
Letters to the editor

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The author of the letter that appeared in ANS 17:1 is **Jeannette Hughes Archer**, University of Chicago Hospital, Chicago, Illinois.

To the editor:

I am writing in response to Carol Montgomery's¹ article, "Swimming upstream: The strengths of women who survive homelessness" in *Advances in Nursing Science* 16:3.

I'm in full agreement with the concept of this model. A way to motivate people is through their strengths and personal resources. Perhaps this way of approaching the problem of homelessness in women is a strategy that would be successful. Another model presently in existence is Orem's self-care perspective, which increases utilization of services by fostering dignity and self-esteem. Dignity and self-esteem also surface when one is able to use his or her strengths and personal resources. I also agree that there should be more efforts to correct the deficiencies within our economic and social institutions that create the conditions for homelessness.

However, I feel that this preliminary investigation to discover the sources of personal

strength in homeless women has biased overtones. There was no random selection, and the hand-picked population was much too small. I also frowned on telling each participant that she was an expert. This assumption may lead them to fabricate their recollections.

The only commonalities these women had were the following:

1. none of them were diagnosed with mental illness, and
2. they had been homeless at one time while raising their children.

Therefore, their cultural or environmental backgrounds were not equivalent, which meant that their perceptions on evaluating success should not have been measured as equally.

This brief study could be a beginning solution to a continuing present social dilemma. As a nurse presently working in community health, I can see how it could be of clinical value to the nurse-client relationship. Developing this model as a teaching tool may help one bring to the surface that which has been repressed by social misfortunes. Therefore, I feel that further investigation is needed and, with less bias, would be beneficial.

REFERENCE

1. Montgomery C. Swimming upstream: the strengths of women who survive homelessness. *ANS*. 1994;16(3): 34-45.

—**Ercerly Brockington, RN, BSN**
Daniel Hale Williams Health Center
Chicago, Illinois

Response from the author:

I refer Ms. Brockington to *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* by Glaser and Strauss¹ and *Naturalistic Inquiry* by Lincoln and Guba² (as well as other references listed in the article) for the theoretical approach to this study. Random sampling, for example, is not appropriate for a grounded theory investigation. Instead,

participants are purposefully "hand picked" through a process of theoretical sampling to represent different aspects of the emerging theory. The goal of the researcher is not objectivity but clarity about the assumptions and biases with which one enters the study. Purposefully selecting women who would best represent the strengths of this population is a "bias" that is consistent with the stated purpose of the study.

I agree that models such as Orem's self-care perspective can be very useful in working with this population. I hope that my research can contribute to our understanding of self-care by discovering the foundations of self-care for this population from their perspective. Unless we have a deep understanding of the experience of these women, we risk imposing our own assumptions about what we think is best for them.

Ms. Brockington is correct in noticing the small sample. In grounded theory, sampling continues until saturation is reached with all of the major categories. While this was done, many questions were left unanswered with regard to specific properties, and more research needs to be done. This study was a preliminary one. A much more comprehensive investigation has recently been funded by the National Institutes of Health and will continue to explore the questions that have been raised. Thank you for your interest in this study.

REFERENCES

1. Glaser BG, Strauss AL. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. New York, NY: Aldine; 1967.
2. Lincoln YS, Guba E. *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Beverly Hills, Calif: Sage; 1985.

—Carol Montgomery, RN, PhD, CS

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