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Comments on the reviews of Kaplan, S. (2008). Children in genocide: Extreme traumatization and affect regulation. London: International Psychoanalytical Association

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My choice of grounded theory as research approach has been made against the background of three factors. The *first and foremost* is that my research interest evolved when I carried out two interviews with survivors who were children themselves during the Holocaust, i.e. *from the data*. The information that I obtained gave me a strong sense of urgency, a motivation, to try to understand the major concerns for child survivors, based on their own perspective. I decided to start doctoral studies after many years in clinical practice. My interest thus emerged from the interviews and not from an existing theory. Grounded theory is a method that sticks closely to the empirical and that aims to create theoretical models based on the development of concepts, of relationships between concepts and of theories concerning social and psychological processes from a certain aspect tied to a special context (Glaser, 1978).

Secondly, only little research has been devoted to the area of child survivors of genocide. Even if psychodynamic theory was in the back of my head, grounded theory was of immense importance in keeping earlier professional experiences and ‘established’ theories away.

Last but not least, I have received many important impulses in connection with Glaser’s lectures and workshops at Stockholm University in 1999 and 2001, respectively. There are some ongoing discussions as to how strict a researcher must be in order to designate his or her research as grounded theory named as ‘classical’ or ‘ideal’. Also Glaser states (1998, p.16), “... partial doing grounded theory by stopping before the package is finished is better than no doing at all”.

The pilot study “Child survivors and child bearing” (Kaplan, 2008, Chapter 3) can be seen as a theoretical sketch to which I returned several times during the research process as this was

the entry to a hypotheses that child survivors do not seem to experience themselves being in their chronological age. Thus the code 'age distorting' emerged. Starrin et al. (1991) stress the importance of theoretical sketches during the course of research work, since these purport to connect the data with the final analysis. Later, the dynamic between the psychological phenomena that I conceptualized as 'perforating' and 'space creating' respectively emerged as an explaining connection in the context of genocide. This is what I meant by "association" in the text, a concept that may be misunderstood. The pilot study, an extended doctoral study on Holocaust child survivors and a post doctoral study in Rwanda have formed the basis for my empirically grounded theory presented in the book *Children in Genocide: Extreme traumatization and affect regulation*. Through the study in Rwanda I wished to find more data that could be relevant for the emerging theory. I got access to different kinds of data through the similar and different characters of the two contexts, and through the descriptions of old incidents and rather recent incidents. These were two different places and cultures, but maybe similar phenomena, thus also a widening and deepening of data.

My working through of the interview material started with an ambition to be open in the face of this material, with a minimum of preconceived notions, and a refusal to describe the psychological phenomena that came forth in terms of illness. "Pattern search is survey modeled as it aggregates incidents like surveys aggregate people. And then the task is to start relating these conceptual patterns to generate a theory using theoretical codes" (Glaser, 1998 p. 31). I was eager not to analyze my data according to appears post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) diagnostics following established practice. Instead, I intended to let the material lead me towards emerging concepts and a theoretical model that explains what happened in the minds of the survivors, and how it occupied their thoughts and feelings. Continuous memo writings and comparisons between incidents and later - emerging concepts - lead me eventually to a dynamic model that I call the 'affect propeller', that does not lock the individuals' acts into finished categories, but instead it shows the steadily ongoing fluctuation of affects in the individual and in relation to his environment. This could refer to social psychological processes – such as i.e. risks of revenge actions in Rwanda (Kaplan, 2008 p. 215). The 'affect propeller' is a model

about the theory to make it more comprehensible - one way to illustrate the concepts of the multivariate theory and by which you may develop relationships between concepts and characteristics of these. The theory is contained in the description of the affect propeller. Generational collapse is one core category and affect regulation is another one and the two are interrelated. The main concern in affect regulation is about the individual's psychic inner balance and thereby survival.

The conflict between telling what happened in practice – the dramatic empirical data – and the clarification of abstract patterns from the reality that has been studied is always a difficulty. Concerning the descriptions of the historical process for child survivors, my intention has been to show the development of social processes in the context they have been living in. There was a change in the preconditions for social life during different time periods of persecution and liberation, as described in the interviews. Similar incidents were compared and the codes were merged and thus enriched. Moreover, people cannot engage if a book only contains mainly abstract concepts – you need also actual examples. I want people with varied research – and professional backgrounds - to be able to read it. In retrospect, I can see that there would have been a value in having a section about methods in an appendix, but as Glaser says (1998, p.41): “Ideally, making grounded theory one's own in order to legitimate a research should be handled briefly with referral to the grounded theory books” and “Its (GT: s) merits emerges with the impact and relevance of the generated theory...otherwise all is talk.”

I would not have been able to reach this result without the hypotheses that were possible to formulate through the work of grounded theory method. The psychoanalytically coloured categories have not been the starting point, but turned out to be categories that got their place in the theory in an emerging way. However, I adapted the writing of the paper to a certain standard in order to meet, among others, an audience of psychoanalysts. Neither have I used the map of psychoanalytic concepts as a code family for the theoretical coding.

Moreover these categories got another meaning in this multihypothetical form than they have as conventional psychoanalytic concepts. They have other relationships and characteristics, thus another meaning. It is rather the case that

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psychoanalysts seem to learn something new from these changed concepts. An article (Kaplan, 2006) about the emerging theory that is included in the book, chapter 8, has been awarded the 2007 Hayman Prize (International Psychoanalytic Association) for published work pertaining to traumatized children and adults – with the motivation, “A great contribution to psychoanalytic theory on the subject of the psychological damage...” (Ungar, chair of Prize committee 2007 cited in Kaplan, 2008). I am following how users of my theory are working in practice and how they evaluate it, so I can validate my theory through its “relevance, fit and work.” I then pursue my work from there - and the emerging concepts and the theoretical model the ‘affect propeller’ has proven to be useful both for researchers and clinical practitioners working with traumatized children and adults within different fields of health care. Also, Glaser (1998) discusses in chapter 6 that the value of every single article is shown by how well it uses the techniques of GT and how well this is mirrored in the result, which often turn out to be important concepts of great value.

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