

**ePortfolio Journal Assignment 2**

**My Grounded Theory Data and Analysis**

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## **ePortfolio Journal Assignment 2: My Grounded Theory Data and Analysis**

When I decided to investigate how nurses engage with nurse influencers on social media, I very much underestimated how easily overwhelmed I would become with the process of data collection, data analysis, and just beginning to work through the actual work of a grounded theory project. It was very easy to use that overwhelm to push this work asked in favour of the other work that I had to do that I was much more comfortable and familiar with rather than settling into the unknown. But as I see the incredible value that grounded theory brings to nursing research I need to commit to this process and get on with it to be able to complete my future work. So, here I will describe my process of working through the process of collecting and analysing my data for this grounded theory project.

### **Research Question**

As described in my prior journal assignment, through my doctoral program at the University of Saskatchewan I have become interested in the image of nursing and nurses, nursing stereotypes and how these stereotypes are perpetuated in various forms of media through history. This project is focused on social media, and on the phenomenon of nurse influencers (so called nursfluencers) and how nurses experience and engage with them on various social media platforms. This work fits well within my interest of the image of nursing in contemporary media, and fits within my broader research interests of moral distress, resilience, and hope that will be the focus of my doctoral work.

This project will attempt to develop a constructivist grounded theory analysis of nurses' engagement with nurse influencers on social media. The research questions that will guide this work are: how do nurses engage with nurse researchers on social media? How do nurses describe this engagement?

## Data Collection

Data collection began with purposive sampling, examining the social media platform Reddit initially. Reddit is largely anonymous, and it does not provide any personal or geographical data about the user, which met my concerns about ethics. Reddit offers groups known as sub-Reddits which are moderated by users to varying degrees, have rules of engagement, and many require verification of status to participate. The nursing sub-Reddits do not appear to be moderated by the “main” nurse influencers, which allow for free discussion and commenting, which contrasts with the various other social platforms such as Instagram, X and Threads, which the influencer can delete comments/turn off comments and thereby control the narrative. The main nursing sub-Reddits were searched, these included *r/nursing* (789000 users), *r/nurse* (86,207 users), and *r/nurses* (38,544 users). The search terms included *nurse influencer(s)* and *influencer(s)*.

The initial search within *r/nurse* and *r/nurses* did not yield many results, as they are smaller sub-Reddits, and have been funneled into *r/nursing*. The initial search for both search terms in *r/nursing* yielded approximately 137 posts with subsequent comments. These were screened for relevance to the phenomenon of interest, current within the last four years (none earlier than 2020), and in English. With these criteria in mind, 320 data points were included in the initial data collection from Reddit. This data was put into a Microsoft Word document for analysis.

## Coding

Coding data in qualitative research is the process of assigning a word or short phrase that “symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute” to a portion of data (Saldaña, 2021, p. 5). It is through coding the data in various phases that the

researcher can see the patterns and categories emerge and begin to develop the emerging theory (Charmaz, 2014; Chun Tie et al., 2019). When conducting constructivist grounded theory, Charmaz (2014) describes first completing initial coding, where the researcher sticks closely to the data. During this process I took the advice of both Irwin et al. (2024) and Saldaña (2021) and tried to code quickly and spontaneously, and to make use of in vivo codes.

As I moved from initial coding into focused coding where core categories begin to become more refined, I attempted to code using gerunds to attempt to illustrate the processes behind the data (Irwin et al., 2024). As I worked through the focused coding, I found categories emerging. These categories included: educating vs. entertaining, defining nurses' work, losing public trust, monetizing suffering, feeding the algorithm, and lacking heart and experience. I could see repetition in the posts and comments as I worked through the data, and as I continually went back to Reddit, I did not find any new data that added to the analysis. To be thorough and ensure theoretical sensitivity I sought data from additional social media sites, including Instagram, X, and Threads, where I searched the most frequently mentioned nurse influencers who appeared in the Reddit comments in my original search. Using the same inclusion criteria as with the original data collection, I was able to include 35 additional data points for analysis.

Charmaz (2014) describes theoretical coding as a level of coding that follows initial and focused coding, it is a sophisticated process and if used properly, can bring clarity to the final analysis. The theoretical codes can function like an umbrella (Saldaña, 2021), that help cover other core categories. This level of coding is still a work in progress as I continue to formulate the emerging grounded theory.

### **Analytic Memo Writing**

As described in Charmaz (2014) and Chun Tie et al. (2019) memo writing is an essential piece of the grounded theory process in all its various iterations. It is through the memo writing process that the researcher can make connections, engage in constant comparison, build their audit trail, document their thought process for decision making (Irwin et al., 2019). Writing the analytic memos was a significant learning process for me, initially I wrote them in a Word document. But I found myself wanting to write them with pen and paper as I could draw (poorly), use various colours, and it just felt like a nice change from using the computer. I enjoyed the process of using pen and paper, and I think that being able to pen to paper helped me work through the data in a different way. I used both a notebook, and post-it notes on a whiteboard to help me visualize the data once the codes were developed. What I will need to do as I continue to work through this process is to figure out a system for cataloging and saving my analytic memos for future reference (preserving the audit trail).

### **Next Steps**

The next steps that need to be undertaken are the development and generation of an emerging grounded theory that is comprehensive, well presented, and integrates my learning from this course. I will spend time revisiting and immersing myself in my data and in all levels of my codes and revisiting my analytic memos. I will be engaging in constant comparison, and examining the relationships between the codes and categories, and the categories to each other. I will continue to develop the theoretical codes until I am satisfied with the theoretical framework that has emerged. I am hoping that what I will develop will be an emerging grounded theory that can guide future research regarding nurses' engagement with social media and nurse influencer culture, and perhaps offer a small contribution to what is available about the image of nurses in contemporary (social) media.

As I move forward as a novice researcher/grounded theorist I am appreciating this work and opportunity to engage with grounded theory in this stepwise manner. I very much underestimated the amount of data that I would find, and how paralyzed I would feel at having to approach coding manually initially. However, after engaging with different resources I was able to tackle it and found my way through it. In the future I am very interested in looking into using software for data transcription and coding but will continue to use pen and paper for analytic memo writing.

## References

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