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1 CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS

In this volume, we present an introduction to *ideal-type analysis*, a qualitative method for analyzing data to construct typologies in research. Because we are researchers working within the field of psychology and psychotherapy, many of the studies described in this volume are psychological research studies. However, the methodology presented here is transferable to other research contexts. Indeed, ideal-type analysis has its roots in sociological research.

In this first chapter, we begin by defining what a typology is, explaining how ideal-type analysis fits into the qualitative research tradition, and describing the philosophical and epistemological positions underpinning this approach. We then go on to identify the key features that distinguish the ideal-type analysis approach to provide sufficient context for the more detailed description later in this volume of the practical steps to be followed in conducting an ideal-type analysis.

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CONSTRUCTING TYPOLOGIES IN PSYCHOLOGY

A *typology* is an ordered set of categories that can be used to organize and understand objects and people according to their similarities and differences (Mandara, 2003). The creation of typologies is not new in psychology. Over decades of research, psychologists have developed typologies of such constructs as parenting styles (e.g., Baumrind, 1991; Simons & Conger, 2007), personality types (e.g., Bohane et al., 2017; Vollrath & Torgersen, 2002), and coping strategies (e.g., Aldridge & Roesch, 2008; Vandoninck & d'Haenens, 2015) in their efforts to understand human behavior. For example, once we are offered the distinction between "permissive," "authoritarian," and "authoritative" parenting styles (Baumrind, 1991), a shape and pattern are given to the infinite variety of ways in which parents behave. These can then be used to make predictions about the world. For instance, we can hypothesize that a child whose parents have an authoritarian parenting style may be less creative at school than a child whose parents have an authoritative parenting style (Mehrinejad et al., 2015).

Although all of us may implicitly be identifying types in our daily lives all the time (e.g., "She is an introvert," "She is an extrovert"), research allows us to systematize this process. A typology is formed on the basis of a grouping process, whereby cases or research participants are divided into different types or groups on the basis of their common features. Thus, typologies provide the means for psychologists to "identify, organize, and systematically describe naturally occurring behavioral patterns of people in such a way that the wholeness of the people is retained" (Mandara, 2003, p. 132). As a rule, when developing a typology, the characteristics within a type should be as similar as possible, and the differences between the types should be as distinct as possible, so that the cases within a type resemble each other and there is sufficient heterogeneity between the types (Kluge, 2000).

Several methods have been used to form typologies in psychology research, some of which belong to a more quantitative research tradition, whereas others are more aligned with a qualitative or mixed-methods research tradition. Such methods include cluster analysis, which is a multivariate statistical method (e.g., Clatworthy et al., 2005; Henry et al., 2005); Q-methodology (e.g., Cross, 2005; Flurey et al., 2016) and qualitative comparative analysis (e.g., Legewie, 2013; Rihoux, 2003), which are mixed-methods data analysis techniques; and ideal-type analysis, which is a qualitative data analysis method (e.g., Stuhr & Wachholz, 2001; Wachholz & Stuhr, 1999; Werbart et al., 2011, 2016). While the methodologies of these techniques and the types of data that they work with differ, at the heart of

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all these approaches is the desire to condense or render more manageable large amounts of data, to enable meaningful comparisons to be made across a data set, and to create systematic groupings within the data.

Despite the utility and prominence of typologies within psychology, there is, in fact, little methodological guidance available to explain the process of constructing a typology, particularly as a qualitative method for analyzing data (Kluge, 2000). Although typology creation could follow, for example, from conducting a narrative analysis (Sharp et al., 2018) or a framework analysis (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994), ideal-type analysis is an important addition to the family of qualitative research methods because it offers a systematic, rigorous methodological approach specifically for the development of typologies from qualitative data (Gerhardt, 1994). However, compared with such approaches as thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA; Smith et al., 2009), ideal-type analysis has, to date, been relatively rarely used within the field of qualitative psychology research. Usage thus far has perhaps been most common among psychotherapy researchers, who have sought to explore clients' experiences of and ideas about therapy, with implications for clinical practice (McLeod, 2011). We propose in this volume that ideal-type analysis provides a way of studying the psychological world that has great value and offers something different to other better-known qualitative methods.

HISTORICAL AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF IDEAL-TYPE ANALYSIS

Origins of Ideal-Type Analysis

The ideal-type approach originated in the work of Max Weber (1904), one of the early pioneers in the field of sociology, who argued against a narrowly positivist view of knowledge, believing that all social research has an interpretative component. Weber was interested in understanding and explaining historical and social phenomena, processes, and events, such as the links between capitalism and the "protestant ethic" (Psathas, 2005). In his investigations of such phenomena, Weber sought to bridge the gap between nomothetic approaches—those concerned with establishing general laws—and idiographic approaches—those tied to the individual experience and not intended to generalize beyond this (Psathas, 2005). Weber's answer was the ideal type: "An analyst's solution which was both general and specific" (Psathas, 2005, p. 149).

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The ideal type, in Weber's thinking, was a description derived by a researcher from their observations of an empirical reality or a social phenomenon, as a first step in their analysis of a little-known or little-explored topic (Psathas, 2005; Swedberg, 2018). The ideal type was not intended to be a fully accurate and complete depiction of that particular reality or phenomenon; rather, it was intended to be an example, theory, or generalization of it (McIntosh, 1977; Psathas, 2005; Williams, 2002). Thus, the word "ideal" in an ideal-type context does not mean "perfect" or "best," but instead, it refers in the philosophical sense to an "idea" (McLeod, 2011; Werbart et al., 2016) or to "something that exists only in the mind" (Philips, Werbart, et al., 2007, p. 217)—a mental representation that will never be entirely identical with social reality but that helps to make such reality understandable.

For Weber, the ideal type was a "methodological tool" or "yardstick" for measuring similarities and differences between phenomena, processes, and events across time periods and places (Kvist, 2007; Psathas, 2005; Werbart et al., 2016). Essentially, the ideal type is an analytical construct or hypothesis about a particular phenomenon against which different instances or examples of that phenomenon can be measured, tested, and interpreted (Gerhardt, 1994; Stuhr & Wachholz, 2001; Wachholz & Stuhr, 1999; Werbart et al., 2016). Thus, the purpose of constructing the ideal type "is to obtain an adequate reduction of empirical data such that comparative analysis becomes possible" (Werbart et al., 2016, p. 929). Through a process of comparison, the researcher can use the ideal type, constructed in relation to a particular phenomenon, as a tool to enable interpretation and understanding of other similar phenomena (Gerhardt, 1994; Psathas, 2005) and to generate new ideas about reality (Swedberg, 2018).

Another sociologist, Uta Gerhardt (1994), later translated Weber's original methodology for forming and testing ideal types into a qualitative sociology research method: ideal-type analysis. Gerhardt's method reflects and partly extends Weber's original thoughts about ideal types (Stuhr & Wachholz, 2001; Wachholz & Stuhr, 1999). In the development of her methodology, Gerhardt reflected on the limitations that she had observed of existing qualitative research methods. Discussing approaches such as grounded theory and ethnographic research, she argued that they "either underestimate or overestimate the value of individual case evidence" (Gerhardt, 1994, p. 92). For instance, Gerhardt saw grounded theory as a process for generalizing across individual cases and, in doing so, losing touch with the diversity among individual cases. Moreover, for Gerhardt, the focus in ethnographic research on depicting social reality using an individual case came at the expense of systematically situating this case within a range of cases, which could offer further insight into that reality.

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Consequently, in advocating ideal-type analysis, Gerhardt (1994) wanted to avoid, first, what she saw as the loss of individual case material in the process of generalizing across cases and, second, the sanctification of individual cases "into quasi absolute evidence of covert meaning spheres" (p. 94). Taking Gerhardt's approach to ideal-type analysis, the researcher would first summarize each participant's narrative (e.g., an interview transcript) so that each participant is represented as a "case reconstruction." The researcher would then compare the case reconstructions with each other to discern differences between participants and identify patterns or groupings of participants with similar experiences. Next, the researcher would select an ideal-typical case exemplar for each grouping, which would represent that grouping in a particularly "pure" or "optimal" form. Finally, the researcher would seek to explain the patterns they had found, such as by looking at the demographic or contextual characteristics of the participants within each grouping and by noting individual participants' similarities and differences with the ideal-typical case exemplar for each grouping.

Echoing Weber's (1904) earlier thinking, Gerhardt's (1994) ideal-type analysis approach was thus an attempt to bridge the gap between a focus on the individual case and a focus on the patterns arising across cases in qualitative data analysis while ensuring methodological rigor. Gerhardt's method for ideal-type analysis, originally developed as a qualitative sociology research method, has since also been applied in qualitative psychology research. (See Chapter 2, this volume, for a list of examples of studies using ideal-type analysis.) Psychology researchers have tended to retain a close connection with Gerhardt's original methodology but have also adapted and extended it, depending on their study aims and the kinds of data they have collected (McLeod, 2011).

Epistemology and Ideal-Type Analysis

Although Weber was a pioneer in his critique of positivist approaches to knowing and understanding the world, it has been argued that Weber never satisfactorily explained the epistemological basis for his work on the ideal type (McIntosh, 1977). However, in her work, Gerhardt (1994) saw the qualitative researcher as ultimately deriving knowledge through their interpretation of participants' subjective accounts. Thus, knowledge developed through qualitative data analysis can be seen as the product of both the participant's and the researcher's subjectivity. Yet, Gerhardt also championed the importance of the researcher taking a rigorous and systematic approach to their interpretations and saw ideal-type analysis

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as facilitating this. In terms of the different epistemological perspectives adopted by qualitative researchers, if we take Gerhardt's view on knowledge, ideal-type analysis fits readily with what has come to be called a critical realist perspective.

Knowledge, from a realist perspective, captures a true reflection of something that is happening in the world that we live in, such as a social or psychological process (Willig, 2012). This perspective rests on the assumption that "certain processes or patterns of a social or psychological nature characterize or shape the behavior or the thinking of research participants, and these can be identified and conveyed by the researcher" (Willig, 2012, p. 11). Not many researchers today would consider themselves realists, according to this definition, because it is generally recognized that there can be no such direct knowledge of the world. However, that is not to say that we need to abandon any hope of learning about the world. Critical realism is the most prominent variation in realist thinking in the social sciences (Maxwell, 2010). When taking a critical realist perspective, researchers accept that there is a real world that exists independently of their perceptions and constructions of it, yet also accept that their understanding of it is a construction from their perspective or point of view (Maxwell, 2010).

Carrying out an ideal-type analysis from a critical realist perspective would mean that the researcher sees the ideal types that they construct, in an attempt to describe reality as constructed by the participants under study, as being an interpretation of that reality, which the researcher also constructs from their perspective and view of the world. Therefore, if we take this epistemological perspective, we see the construction and content of each ideal type as being dependent on the point of view, experience, and knowledge of the researcher at that moment (Schutz, 1967). Thus, in light of this, we also see the features of each ideal type as being those that are selected and deemed significant, relevant, or essential from the perspective of its creator, the researcher (Psathas, 2005). This means, first, that different ideal types referencing the same phenomena may be legitimately constructed by different researchers and, second, that the ideal type cannot be considered apart from the context within which it was constructed (Frommer et al., 2004; Psathas, 2005).

Consequently, ideal-type analysis also fits readily with a constructivist epistemological perspective. From this perspective, data are seen as being coconstructed by the researcher and participant and shaped by their views and experiences, which are in turn shaped by their context, including their social and cultural backgrounds (Charmaz & Henwood, 2017).

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A constructivist approach to grounded theory, for example, sees reflexivity as a core research activity, whereby the researcher seeks to examine how their worldviews, language, and privileges influence all aspects of the research process, including the interpretations that they make and the meanings that they derive from their data (Charmaz, 2017). Willig (2016) pointed out the compatibility of a constructivist perspective with a critical realist perspective. Specifically, despite constructivism often being seen as more aligned with a relativist perspective (i.e., the view that there is only ever a subjective reality), both constructivists and critical realists alike subscribe to the view of the existence of an independent reality and, though we cannot produce an objective account of it, we can try and interpret and understand it from our context (Willig, 2016).

Yet, the fact that ideal-type analysis may readily lend itself to a critical realist or constructivist epistemological perspective does not prohibit the researcher from, for instance, constructing a typology as an additional step in their data analysis following their use of another qualitative method with a different epistemological underpinning. For instance, Vachon et al. (2012) initially conducted an IPA, which is informed by an interpretative phenomenological perspective (Smith et al., 2009), to explore the perspectives of oncology and palliative care nurses on death proximity and finiteness, their spiritual-existential experience, and caring. As a further step in their interpretation of the data, the authors then developed a typology, using ideal-type analysis, to describe the patterns between the themes that they had derived through their IPA (Vachon et al., 2012). So, ideal-type analysis is not inextricably linked to a particular epistemological position. Ultimately, what is important in any ideal-type analysis study, as indeed with any qualitative research study in general, is that the researcher explicitly acknowledges and explains the epistemological perspective guiding their analysis at the outset and, if necessary, at each stage of their study.

SITUATING IDEAL-TYPE ANALYSIS WITHIN THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH TRADITION

Data in qualitative research may consist of interview or focus group transcripts, observations, naturally occurring conversations, field notes, diaries, clinical case notes, and other textual or visual data sources. Qualitative researchers typically collect multiple accounts from participants about a phenomenon of interest and then seek to understand what such accounts mean (Ayres et al., 2003). Meaning is ultimately conveyed through a detailed,

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narrative research report of the researcher's description or interpretation of participants' perceptions, understandings, or experiences of a phenomenon (Smith, 2015). One decision that qualitative researchers have to make is whether to use a cross-case approach or a case study approach to make sense of their data set (Ayres et al., 2003; Gerhardt, 1994). Ideal-type analysis is in a unique position as a method that bridges the gap between these two traditions (Gerhardt, 1994).

What do we mean by cross-case analysis? In bringing order to qualitative data, researchers often seek to find similarities and differences within and across the data set, in terms of participants' views, opinions, and experiences. Strategies for analyzing qualitative data in this way typically involve coding and sorting text into units of meaning, and then when an idea occurs repeatedly across participants, it may be identified as a theme, pattern, or core category in the data (Ayres et al., 2003). Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 1992; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) are frequently used examples of such strategies in qualitative psychology research.

However, an issue with a cross-case approach to qualitative data analysis is that when split into separate units of meaning or themes, data are often decontextualized, with particular instances (e.g., transcript extracts) separated from the individual cases (or whole transcripts) to which they belong (Ayres et al., 2003). Essentially, a theme might well appear in a number of different interviews with different individuals (e.g., "fear of closeness" in a thematic analysis of people's experiences of intimate relationships), but in analyzing the data in this way, we can lose sight of how a particular theme might form part of a wider narrative for any single individual. So, for one participant, the fear of closeness might be related to a childhood in which their parents were intrusive and overpowering, leaving them afraid of letting people get close; whereas for another participant, the fear of closeness might be linked to a wider narrative about being an immigrant and facing experiences of racism. Thus, cross-case approaches to qualitative data analysis, which identify themes across a group of participants, pose the risk of losing person-specific information, without which the experience or perspective of any individual participant cannot be fully understood (Ayres et al., 2003).

In contrast to cross-case approaches to qualitative data analysis, within-case (or case study) approaches focus on deriving meaning from an individual case or participant. These approaches involve the intensive study of a single unit (e.g., a person, an interview) to better understand a larger class of similar units, drawing on this one instance (Gerring, 2004). The case study approach allows the researcher to understand the aspects of experience that

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occur, not as separate units of meaning across a data set of multiple participants, but rather as a pattern of meaning within the account of an individual participant (Ayres et al., 2003). The use of case studies in psychology has spanned multiple areas of qualitative research. For example, case studies have been used to study individuals' lived experiences of Parkinson's disease (Bramley & Eatough, 2005), experiences of recovering from alcohol abuse (Rodriguez-Morales, 2017), and teachers' decision making about whether to leave the profession (Towers & Maguire, 2017).

However, a case study approach also has its limitations. For instance, it is not always clear how general inferences can be drawn on the basis of case studies (Bengtsson & Hertting, 2014). Indeed, it has been argued that this approach risks overestimating the value of individual case material (Gerhardt, 1994). This is because it does not involve systematically comparing an individual case with multiple cases, and therefore there is not the opportunity to reject the results arrived at through a single case study by comparison with other accounts of a phenomenon (Gerhardt, 1994). Thus, some authors propose that it is, in fact, impossible to generalize from case study research (King et al., 1994).

Overall, therefore, neither cross-case nor within-case approaches to qualitative data analysis may be entirely adequate alone to enable the researcher to understand an experience fully. Psychological data can best be understood both through its parts and as a whole (Ayres et al., 2003). Thus, approaches to qualitative data analysis are needed that seek to understand the individual account in its own context, while also seeking to illuminate the variation or patterns that can exist across individuals' experiences (Ayres et al., 2003). Ideal-type analysis is one such approach that fulfills this remit.

KEY FEATURES OF IDEAL-TYPE ANALYSIS

Ideal-type analysis offers something different from other qualitative methods because it provides a rigorous, step-by-step methodology for researchers to use specifically to develop typologies from qualitative data.

Key Feature 1: Rich Description of Groups of Participants

In ideal-type analysis, a typology consists of a number of different types or groupings of participants developed to address a specific research question. Each type or grouping represents a key similarity, or multiple similarities,

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in the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of the participants within it. In their analysis, the researcher seeks to accurately and comprehensively describe the characteristic features of each type (Stoecker, 2003). Of course, not every participant within a certain type will perfectly reflect all the features of that type. For example, an individual could generally consider themselves an introvert, but in some circumstances, that individual may tend to be more of an extrovert, meaning that they do not always exactly reflect the characteristics of the introvert personality type. Thus, in ideal-type analysis, to guide their description of the types, the researcher selects an individual participant or "optimal case" in each type who particularly exemplifies and reflects the key characteristics of that type (Stuhr & Wachholz, 2001; Wachholz & Stuhr, 1999). The word "optimal" in this context is not intended to imply desirability but instead refers to the case that most epitomizes the core features of each type. So, the Italian fascist, Benito Mussolini, could be considered an "optimal" case of a dictator because he ruled autocratically, with no governing body to check his power, and used the secret police to restrict the personal freedoms of his people. But the fact that he may be considered an optimal example of a dictator does not imply that this is a good or desirable type of political leadership!

Key Feature 2: Comparisons Between Groups and Individuals

Each type, or grouping of participants with similar experiences or perspectives, in ideal-type analysis is formed through the systematic comparison of individual participants with each other. In this way, ideal-type analysis provides a means for the researcher to retain a focus on the individual participant's experience, as well as on the patterns that exist across the data set, including within and between groups in the data set (Werbart et al., 2016). Thus, ideal-type analysis can be considered a systematic form of person-centered, multi-case-study research (Werbart et al., 2016).

Key Feature 3: Ideal Types as Hypotheses About Human Thought and Behavior

The types formed through ideal-type analysis can be considered hypotheses about aspects of human behavior, experience, or perception, which are intended to be tested against and, in doing so, enhance our understanding of reality or a given psychological phenomenon (Lindner, 2006; Stuhr & Wachholz, 2001; Wachholz & Stuhr, 1999). This means that as new typologies are formed, new hypotheses are created about how a particular psychological phenomenon can be understood. In this way, typologies provide the

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potential to generalize beyond the sample under study (Williams, 2002). For instance, Lindner (2006) identified four ideal types (or groupings) of suicidal men in a sample of psychotherapy patients—"disconnected," "hurt," "stormy," and "object dependent"—which he suggested could then provide a framework, or a set of "clinically relevant hypotheses," to facilitate the assessment of other patients (p. 212). Specifically, these ideal types, developed from one sample of suicidal men in Lindner's study, could potentially be used by clinicians assessing other suicidal male patients to consider which ideal type any given patient reflects and what implications this may have for how they engage in treatment and for their level of suicidal risk.

Previous studies have also sought to test the predictive validity of the types that they have developed. For instance, Philips, Wennberg, and Werbart (2007) constructed a typology of people's ideas of cure before receiving psychotherapy. The authors hypothesized that people with an "approaching" idea of a cure, defined as facing your problems as a way of improving your capacity to manage them, would be less likely to end treatment prematurely than those who had a more distancing idea of cure, defined as avoiding your problems as a way of expending minimal effort in managing them. Likewise, attachment researchers, making use of Ainsworth and Bell's (1970) typology of preschool children's attachment types, have been able to make predictions about children's emotional well-being and academic success. For example, Jacobsen and Hofmann (1997) found that children with a "secure" type of attachment, as demonstrated in the Strange Situation test when they were toddlers, were more likely to thrive in middle childhood than those who, as toddlers, had shown a more "insecure" type of attachment.

Key Feature 4: Ideal-Type Analysis as a Form of "Qualitative Cluster Analysis"

Researchers have drawn comparisons between statistical cluster analysis and ideal-type analysis, with the latter being described as a form of "qualitative cluster analysis" (Kuckartz, 1991; Stuhr & Wachholz, 2001, p. 165). Indeed, both methods can be used to identify particular groups of people with shared characteristics, to enhance our understanding of the needs, experiences, and behaviors of different groups of people. For example, statistical cluster analysis has been used in health psychology to identify which groups of people are at risk of developing particular medical conditions, to enable the appropriate development and targeting of interventions (see Clatworthy et al., 2005). Likewise, ideal-type analysis has been used to identify how different groups of people engage with mental health services, with implications for the nature of effective support provision for these groups (e.g., O'Keeffe, Martin, Target, & Midgley, 2019; Stapley et al., 2017).

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However, the two approaches also differ in several key ways. The type of data used in a statistical cluster analysis typically consists of numerical scores or codes. The variables by which cases are compared in a statistical cluster analysis are predefined ("top-down" or deductively) by the researcher before their analysis (Stuhr & Wachholz, 2001). This type of analysis is usually conducted using a statistical software package. However, the type of data used in an ideal-type analysis typically consists of qualitative data, and the process of creating types is "bottom-up" or inductive, starting with the researcher making sense of their (usually textual) data and then gradually identifying types on the basis of comparisons between participants. Thus, in an ideal-type analysis, unlike in a statistical cluster analysis, the variables that form the basis for any groupings have typically not been defined by the researcher before their analysis. This allows the researcher to remain open to the unexpected, and thus the researcher may identify groupings of similar cases on a basis that they did not know existed until they analyzed the data.

SUMMARY

The creation of typologies is not new in psychology, but there has been little methodological guidance available to explain the process of constructing a typology. Ideal-type analysis offers something different from thematic approaches to qualitative research or from ethnographic or case study research methods in that it provides a rigorous, step-by-step methodology for researchers to use to develop typologies from qualitative data. Ideal-type analysis has four key features:

- rich description of groups of participants
- comparisons between groups and individuals
- ideal types as hypotheses about human thought and behavior
- ideal-type analysis as a form of "qualitative cluster analysis"

Ideal-type analysis has its roots in the thinking and methodology of sociologists Max Weber (1904) and Uta Gerhardt (1994). Gerhardt's methodology for ideal-type analysis was originally developed as a qualitative sociology research method but has since also been applied in qualitative psychology research. In terms of the different epistemological perspectives adopted by qualitative researchers, ideal-type analysis fits readily (though not inextricably) with a critical realist or constructivist perspective.