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Boy's Talk

– using Grounded Theory to identify key aspects of Men's shed talk



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Application of Grounded Theory to reveal key categories in a typical Shed Chat-Face

Dear Reader: This exhibit is developed from the following exhibit in this issue:

Wildman, P. (2016). *CRAFT as Doula to the Archaic Renaissance via: (A) Vygotsky's CHAT (Cultural Historical Activity Theory), (B) Hand knowledge (Men's) spirituality, (C) Jung's call to give birth to the ancient in a new time, and, (D) Confucian collaborative engaged agency and, (E) my work towards an Archaic Renaissance through CAP (Critical Artificer Praxis viz. head, heart and hands learning), and Grounded Theory*. Brisbane: The Kalgrove Institute. 30 pgs.

Praxis background for this exhibit

From a praxis perspective this exhibit draws from an extensive 15year background in Men's Shed's and Grounded Theory, covering some 100 or so conversations, see details are below.^{1, 2 & 3}

NB1: Grounded Theory: These categories and attributes come out from applying the Qualitative Research Methodology of Grounded Theory to my observations of the approximately 100 conversations I have observed, and been part of, between men in various situations in Brisbane Australia from 2007 to 2016 among primarily Caucasian males 50+². They are in no way prescriptive, objective or necessarily generalisable.

NB2: Rationale for this Exhibit: This exhibit is an attempt, in part, to outline the key attributes of Men's Talk as there is no direct counterpart of a Doula for Men so to speak. Girls Talk I submit may well be, I submit, around the facilitating and relating part and parcel of the Doula process. The closest I can come up with is the phenomenon known in Australia as the Men's Shed Movement (presently the fastest growing NGO network in Australia). So it is to this movement that we now turn.

Grounded Theory (GT) methodology

The above discussions form the experiential background for this section and thereby in large part this exhibit. I then applied Grounded theory, similar to the process used in the CRAFT issue on Archaic Renaissance <http://www.crafters-connect.com/craft-issue-8/> which includes my three eBooks, to my notes and memories of these discussions to elicit the key common attributes and thence key categories thereof therefrom. In short I sought to derive, or identify, the patterns of the past/meta data from this field data.³

¹ Further the title is an aside to Dave Edmund's 'Girls Talk' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TTkhBuNdMgY> cp. Girls Talk Boys <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0MXldocLfu4>

² (1) My two year involvement in the Nundah Men's Shed, Brisbane, Australia (2103-2015) where I listened to, and often participated in, some 70 or so men's yarns, or as I call them 'Chat-Faces'

(2) Ongoing interview discussions with the four Bush Mechanics (2001-2005) conducted for the original research for the three Bush Mechanic/Artificer eBooks

(3) The two full cycles of Action Learning Circles (ALC) (an Adult Learning Modality) Community Economy Development ALC (jointly with Life Long Learning Qld and Learning Circles Australia) 2005, and Biochar ALC (jointly with the Australian Biochar Project – Kunghur NSW) conducted 2012-2014 each with six circle meetings of around 10 folks attending (usually the same for each of the two circles) each meeting (15 yarns)

(4) As well as various other such discussions drawing from the Brisbane Hot Futures group 2001- (10 yarns). All up I estimate that around 100 such discussions, many of which I participated in, form the basis of this section of this exhibit within my overall 15year Action Research/CHAT/CAP Project commenced in 2001.

³ Dick (2000, 2007), Geertz (1983), Glasser (1995), Wildman (2002, 2007a, b, 2008, 2009 & 2013). I have applied GT several times over the past 20years generally in collaboration and with the supervision of Dr Bob Dick, particularly in relation to my 15year (Artificer): Bush Mechanics Action Research Project which generated three eBooks (2008, 2009 and 2013).



Outcome Grounded Theory attributes and attribute categories

I kept field notes, and experiences I had, during this process. Categories 2&3, and 5&7 may cluster together and thus be subsets of still larger categories. In systems theory this is called ‘chunking-up’ to a category that incorporates all the previous attributes. Thus the collective categories are grounded in field notes from observing, and participating in, sharing lived lives. In turn these grounded categories can be related and thus can form the basis for a theory.

Such a ground up approach to theory generates what is called ‘Local Theory’ that doesn’t seek to be universal or valid in a narrowly understood scientific manner. Generally speaking scientific theory is that is called ‘Grand Theory’ such as say $E=MC^2$ and is thereby top down and ‘supposedly’ universal that is applies across time and space. Grounded Theory is in many regards the counterpoint to this hubris.

Now in applying Grounded Theory I sought to identify, and then categorise, the key attributes of a ‘shed/shop chat-face’ that, to my experience, are a typical chat in a break in a kitchen, shed, garden etc. These are the ‘shed shanty’s’, ‘crafters corner conversations’ or more directly ‘artificer yarns’ and so forth, as I call them. These are almost always ‘face to face’ and colloquial and thus may be called ‘chat-face’.

In undertaking this process I found the following **27 attributes** collected into some **7 categories for these attributes**.

In my experience and research such conversations interweave, or more correctly intervolve,⁴ the following:⁵

⁴ Intervolve: to roll, wind, or involve, one within another yet keep distinct.

⁵ So in summary and overview these categories and attributes come out applying the Qualitative Research Methodology of Grounded Theory to my observations of the approximately 100 conversations I have observed, and been part of, between men in Shed situations in Brisbane Australia from 2007 to 2016 among primarily Caucasian males 50+. They are in no way prescriptive, objective or necessarily generalisable.

Emergent Grounded Theory Attributes of 'Boy's Talk'

(1) Lived Life Narrative (within an)

1. Narrative that draws its source context from **the lived life** experiences of the teller and braids around **Tips**, **Tools**, **Tales**, **Techniques** expressed and incorporated in, **Tasks**
2. As such incorporates a sort of interactive Action/Artificer Learning - **Head**
3. Identification with, and through, a shared project/object/exemplar⁶
4. Within a relatively relaxed informal, non-urgent, reflexive ambience

(2) Informal Format (using)

5. Braided the 5T's are braided into an informal exchange drawn around the lived life of the teller



6. Informal collaborative multi-faceted format whereby **Tales** are braided poly-focus informal heuristic dialogic narrative (family chat about something or other) woven around the tellers lived life, rather than expert uni-focused algorithmic formulaic monologue (giving a conference paper, pilots flying a plane, Ikea flat pack assembly instructions!!!!)
7. Relatively spontaneous within say a 'smoko/kitchen cabinet/gardeners corner/workbench chat' feel/format
8. Informal asides with humour, pathos, insights and ahha moments
9. Usually undertaken insitu i.e. in a workplace in an informal circle format with up to 5 plus or minus two men participating (I have seen it work with a dozen men however that is unusual – in my experience)

(3) Inclusive Governance (which is)

10. With a fluid collaborative, informal power structure,
11. Open governance and agenda
12. Not PC

(4) Collaboratively Practical (and)

13. Practical **Tips** on chosen **tasks** and topics and with **handy** hints
14. How-to's/**techniques** on **Tool** use and craft fabrication inc. step-by-step-how-I-did-this⁷
15. This circle is stablished WITHIN the direct task & its environment (with workplace ambience present i.e. smell, sight, touch, sound, tools, pots, pans, forks, spades, drills, sewing 'yarn', sawdust etc.)
16. Critical i.e. includes what worked and what didn't and ways to improve in future as well as awareness of the 'big picture'
17. As such incorporates a sort of interactive Action/Artificer Learning

(5) Convivial (in a)

18. Intervolvement of relationships involved around same⁸
19. **Heart**/Emotional investment/introjection into the story/tale/narrative
20. Relationships oriented inc. those with people, animals, and matter involved

⁶ → Gen 3 CHAT (Stetsenko/Vygotsky) Cultural Historical Activity Theory

⁷ → Gen 1 CHAT Stetsenko/Vygotsky) This term are expanded in the original Exhibit from which this section is drawn. The term is not material in this section however it is included for broader reference of the reader should she wish to read the full original Exhibit/article Wildman (2016a)

⁸ → Gen 2 CHAT (Stetsenko/Vygotsky)

21. Conviviality, even humour, braided with earnestness



(6) Non-reductive (and)

- 22. An aside to theory yet is always conscious of ‘the big picture’ i.e. NOT reductionist
- 23. Mutual-Aid and non-commercial often overtly so e.g. sharing recipe processes
- 24. ‘Joins The Dots’ of content and meaning though in quite different life arenas are linked

(7) Yin orientated (way)

- 25. Collaborative, inclusive/mutual aid/nurturing/journey oriented in contrast to the conventional individualistic/competitive/finish line oriented
- 26. ‘Yinyi’ (not bitchy witchy talk though) rather than ‘Yangie’ (see below) i.e. girl’s talk rather than boy’s mucho macho talk (I suspect)
- 27. Focused more on helping others achieve/learn/grow a task than expositing on how great thou art with thou being me ⁹.

[Links to other aspects of my research](#)

As such this grounded discussion format and content meets, I submit, the six following principles of the Australian Bush Mechanic/Artificer which, in turn, have been generated through the application of Grounded Theory as detailed in the 3 eBooks of the 15year Australian Bush Mechanic Action Research Project viz.:

- 1 Exemplar project
- 2 Inner-outer Harmony
- 3 Social Holon/Mutual Aid
- 4 Global Problematique/Big Picture
- 5 Synergy/Harmony between the parts/holons
- 6 Action Learning/Learning by Doing.

Wildman (2008, 2009, 2013).

⁹ Such craft’ers discourse has many ‘yiny’ aspects and can seem a waste of time to many committed to ‘yangy’ type direct minimalist discourse (which very much as a role to play say in an emergency) as so many ancillary (to what?) topics are included, however for participants ‘tis the stuff of life’.

Conclusion

I posit that in a sense many of the above 27 CHAT/CAP attributes represent, existentially at least, those attributes that are vital for 'holding a safe space' for boy's talk to occur. These discussions then are part of a valorisation of the role of Artificer/Artisan/Hand Werker so to speak. This then in accordance with the definition of Doula as developed in this exhibit and in this Issue of CRAFT.

Potential applications of these categories could be in encouraging CRAFT type Boy's Talk type conversations in Shed situations plus for a consultant say going into a very practical knowledge/'blokey' type environment for discussions to ensure these 7 (or as many as practicable) were present and finally as a diagnostic in situations where the conversation is not 'working'. Please note these categories and 'boy's talk' in general is not meant as an alternative to formal legally required meetings with majoritarian voting and so forth, rather as a counterpart that is a supplement thereto.

Crucially though I remind folks that are looking to apply these categories they are NOT meant to be formal or mutually exclusive of other categories or ideas and are meant to be part of an informal conversation process. Once these are formalised the magic disappears and we are left with the formal dry structures of the officially sanctioned system – though this is necessary in certain circumstances e.g. AGM's etc.

PS1: I submit that, not co-incidentally, many of these attributes are also evident in children's play, in particular No's: 1, 2 (as socialisation), 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, and 14,

PS2: I suspect and posit many indigenous conversation streams may well parallel the relatively despised 'shed yarn' as I have attempted to explicate above.

PS3: I suspect and posit this is the form of conversation between Artificers relatively irrespective of gender or class.





The original Man Cave Round Table



References

[a] Acknowledgement

All graphics, in this exhibit, are public domain have been obtained from a Google search. To my mind the three quadrant circle jpg best illustrates CRAFT as a modality of education/ learning/pedagogy. This then is the multidimensional leaning space that the CRAFT doula seeks to hold via. HHH the following:

[b] Web

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<http://www.executivestyle.com.au/shedding-inhibitions-2hkzp>

[c] Text

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