sensations are experienced, the intensity of the unpleasant distressful emotions and sensations from the person's feelings of insecurity are taken off and blunted. It is "to take the edge off" (Brown, 2012, p. 87). Joyful feelings and sensations are also inadvertently taken off and blunted when the person gains instant relief for their feelings of insecurity. Brown (2012) revealed: "Numbing vulnerability also dulls our experiences of love, joy, belonging, creativity, and empathy. We can't selectively numb emotion. Numb the dark and you numb the light" (p. 86).

Medicating, escaping, and gratifying to acquire a false sense of security are inter-related processes of gaining instant relief for the person's feelings of insecurity. When the person is medicating, they are ameliorating their distressful feelings of insecurity by utilizing a combination of instant relievers to obtain the security attribute that they perceive themselves lacking due to insecure experiences that occur in their lives. A gamer was observed to be seeking connections with others by being active in online games because "strains on social relationships in the offline world made online relationships in World of Warcraft (WoW) more enticing" (Carmona & Whiting, 2021, p. 2177). Escaping involves a person distracting and diverting themselves from facing their distressful feelings of insecurity, the perception of lack in their mix of security attributes, the insecure experiences that triggers the perception of lack, and the gaining of the security attributes that they most need. Instead, the person gratifies. When a person is

gratifying, they obtain a security attribute in excess and may subsequently neglect other security attributes. A gamer confessed:

> I just wanted [WoW] to be a fun way to spend some time with new people, then I realized my mistake. Neglecting wife and family, job started to suffer. I had to rectify it, which meant alienating all the important online relationships I have made. (Carmona & Whiting, 2021, p. 2178)

Thus, the security attributes that they gratify are obtained disproportionately from with the rest of the other security attributes. Subsequently, they may continue to feel insecure when insecure experiences that occur throughout their lives trigger the perception of lack in their mix of security attributes.

Instant Relievers

Instant relievers are objects that the person is engrossed in order to obtain the security attributes that they perceive themselves lacking due to insecure experiences that occur throughout their lives so that they will gain instant relief for their feelings of insecurity. The utility of these objects are inter-related. The person utilizes a combination of instant relievers.

This combination of instant relievers commonly includes (1) substance, mind-altering chemicals; (2) activity, doings; (3) people and relationship, neediness and clinginess; (4) self-importance, exaggeration of superiority or inferiority; (5) perfection, faultlessness in outcomes; (6) irrationality, unreasonable beliefs and expectations; (7) denial, resistance of facts; (8) deception, concealment of truth; (9) avoidance, disengagement; (10) aggression, hurting of self and others; (11) fantasy, imaginations; (12) control, suppression; and (13) death, contemplation and attempt to end life.

Brown (2012) shared:

For many of us, the literal chemical anesthetizing of emotions is just a pleasant, albeit dangerous, side effect of behaviors that are more about fitting in, finding connection, and managing anxiety". She continued: "For me, it wasn't just the dance halls, cold beer, and Marlboro Lights of my youth….—it was banana bread, chips and queso, e-mail, work, staying busy, incessant worrying, planning, perfectionism, and anything else that could dull those agonizing and anxiety-fueled feelings of vulnerability. (p. 87)

Their utility of these instant relievers ranges from the continuum of using to obsessing. When they are obsessing over an instant reliever, they repeat the utility of, fixate on, crave, pursue, and/or pre-occupy themselves with an instant reliever impulsively and compulsively. The person's using of an instant reliever progresses to obsessing over the instant reliever when the utility of the instant reliever increases over time and the person is getting more trapped in the vicious cycle. The combination of instant pain relievers that the person utilized varies according to the number of types and magnitude of instant relievers utilized by a person at any point of time. This combination self-organizes when the person is progressively adding and substituting the utility use of an instant reliever with another instant reliever that is of similar, or different type and of varying magnitude and potency over time. This self-organization of the utility of a combination of instant relievers is determined by the changes in the level of feelings of insecurity and the person's tolerance of the utility of the instant relievers in

obtaining the security attributes that they are persistently and increasingly perceive to be lacking so that they will gain instant relief for their feelings of insecurity. Thus, a person's tolerance of the utility of an instant reliever has increased when a higher level of or more potent instant reliever is required to obtain the security attributes that they have persistently and increasingly perceive to be lacking. This is to gain the similar level of instant relief as experienced previously due to insecure experiences that occur. When adding and substituting are carried out, the utility of an instant reliever is reinforced by the utility of another or similar instant reliever. Chin (2015) shared:

> I continued to search for ways to ease my panic—acupuncture, massage therapy, crystal healing, energy work, breathing exercises, a handful of therapists, a personal gym trainer, smile therapy, and retail therapy (I even attempted to hire a dog sitter to sit with me)—and while some of these things offered their own small reliefs, I was still besieged with panic attacks. (n.p.)

This self-organizing utility of a combination of instant relievers activates the person's selfhood too to self-organize based on their current mix of security attributes to be a lesser version of themselves. This lesser version of themselves increasingly feel insecure, disempowered, dysfunctional, display immaturity and disconnected.

Vicious cycling

Vicious cycling denotes the following circular trajectory. The person experiences a (1) reprisal of their feelings of insecurity, the perception of lack in their mix of security attributes, the insecure experiences that trigger the perception of lack, and the utility of a combination of instant relievers. Consequently, as time passes, they will (2) downward spiral where they increasingly feel insecure because they persistently and increasingly perceive a lack in their mix of security attributes due to insecure experiences that occur in their lives. There are also times where the person continues to perceive themselves lacking and/or lose the security attributes that they desire and/or they have already had when they continue to obtain these security attributes by utilizing a combination of instant relievers. The false feelings of security that come with security attributes that they have gained are only temporary. For example, a person who self-harms in order to cope (Mayo Clinic, 2018) by gaining power over their painful emotions will continue to lose power over their emotions where the painful emotions return. Over a period of time, this will lead them to feel more insecure and painful because the perception of lack of the security attributes still persisted and increased with the adding and substituting in the utility of a combination of instant relievers. They progressively become a lesser version of themselves that increasingly feel insecure, disempowered, dysfunctional, display immaturity and disconnected.

Next, (3) an amplifying causal looping of the person's feelings of insecurity, perception of lack in the mix of security attributes and utility of a combination of instant relievers would emerge. Finally, the trajectory includes an (4) inter-generational and social transfer of feelings of insecurity, perception of lack in the mix of security attributes, and utility of a combination of instant relievers of "others." Similarly, "others" also utilize a combination of instant reliever to gain the security attributes that they perceive themselves lacking so that they gain instant relief for their feelings of insecurity. The exposure of utility of a combination of instant relievers of 'others' to the person will lead the person to undergo insecure experiences by "others." This will trigger the person to perceive a lack in their mix of security attributes and subsequently they

feel insecure. Consequently, the person utilizes a combination of instant relievers to obtain the security attributes that they perceive themselves lacking due to the insecure experiences by 'others' in order to gain instant relief for their feelings of insecurity. This pattern is also observed when the person transfers their feelings of insecurity, perception of lack in their mix of security attributes and the utility of a combination of instant relievers to the people around them when these people are exposed to the person. These people have intimate, close, familial, and social interactions and connections with the person. These people could be "others" that trigger them to perceive a lack in their security attributes and another person that the person interacts with. The transfer between parent and child is intergenerational while social transfer occurs outside of parent and child connections and interactions.

Stage 2: Honesting

When the person is consciously implementing honesting as a strategy, they are being honest by connecting with trusted-others in order to support their recovering process. Most people would need trusted-others to empower them to be honest with their feelings of insecurity, false feelings of security, perception of lack of security attributes, insecure experiences that trigger the perception of lack and the utility of a combination of instant relievers. They are often unclear and subtle to the person. The person could be utilizing a combination of instant relievers such as denial, deception and others to obtain the security attributes that they perceive themselves lacking for gaining instant relief for the feelings of insecurity. Rich (2011) stated: "Dishonesty lives as a blind spot. We don't recognize ourselves as being dishonest because we have a library of built-in stories to justify our actions. And we believe them" (n.p.). Thus, support from trusted-others are required to help the person to gain freedom from the vicious cycle they are trapped in. Cole (2016) revealed: "They can see things you cannot [and their] feedback gives you new things to contemplate, poses questions, and probes at deeply rooted behavior patterns…it is simply a process [and] the path that allows for the most growth" (n.p.).

Thus, honesting is not only a binary strategy but also a moment-to-moment, long-term and lifestyle-based strategy aimed at empowering the person to consciously face their distressful and painful feelings of insecurity, gain the security attributes that they perceive themselves lacking, resolve the insecure experiences that trigger the perception of lack and consequently, free themselves progressively from instantaneous relieving. In order to face these feelings of insecurity, the person embraces their vulnerability and works on them with their trusted-others. Thus, there is a need for a person to connect with trusted-others. Brown (2012) identified "vulnerability [as] uncertainty, risk, and emotional exposure" (p. 29). She asserted that while

> going it alone is a value we hold in high esteem in our culture . . . . The vulnerability journey is not the kind of journey we can make alone. We need support. We need folks who will let us try on new ways of being without judging us. (n.p.)

Some people may resort to self-help in order to be honest with themselves. Self-help commonly through reading and reflecting could be a form of honesting as there is a connection with a trusted-other. This is because the person reads and reflects on the material that is prepared by and attributed to the trusted-other. Cadwalladr (2015) quoted Brene Brown a "celebrity self-help queen" who said that she does not know what self-help means and asserted that "I don't think we're meant to do it alone" (n.p.).

However, the connections formed between the person and the trusted-other are commonly indirect, impersonal, untailored and lacking two-way interaction. They may run into a greater risk of misunderstanding and misinterpreting what they had read. It may also hamper the person's clarity and ability to be real. This is because there is absence of a personal connection with the trusted-other. At some point in time, they may connect with trusted-others in-person to be more honest about their experiences. In Sarno (2001), James Campobello, a reader of the Healing Back Pain book, wrote to the author Dr. Sarno, a back pain specialist to share his experiences on how the book had "saved [him] from a life of disability" and has corresponded with Dr. Sarno ever since and had been "free of pain or restriction" (pp. 194, 196).

Trusted-others

Trusted-others empower the person to be honest. The empowerment received from trusted-others is the various support for betterment that is gained from connecting with trusted-others. Trusted-others include a trusted person, group, a spiritual entity or a combination of these three. Trusted-others are those that are deemed to be more superior and better than the person due to the characteristics that they possess. A spiritual entity is an incorporeal entity that is regarded, and venerated by the person as higher in goodness than themselves. A spiritual entity may usually be understood by the person as a power higher than themselves such as a deity, higher self, a religion, or spiritual principles. The person may accept other forms of spiritual entities based on their level of faith towards these entities. However, they may resist the trusted-other especially the spiritual entity due to their (1) self-will and the illusion that they are in control, (2) blame towards the higher power for causing their lack, (3) the belief that the higher power is judgmental and punishing, or (4) not believing in the higher power. This resistance will lead the person to reject the spiritual entity as their support. Thus, a spiritual-based trusted person or group will often introduce the spiritual entity as a trusted-other to the person. Spiritual-based trusted groups and persons will commonly lead the person to connect with their spiritual entities as their ultimate empower-er. The person can connect with an assortment of trusted-others that have specific resources required by them in order to be empowered in being honest with themselves, gaining the security attributes that they perceive themselves lacking and resolving the insecure experiences that trigger the perception of lack.

A trusted-other has the following characteristics to empower the person: (1) open acceptance without judgment, (2) the security attributes, feelings of security, and peace that the person aspire to possess from or through the trusted-other, (3) compassion, (4) genuineness, accuracy in representation, and (5) superior knowledge and experience. These characteristics are also the tangible and intangible resources of the trusted-other. These resources determine the person's faith towards the trusted-other. Faith is the perceived level of relevance of the trusted-other to the person's recovering process. It is based on the resources that the trusted-other possess and required by the person to gain the security attributes that they perceive themselves lacking. Faith increases when the person gains the security attributes that they perceive themselves lacking through the trusted-other. In connecting with a trusted-other, the person will go through a cyclic trust process that consists of the following stages: denying, accepting, discovering, and trusting the relevance of trusted-other. In the denying stage, the person does not see the relevance and rejects the trusted-other when the trusted-other is introduced to them. As their feelings of insecurity grow more distressful, they have no other choice but

to accept the relevance of the trusted-other. Consequently, as they progress to the discovering stage, they become more aware of the relevance of the trusted-other as they work with the trusted-other in exploring and gaining the security attributes that they perceive themselves lacking and resolving the insecure experiences that trigger the perception of lack. Finally at the trusting stage, the person has more faith in the trusted-other as they have gained the security attributes that they perceive themselves lacking and resolved the insecure experiences that trigger the perception of lack. James Campabello, a former sufferer of chronic pain advised his friend (Sarno, 2001):

> You must either believe that it can work for you, or you must be so desperate that you will try very hard to do it even if you don't believe in it. I did not believe in it [at first]. My nature is very skeptical…However, I was desperate… So even though I didn't think it could help, my wife convinced me to try it. You can do the same thing..You might as well try—what have you got to lose? (p. 196)

The person's faith towards the trusted-other determines which stage they are in and their progress or regress in the cyclic trust process. This process is not linear as the person may commence, progress and regress in any stage of the process according to the level of faith they have in the trusted-other. A reduction of faith due to the failure in gaining the security attributes that they need through the trusted-other leads the person to disconnect from the trusted-other thus ending the helping relationship. This cycle repeats, when the person tries to connect with another trusted-other where they establish a connection with the new trusted-other.

Being honest

Being honest includes 1) gaining clarity and 2) being real. Both these sub-processes are interconnected and the person would usually connect with trusted-others in order to carry out these processes. Maslow (1971) observed that a client is helped "to unfold, to break through the defenses against his own self-knowledge, to recover himself, and to get to know himself" (p. 50).

When a person gains clarity, they capture a moment of insight about their feelings of insecurity, the security attributes that they perceive themselves lacking, the insecure experiences that trigger the perception of lack, the combination of instant relievers that they utilize to obtain these security attributes in order to gain the instant relief, the security attributes that they may have neglected and their selfhood. Insight can be captured suddenly or gradually. The higher the degree of openness and faith of the person in the trusted-other could result in a more sudden and swifter capturing of insight.

Being real consists of (1) admitting and accepting, (2) expressing authentically, and (3) doing the right thing. The person admits and accepts the unpleasant and painful truth of themselves. Rogers (1961) stated:

> The curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change...we cannot change, we cannot move away from what we are, until we thoroughly *accept* what we are. Then change seems to come about almost unnoticed. (p. 17)

They admit and accept that they had been utilizing a combination of instant relievers to obtain the security attributes that they perceive themselves lacking due to the insecure

experiences that occur in order to gain instant relief for their feelings of insecurity, and consequently this action had led to their increased feelings of insecurity. They also admit and accept that they have neglected the security attributes that they needed most for obtaining those security attributes that provide them instant relief for their feelings of insecurity.

When a person expresses themselves authentically, they are genuine about their feelings of insecurity, the security attributes that they perceive themselves lacking, insecure experiences that trigger the perception of lack, and the combination of instant relievers that they utilize to obtain these security attributes in order to gain instant relief. Rogers (1961) noticed that there is congruence when one "is genuine and without 'front' or facade, [and] openly being the feelings and attitudes which at that moment are flowing in him" (p. 61). Kierkegaard (1941) in Rogers (1961) said "to be that self which one truly is" (p. 166).

The person does the right thing to gain the security attributes that they perceive themselves lacking and to resolve the insecure experiences that trigger the perception of lack. However, they may lack clarity in doing the right thing. Plante (2009) noted:

> We usually know what the right thing is for ourselves and others but we typically struggle with doing it. We often tend to cut corners, not be as honest as we should be, eat too much, drink too much, say things to those we love (and those we don't) that we often later regret. (n.p.)

The person would usually connect with their trusted-others in order to gain greater clarity in doing the right thing. Some common right things to do may include making amends, deciding on choices and taking responsibility for their actions. By making amends, they mend their relationships and may gain connections as a security attribute that they may lack.

Connecting with trusted-others

By connecting with trusted-others, the person is relating and belonging with their trusted-others. When the person is relating and belonging with trusted-others, they work on themselves by (1) seeking help and (2) learning from the trusted-others, (3) getting involved and (4) staying open with trusted-others, and (5) letting-go with the presence of the trusted-others. They seek help by reaching out to the trusted-other. Next, through learning from the trusted-other, the person learns about the security attributes that they perceive themselves lacking, insecure experiences that trigger the perception of lack and to resolve these experiences, their selfhood, and to gain the security attributes that they perceive themselves lacking without utilizing instant relievers. When they learn to connect to others through their connection with their trusted-other, they also gain connections as a security attribute. The openness of the person to the trusted-other is commonly expressed as open-mindedness, presence, awareness, willingness, spontaneity, humility, and being reachable and teachable. Finally, letting-go involves the person surrendering their feelings of insecurity and utility of instant relievers in order to gain the security attributes that they perceive themselves lacking. They do so in the company and guidance of the trusted-other.

Recovering

Honesting as a strategy supports the recovering process that most people go through. Recovering is a life-long, moment-to-moment, and lifestyle-based process of gaining the security attributes that they perceive themselves lacking due to the insecure experiences that occur throughout their lives. By doing so they recover and heal from their distressful and painful feelings of insecurity. As a result of this process, the person continuously realizes a better version of themselves where they increasingly feel secure, empowered, functional, display maturity, and connected because they continuously gain the security attributes that they perceive themselves lacking, resolve the insecure experiences that trigger the perception of lack, are at peace with the unique mix of security attributes that they possess and aim to be a better version of themselves. The unique mix of security attributes that the person possesses is proportionate, balanced, necessary, essential, nurturing, and fitting to their present needs. This recovering process is asymptotic where the person feels the most secure and could be the best version of themselves as they could in any one time. Thus, they could only continuously work to be a better version of themselves. Helena in Childline (n.d) shared:

> It was two steps forward one step back the whole way, but I reminded myself that I fought to get this far, and I just kept going. At 23, I went into full-time education, went on to do my degree and now work for a charity. I consider myself a healthy person now and I have been for many years, but the impact that it had on my life has been enormous. (n.p.)

When the person increasingly feels secure, they experience a mix of feelings of (1) adequacy; good enough and satisfied; (2) belongingness, loved and accepted; (3) safety, being protected (4) worthiness, self-acceptance; (5) wholeness, purposeful; and (6) hopefulness, empowered. Manifesting from these feelings are (7) joyful emotions and physical sensations. A common joyful emotion that a person experience is happiness with its warm and activated or relaxed physical sensations. Selva (2017) revealed: "happiness is the one emotion that fills the whole body with activity. This might indicate a sense of physical readiness that comes with a happy state" (n.p.). These feelings of security are also usually experienced as peace, contentment, positivity, and balance by the person while they are still working on their feelings of insecurity.

The recovering process has two mutually reinforcing stages that lead the person to continuously gain the security attributes that they perceive themselves lacking and subsequently, continue to be a better version of themselves. These stages are: (1) staying clean and (2) going beyond. Staying clean involves the person working to abstain from the utility of a combination of instant relievers in order to gain the security attributes that they perceive themselves lacking. Going beyond involves the person moving on by (1) continuously improving and developing themselves; (2) being grateful; and (3) impacting others. They continuously improve and develop themselves by maintaining their feelings of security, being a better version of themselves by perpetually gaining the security attributes that they perceive themselves lacking, resolving the insecure experiences that trigger the perception of lack and being at peace with the unique mix of security attributes that they possess. Next, they are being grateful of their mix of security attributes and the trusted-other that had empowered them to gain the security attributes that they perceive a lack. And finally, they are impacting others where they are taking on the role of a trusted-other, giving back to others and getting into a virtuous cycle.

Regressing in the recovering process happens when the person re-engages in instantaneous relieving. The reasons for this regressing are as follows: (1) The person feels insecure as they perceive a lack in their mix of security attributes due to the insecure experiences that occur, however they are (2) complacent and since (3) recovering is no longer their priority, they stopped to implement honesting, and consequently they re-engage in instantaneous relieving. Increased feelings of insecurity and losses in their security attributes due to instantaneous relieving may lead them to gain a moment of clarity and thus return them to implementing honesting.

Limitation

This theory is delimited by the core category (i.e. securing) and its sub-categories (i.e. instantaneous relieving and honesting) as the solutions that most people take in order to deal with their main concern (i.e. feelings of insecurity). While the theory fits, is relevant, and works to extend its concepts to a wider range of people, there will be populations of people that the theory may not provide adequate coverage. Thus, the theory could be modified further with new data as they emerge to further extend the generality of its concepts. Finally, although these solutions and major concern could be applicable to a significant group of ordinary people, there may be other major concerns and solutions that could emerge from other studies.

Implications

As there is fit, workability and relevance, this theory could be put into practice when contextualized by professionals in healthcare, rehabilitation, professional psychology, social work, therapy, coaching, teaching and other human development services to help ordinary people either as individuals or as a unit (e.g. family, couple, group, organization or community) to gain clarity of their feelings of insecurity. Further action and approaches could be designed and adopted to help and support these individuals and units in their distresses in life. Specifically, the theory could be used to assess clients and patients in behavioral and mental healthcare and to plan treatment for their condition. By assessing the security attributes that clients perceive themselves lacking and form plans to empower them to gain those security attributes, clients could resolve their distress and work to be a better version of themselves. Thus, this theory has implications in future research concerning personal growth and optimal functioning.

Conclusion

Securing as a mid-range theory proposes the role of our feelings of insecurity in forming our selfhood. When these feelings of insecurity are explored honestly with trusted-others and rightly acted upon with their guidance, we continuously become a better version of ourselves. However, if we are not able to free ourselves from the natural tendency to engage in instantaneous relieving, we progressively become a lesser version of ourselves. Maslow (1971) was apt to stress that "when in doubt, be honest rather than not" (p. 50). However, being honest is not an easy feat. Most of us could attest to the role of a person, group or entity whom we could trust (e.g. a mentor, professional peer, physician, instructor, teacher, tutor, coach, therapist, consultant, religious person, support group, organization or God as a higher power) in helping and providing us counsel to free ourselves from various distresses that happen in some point of our lives. Thus, trusted-others empower us to be a better version of ourselves. This is illustrated by the concept of a "fully-functioning person [that emerged from a] helping relationship"

(Rogers, 1963, p. 22). Without trusted-others, our natural tendency for instant relief will lead us to our peril where we are trapped in a vicious cycle. Thus, the key to our recovering process is our trusted connections that have the necessary resources and characteristics that empower us to be honest with ourselves, gain the security attribute that we lacked and continuously become a better version of ourselves.

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Appendix

The 143 online articles were taken from the following websites: Recovering Couples Anonymous (www.recovering-couples.org), Smart Recovery (www.smartrecovery.org), Dual Recovery Anonymous (www.draonline.org), Your Brain on Porn (yourbrainonporn.com), Debtors Anonymous (www.debtorsanonymous.org), My Debt Story (mydebtstory.com), Poverty And Social Exclusion (www.poverty.ac.uk), Vanguard News (www.vanguardngr.com), Entrepreneur (www.entrepreneur.com), Emotions Anonymous (www.emotionsanonymous.org), Obsessive Compulsive Anonymous (www.obsessivecompulsiveanonymous.org), Schizophrenics Anonymous (www.sardaa.org), Anxiety and Depression Association of America (www.adaa.org), Chronic Pain Anonymous (www.chronicpainanonymous.com), Pain Concern (www.painconcern.org.uk), Life in Pain (www.lifeinpain.org), Support After Suicide

(www.supportaftersuicide.org), White Wreath Association (www.whitewreath.org.au), Childline (www.childline.org), Mayo Clinic (www.mayoclinic.org), The Ehlers-Danlos Society (ehlers-danlos.com), Psychology Today (www.psychologytoday.com), verywellmind (verywellmind.com), (PsychCentral (psychcentral.com) , Save the Children (savethechildren.org), Hope Street (hopestreet.org), Enjuris (enjuris.com), Trauma Survivors Network (traumasurvivorsnetwork.org), ACES Too High (acestoohigh.com), Counselling Directory (counselling-directory.org.uk), Kurious (kurious.ku.edu.tr), The Hufftington Post (www.thehufftingtonpost.com), The Guardian (theguardian.com) Preserve Articles (preservearticles.com), Forbes (forbes.com), Bustle (www.bustle.com), Elite Daily (www.elitedaily.com), Scientific American (www.scientificamerican.com), NBC News (www.nbcnews.com), PositivePsychology.com (positivepsychology.com), BBC (www.bbc.com), SBS News (www.sbs.com.au), Medium (medium.com), AP News (apnews.com), World Economic Forum (weforum.org), TED (ideas.ted.com), Lifehack (lifehack.org), Goalcast (goalcast.com), Tiny Buddha (tinybuddha.com), World Vision (worldvision.org), People (people.com), National Geographic (nationalgeographic.com), UNHCR (unhcr.org), and Thrive Global (thriveglobal.com).

Criteria for Assessing a Classic Grounded Theory Study: A Brief Methodological Review with Minimum Reporting Recommendations

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Abstract

Introduction: Reporting criteria for research studies are essential to assess the methods and to evaluate the usefulness of the findings. The purpose of this review was to identify the essential criteria to report a classic grounded theory (classic GT) study.

Method: A methodological review of the reporting criteria for a classic GT study.

Results: Grounded theory studies generally report theoretical sampling, theoretical saturation, memoing, and constant comparative analysis. In addition, classic GT studies reported unstructured interviews, a grand tour question, substantive and theoretical coding, and hypothetical probability statements. However, they did not report comprehensive literature reviews. An early focus on useability of the resulting theory was expanded to include criteria for fit, understandability, relevance, grab, general, work, control, and modifiability.

Conclusion: Essential criteria were identified for reporting grounded theory research with differentiations for classic GT. The classic GT criteria should be included as a reporting extension to complement the existing reporting guidelines.

Key Words: Classic grounded theory (Classic GT), theoretical sampling, theoretical coding, theoretical sensitivity, theoretical saturation, constant comparative analysis, grand tour question, reporting guidelines, peer-review, research evaluation, COREQ, SRQR, EQUATOR

Introduction

Recommended reporting criteria are essential for researchers developing a manuscript to guide the disclosure of their research methods and findings (Moher et al., 2008). This paper is the first in a series about the methodological processes and procedures that should be

disclosed in a manuscript reporting a classic grounded theory (classic GT) study. Reporting criteria are also important for reviewers tasked with evaluating the methodological quality of a manuscript reporting a qualitative research study. In this regard, the reviewer is responsible for carefully assessing the manuscript to identify study limitations requiring revision, or fatal flaws requiring rejection. All qualitative research methods have established procedures to demonstrate rigor and techniques to establish trustworthiness. The same is true for classic grounded theory.

The purpose of this methodological review is to identify the essential reporting criteria for qualitative research manuscripts reporting a classic GT study. First, an overview of the methods and results sections will be described in terms of the research protocol and the work to implement the study. Next, the minimum reporting criteria for a classic GT study are identified and discussed. Then, the importance of reporting criteria for a classic GT study are explained within the context of the two primary guidelines for reporting qualitative research. Finally, minimum reporting criteria for a classic GT study are recommended as an extension to strengthen existing guidelines for reporting qualitative research.

Research Designs and Protocol Development

The protocol for a research study is a plan for how a study will be conducted (Salkind, 2010). The protocol should be based on the methodological norms for the selected study design with a clear explanation about how the procedures will be operationalized. Researchers should cite the appropriate methodological literature to support the procedures. The protocol should guide the implementation of the research study. Although implementation should follow the protocol as closely as possible, minor variations are common occurrences, especially within the context of qualitative research. Any variation from the original research protocol, should be clearly identified and briefly justified. The protocol implementation should result in a manuscript that clearly and concisely reports the study findings in alignment with the research methods.

Criteria for Reporting the Research Methodology for a Classic Grounded Theory

When reviewing a manuscript reporting a grounded theory study, the first criterion for assessment is the demonstrated familiarity with the multiple approaches to grounded theory. The three most common approaches, or versions, for grounded theory studies are classic (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), Straussian (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), and constructivist (Charmaz, 2006). Although the approaches appear similar in the case of inexperienced researchers, there are unique characteristics for the research protocol of a classic GT study essential for reporting in the manuscript. For this reason, the reviewers need to be able to clearly identify the approach, understand the justification, and assess the implementation.

Avoiding a preliminary literature review is a basic tenet of classic GT (Glaser, 1978). Thus, reviewers should examine whether a preliminary literature was conducted. There are times when a researcher must conduct a preliminary literature review, for example, to meet the requirements of a university or ethics review board. In these cases, the reviewer should look for a statement about how the researcher limited the influence of the literature during the study implementation.

A classic GT study should not begin with a predetermined research problem, whether it is based on literature or personal or professional experience (Glaser & Holton, 2004). Instead, within a classic GT study, the problem should emerge from the data analysis as the problem or issue that the people within the area of study are trying to resolve. Reviewers should be able to determine if the problem statement was developed in advance by the researcher or if it was discovered from an analysis of the data.

A general research question for a classic GT is articulated in general terms related to the topic area of the study. For example, a research question in a study on infertility may be framed as "what is the main concern (issues, problem) for people who are living with infertility, and how do they resolve this concern (issues, problem)?" This allows for the problem and theory to emerge from the data. Similarly, a purpose statement for the same study may be something like "The purpose of this study is to develop a theory about the main concern (issues, problem) for people who are living with infertility and the patterns of behaviors used to resolve this concern (issues, problem)." The purpose statement should indicate generating theory as a primary part of the purpose. Regardless of the exact wording used in the research question and purpose statement, the reviewer should consider if the question and purpose statement are sufficiently broad to allow both the problem and a theory about the patterns of behaviors used to address the problem to emerge from the data.

The next area for a review to consider is the sample and method of sampling. Within a classic GT study, the sample is comprised of people who have firsthand knowledge and experience within the topic area of study. However, later participants are selected based on theoretical sampling. Theoretical sampling involves analyzing each piece of data as it is collected and prior to the collection of the next piece of data so that the data analysis can guide what data to collect next (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Within all the approaches to grounded theory, theoretical sampling is the specific sampling technique to support theory development. The technique guides the researchers to determine what data is needed to facilitate reaching theoretical saturation, the point where no new variations are among the significant concepts are found in the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Due to the nature of theoretical sampling, the size of the sample cannot be predetermined. Some theories may have a small sample of 10-20 while other theories may have much larger samples. The sample size depends on the quality of the data and the scope of the theory. The reviewer should identify whether the initial sample seems appropriate to the topic area (i.e., did they have firsthand experience?), whether data were analyzed one piece at a time, and whether theoretical sampling was used to determine what data were needed next.

The purpose of grounded theory is to generate a theory, rather than suggest or verify a theory. Thus, the types of data and how they are collected and analyzed should align with this purpose. While classic GT may use any type of data (Glaser, 1998), interviewing is the most common form of data collection. When interviewing participants, researchers use unstructured, in-depth interviews with a broadly worded question about the topic area called the grand tour question (Simmons, 2010). Building on the previous examples, a grand tour question might ask "Can you tell me about your experience with infertility?" The question invites participants to discuss what is significant to them within the topic area. Probing questions are then used to focus on only the topics brought up by the

participants. While engaging in theoretical sampling, the grand tour question usually changes and become less "grand" as the researcher works to theoretically saturate various aspects of the emerging theory. Reviewers should initially determine if unstructured, in-depth interviews along with probing questions were used for the research. Reviewers should question the fidelity to the classic GT if the researchers reported semi-structured or structured interviews.

Data analysis procedures in classic GT involves substantive coding, which includes open and selective coding, and theoretical coding later in the process (Glaser, 1978). Constant comparative analysis is central to data analysis in any grounded theory study, and memos are used to capture the theoretical ideas generated from constant comparative analysis (Glaser, 1965). Two aspects of data analysis often missed when reporting the protocol and implementation are sorting and creating a theoretical outline. These are tied to theoretical coding, which helps the researcher identify the theoretical structure for the resulting theory (Glaser, 1978). The reviewer should carefully determine whether all components of the data analysis are included, especially constant comparative analysis, as critical reporting elements.

After sorting and creating a theoretical outline, the final step is to "write up" the theory. At this point in the process, relevant examples are included in the theory and external evidence from the literature is referenced (Holton & Walsh, 2017). The structure and presentation of the theory is the result or research product. This is the next area for reviewers to evaluate for a classic GT study.

Criteria for Reporting Research Findings from a Classic Grounded Theory Study

For grounded theory, first and foremost, the results should be a theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The theory that results should identify the theoretical concepts and relationships which are often expressed as hypothetical probability statements (Yalof, 2014). Hypothetical probability statements (Glaser, 1978) explain how one concept interacts with and affects another concept. Thus, the theory should be written conceptually (i.e., about the concepts) and theoretically (i.e., about the relationships). The product/result should not describe the data or participants as is common in many qualitative approaches. Thus, the theory should not reference the participants unless using them as an example of a theoretical concept or relationship. It should also not produce themes, as thematic analysis does.

Constant comparative analysis (Glaser, 1965) leads to the discovery of a core category (Glaser, 2002), which is the central pattern of behavior that addressed the problem that emerged from the data. In some literature, the core category is used interchangeably with core variable (Glaser, 1965, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and core concept (Glaser, 2014). The core category is the central idea of the theory that explains how people within the area of study resolve what is problematic to them. All the other concepts in the theory relate to this core category and help explain it. The reviewer should first determine if the theory clearly identifies a core category and the centrality to the theory. Then the reviewer should determine if the other concepts relate to the centrality of theory and help explain the core category.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) recognized grounded theory required criteria to define the unique research design and, more importantly, to evaluate the resulting theory. When Glaser and Strauss (1967) first articulated grounded theory as a method, they presented criteria focused on establishing the useability of the theory. With time, Glaser (1978, 1998) expanded the criteria to include fit, understandability, relevance, grab, general, work, control, modifiability. These criteria are met by a theory grounded in the data.

The theory must closely *fit* the data and the substitute area. Because it fits the data and substantive areas, the theory should be *understandable* and *relevant* to both professionals and laypersons concerned with the area (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). When a theory is understandable and relevant is often has g*rab,* meaning it is interesting and is memorable (Glaser, 1978) to those within the substantive area. In addition, the theory must also be *general* enough to be "applicable to a multitude of diverse daily situations within the substantive area" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 237), allowing it to *work* by "explain[ing] what happened, predict[ing] what will happen and interpret[ing] what is happening" (Glaser, 1978, p. 4) in the substantive area and allowing the user a degree of *control* within the situation. Finally, the theory should also be *modifiable* as new data is introduced and as the substantive area changes over time.

When reviewing the "write up" of a theory, the reviewer should make sure the theory goes beyond merely describing concepts by explaining the relationships among the concepts. As mentioned earlier, these are often expressed as hypothetical probability statements that clarify how one concept influences other concepts within the context of the theory. Furthermore, Glaser (1998) discussed the need for a classic GT to be parsimonious. Thus, the theory should only contain the concepts that represent the applicable patterns of behavior and that are necessary to explain, predict and interpret what is occurring with the substantive area.

Beyond the criteria presented by Glaser and Strauss (Glaser, 1978, 1998; Glaser & Strauss, 1967), reviewers should also examine several elements related to how the theory is written. Simmons (personal communication May 25, 2004) explained that when "writing up" the theory, theoretical concepts are presented and discussed prior to providing examples from the data or the related relevant literature. Examples should be limited in use and primarily used to illustrate concepts or relationships that maybe clarified using an example. The theory should be written in the present tense with only examples from the data expressed in past tense.

Grounded Theory Research and Existing Reporting Guidelines

Appropriate criteria to assess the quality of a manuscript reporting a research study depends on many factors including the research approach, study design, methods, findings, and limitations (Guyatt et al., 2008). Although there has been robust development of standard reporting criteria for most quantitative study designs (Simera et al., 2010), there has been minimal advancement for qualitative research. With inadequate reporting of qualitative study designs, reviewers cannot adequately assess the trustworthiness and rigor of a research manuscript and the readers are unable to interpret the validity of the data and the strength of the findings. Arguably, the lack of a reporting checklist and limited reviewer

knowledge about existing classic GT reporting criteria has contributed to the remodeling of the method (Glaser & Holton, 2004).

Enhancing the Quality and Transparency of Health Research

The EQUATOR (Enhancing the QUAlity and Transparency Of health Research) Network established in 2006 is an international initiative that seeks "to improve the reliability and value of published health research literature by promoting transparent and accurate reporting and wider use of robust reporting guidelines" (Equator Network, 2021, p. 5) They have published evidence-based reporting guidelines (Altman et al., 2008) organized within eleven main study areas specific to study designs, methodological strategies, procedures and techniques, sections of manuscripts, and protocol development. For qualitative research, there are two main reporting guidelines, including the Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Studies (Tong et al., 2007), or COREQ, and the Standards for Reporting Qualitative Research (O'Brien et al., 2014), or SRQR. Although the guidelines provide checklists for reporting the minimum criteria for a qualitative research study, neither provides appropriate criteria for reporting a properly constructed and rigorously conducted grounded theory study (Leyva-Moral et al., 2021).

Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Studies

Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Studies (COREQ) checklist was developed to support the adequate reporting of methodological criteria for interviews and focus group study designs. The 32-items in the checklist are recommendations derived from the literature for reporting studies using interviews and focus groups for data collection. The items are organized into three domains including research team and reflexivity, study design, and analysis and findings. The subdomains with individual criteria for quality reporting are specifically focused on the study design attributes associated with the trustworthiness and rigor of the interviews. As such, the COREQ is too narrowly focused to be useful for evaluating the special features defining a classic GT study.

Standards for Reporting Qualitative Research

Developed from an assessment of the qualitative research literature, the Standards for Reporting Qualitative Research (SRQR) checklist improves the transparency of reporting 'all aspects' of qualitative research. The 32-item checklist is more comprehensive in scope than the COREQ with the criteria for reporting organized into six areas aligned with the standard manuscript sections for reporting a qualitative study. The areas include title and abstract, introduction, methods, results and findings, discussion, and others (disclosures). Whereas the COREQ is heavily concentrated on reporting key criteria for conducting interviews, the SRQR is focused on the research design including reporting the data collection processes and analysis. In the context of classic GT, the SRQR is too broad to cover the narrow but essential reporting criteria identified in this article as conceptualized by the original, unmodified, works of Glaser.

Conclusion

This article identified the essential methodological criteria for reporting a classic GT study. The evaluation of a classic GT study requires a reviewer to determine how the study was constructed (protocol) and how the study was conducted (implementation) based upon essential reporting criteria. Despite the existing reporting criteria for classic GT studies, the current qualitative reporting guidelines are too general to identify a manuscript with an inadequate study design or attempts to remodel the method based upon researcher preferences. As such, the classic GT criteria discussed in this article should be incorporated into existing guidelines to preserve the integrity and rigor of grounded theory as a distinct research method. The criteria identified in this review should be included as a classic GT study design extension in the EQUATOR framework to support the existing qualitative reporting guidelines.

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Susan Stillman holds an ED. D in Educational Leadership from Fielding Graduate University, a Certificate of Advanced Graduate Study in Social Emotional Learning from VT College, and an M.Ed. from Antioch New England. She is currently on the faculty of Antioch University Online, working directly with students interested in social emotional learning. Formerly Director and now Emeritus Director of Education at Six Seconds, Dr. Stillman supports practitioners and researchers around the world who wish to study and practice emotional intelligence and social emotional learning. Prior professional roles include K-12 school counselor and licensed professional counselor. At Fielding Graduate University, Dr. Stillman was mentored by Dr. Odis Simmons, one of the pre-eminent ground theory theorists and teachers in the world. At Fielding and other universities, Dr. Stillman taught grounded theory, mentored grounded theory students, served on numerous dissertation committees.

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Judith Wright, EdD, co-founder and Chief Academic Officer of the Wright Graduate University for the Realization of Human Potential is a pioneer in the field of human development and the best-selling author of five books. She first rose to national prominence developing model demonstration programs for college students with disabilities and innovative programs for children with developmental disabilities. Wright earned a certificate of concentration in grounded theory under Odis Simmons and Tony Gregory. Her subsequent ten-year grounded theory research initiative explores the process of and components for living a great life. This research forms the basis for the theory of Evolating, informing curriculum impacting tens of thousands of people globally. Dr. Wright holds a BA in psychology, an MA in education and counseling, and an EdD in Educational Leadership and Change.