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From the Editor

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From the Editor

This issue of the Review has given us an opportunity to focus on a substantive theme. In addressing key concerns of modern working life, the grounded theories (GTs) presented here give us a glimpse into the complexity of the world of work in the 21st century. Presenting these papers together also reminds us of the power of grounded theory to tap into such complexity and offer us insightful explanations for how such issues and concerns may be processed or resolved.

Work is fundamental to the human condition. We are a sense seeking, problem solving, creative species; to engage and produce is central to our being. Yet, there are challenges manifest in achieving our work-related goals. Perhaps more than anything, we have an innate need to reduce the cognitive dissonance in our environment (Festinger, 1957).

The GTs offered in this issue identify some key concerns that create levels of dissonance for many workers – the sense of insufficient time, the pressures of accelerated work loads, of persistent and unpredictable change, of work-related stress and injury, of striving to sustain our creative edge. These matters challenge many modern workers. The theories offered here explain how workers cope – how they process and resolve these key concerns.

My GT (**Rehumanising Knowledge Work through Fluctuating Support Networks**) suggests that knowledge workers seek the social support of like minds to overcome the dehumanising impacts of persistent and unpredictable change in their work and work environments. This informal, self-organising response not only rehumanises their work situations but it ignites passion for collaboration, creativity, learning and innovation. Hans Thulesius and colleagues (**Reincentivizing Work: A grounded theory of work and sick leave**) address

an issue of increasing concern for many organizations – the cost and the challenges presented by increasing rates of workplace absenteeism due to stress and injury. The theory of reincentivizing explains how, once a worker's drive to work has been undermined, it becomes a challenge just to return to the workplace and then identifies a number of drivers and traps that mediate the return to work process. Understanding impaired work drives becomes essential in devising strategies to facilitate - to reincentivize - the return to work. It is interesting to note rehumanising among the strategies offered for reincentivizing.

Astrid Gynnild (**Creative Cycling of News Professionals**) addresses the fundamental need of journalists for fulfillment through creative achievement – the need to make their contribution, to create and to do so in spite of the increasing pressures and challenges of the modern media production environment. The theory suggests that journalists sustain their ability to be innovative and productive through a process of creative cycling whereby they moderate and shift focus between periods of productive processing, breaks and shifts and inspirational forays. This process of skill development enables them to achieve output as required while protecting personal energy reserves and remaining open to the creative inspirations that can emerge unexpectedly and offer cherished opportunities for the unique contributions that distinguish a journalistic career. Gynnild's theory also identifies the dehumanizing impact of the modern newsroom with its siloed, time intense production format and proposes a need to rehumanise the news production environment.

Time pressures are the focus of theories offered by Helen Scott (**The Temporal Integration of Connected Study into a Structured Life**) and by Graham Kenealy and Susan Cartwright (**The Temporal Sensitivity of Enforced Accelerated Work Pace: A grounded theory building approach**). Scott's theory explains the process by which we attempt to integrate new commitments into already structured – and often time-challenged – schedules and how often, despite the best intentions and efforts to juggle and struggle to meet competing demands, we have to reassess our ability to do so and

our commitment to sustaining the effort and the sacrifices involved. Scott proposes an algorithmic calculation to express this process of evaluation.

Kenealy and Cartwright explore the impact of radical change on working conditions and the response of workers to the pressures created through a phenomenon that they term “enforced accelerated work pace”, an organization-level approach to addressing radical change in the environment. Particularly under tight time constraints and with limited resources, the “give” in the system falls to the workers. It is they who are relied upon to bring a project through to success; but, as Kenealy and Cartwright propose, sustaining these expectations over time becomes a challenge to which workers become resistant, suffering conditions of fatigue, psychological detachment and withdrawal. Again, one can readily see in Kenealy and Cartwright’s theory indicators of a progressively dehumanised work environment.

These papers offer conceptually rich explanations for some significant latent patterns of behaviour in modern working life. Concepts like rehumanising, reincentivizing, creative cycling, temporal integration and enforced accelerated work pace transcend the particular substantive studies from which they have emerged to form a basic lexicon that would receive nodding acknowledgement from many in the modern workforce. Each concept, as well, connotes general implications for aspects of life well beyond the workplace. For instance, one can readily recognize rehumanising efforts in many alternative health practices, alternatives to mainstream religions, alternative schools, organic food production, the slow food movement, even internet dating to transcend siloed lives! We can talk readily of reincentivizing our children to complete obligations, of reincentivizing ourselves to carry through on exercise and diet resolutions; of cycling activities to sustain momentum while warding off boredom and fatigue; of integrating commitments to achieve balance and manage conflicts.

The conceptual power of these papers transcends the particularistic details of the varied data sources employed in their analysis and theoretical development. From substantive areas as

varied as journalism, computer studies, management and health care, the authors have employed a wide range of data including personal interviews (both face-to-face and on-line), focus groups, casual observations and conversations, field notes, secondary analysis of interview data collected for other studies, statistical reports, corporate records, conference proceedings and empirical studies. It is fitting therefore, to commence this issue with Dr. Glaser's reminder that, "**All is Data**". This paper originally appeared as Chapter 11 of *The Grounded Theory Perspective: Conceptualization contrasted with description* (Sociology Press, 2001) and we include it here as an important reminder that as grounded theorists, we have the opportunity and responsibility to recognize and utilize all available sources of data in our analyses as essential to knowing and being able to explain what is really going on. In conceptualizing, we transcend the specifics of people, time and place and with this, the constraints imposed by the concerns of some other research methodologies with requirements for worrisome accuracy, full and detailed descriptive coverage and ethical commitments to privacy and informed consent. We use the data as we find it to explain the pattern of behaviour at issue. It is this conceptual power dimension that positions grounded theory as not simply for theorists but also for practitioners and the participants in our studies. This power is a primary reason that many of us are drawn to GT. We are motivated to develop theory that really matters, theory that is "vital, relevant and yields high impact main concerns" (Glaser, 1995, p.4).

- Judith A. Holton, Ph.D.

Festinger, L. (1957). *The Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*.
Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Glaser, B.G. (1995). *Grounded Theory: 1984-1994*. Mill Valley,
CA: Sociology Press.