The Process of Becoming and Helping Others to Become: A Grounded Theory Study

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The purpose of this study was to develop a grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) relevant to the field of Cognitive Coaching (Costa & Garmston, 2002). In-depth interviews were conducted with 12 educators who had participated in Cognitive Coaching training (Costa & Garmston, 2002), as well as three people from other fields who had not taken the training. The basic social process of "Becoming" emerged as the core variable, which is the issue that people are striving to resolve in their lives (Glaser, 1998). As participants learned coaching skills for Becoming, they were also able to help others Become. In the process of helping others Become, they continued helping themselves Become. As a result of Becoming, they were even more inclined to help others Become. The coaching process appeared to be beneficial in people's process of Becoming by allowing them to explore in a nonjudgmental atmosphere. The process of Becoming includes five areas: Beginning the Journey, Learning for Becoming, Gathering Colleagues on the Path, Re-Identifying, and Continuing the Journey.

Introduction

Cognitive Coaching was originally developed by Costa and Garmston in 1984 (1985, 1994, 2002) as a supervisory model for educational administrators to use with teachers. Through the years, teachers and people in many fields outside of education have also employed this method of coaching (Ellison & Hayes, 2003).

Methodology

This study uses a grounded theory methodology, developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Data were gathered from open-ended, in-depth interviews lasting approximately one hour each between Fall, 2003 and Summer, 2004 with 12 educators who had been trained in Cognitive Coaching. Interviewees had received training in Cognitive Coaching as long ago as the mid-1980s and as recently as January, 2004. In addition, three in-depth interviews were conducted with people outside the field of education. Data were analyzed using the constant comparative method (Glaser, 1965). The goal of grounded theory methodology is to identify a core variable—a basic social process that "accounts for the patterns of their behavior which are relevant and problematic for the participants" (Glaser, 1998, p. 117). "The other categories and their properties…explain how the participants resolve their main concern" (Glaser, 1998, p. 117).

Results

People who are attracted to Cognitive Coaching are interested in "Becoming." They are interested in moving forward in their lives, and they are directing their process of

Becoming. They are moving toward wholeness by pursuing their dreams, seeking self-satisfaction and contentment, becoming more competent in their lives, and moving more into community with others, as well as in many other ways. Coaching appears to be beneficial in their process of Becoming, although people can certainly Become without the benefit of coaching. As people who are Becoming coach other people to help them Become, they, themselves move forward in their own process of Becoming. As they move forward, they become even more willing to help others Become. Wheatley and Kellner-Rogers (1996) spoke of this continual, reciprocal process: "The motions of life swirl inward to the creating of self and outward to the creating of the world. We turn inward to bring forth a self. Then the self extends outward, seeking others, joining together" (p. 88). Participants talked about the reciprocal nature of the process of Becoming and helping others Become:

> "I'm working on becoming closer to me…That's my prize for doing coaching, my reward."

> "Where I started to go, paradoxically, Cognitive Coaching being a protocol to assist people in being what they are and who they are…it really isn't resting on laurels. The brain is always growing, and we are always learning. That is what I'm finding challenging right now. The people I'm working with and the work that is needing to be done, and maybe this is just my perspective, this is [extremely] hard work, the work of transformation of ourselves and assisting our colleagues and people to help themselves. It's [extremely] difficult work."

The process of Becoming is consistent with the mission of Cognitive Coaching, which is, according to Costa and Garmston (2002), "to produce self-directed persons with the cognitive capacity for high performance, both independently and as members of a community" (p. 16). Costa and Garmston (2002) borrowed the term, "holonomy," from Koestler (1972) to describe this mission. They said, "holonomy is the science or study of wholeness. As such, holonomy considers both our integrative tendencies and our autonomous aspects" (pp. 18-19). They identified the five states of mind of efficacy, craftsmanship, flexibility, consciousness, and interdependence as being "the primary vehicles in a lifelong journey toward integration" (p. 124). In the field of Cognitive Coaching, the coach is continually assessing the coachee's five states of mind and asking questions to help the coachee strengthen the states of mind. Basically, Becoming implies that people are moving toward being integrated and whole, as well as toward being in community with others. A participant described this dual focus:

> "As you become more holonomous in your life, you are comfortable where you are. That comfort level comes from the fact that you can put away your filters and listen more in-depth to find out where things are."

This basic social process of Becoming is similar to Jung's concept of Individuation, in which the individual seeks to become whole, leading to more connectedness with and appreciation for others (Jacobi, 1973). The process continues throughout one's lifetime.

According to Jung (1928, p. 171, as cited in Fadiman & Frager, 1976), "Individuation means becoming a single, homogeneous being, and, insofar as 'individuality' embraces our innermost, last, and incomparable uniqueness, it also implies becoming one's own self" (p. 72). Jung (1957) suggested that his process of individuation impacted society: "If the individual is not truly regenerated in spirit, society cannot be either, for society is the sum total of individuals in need of redemption" (p. 56).

Becoming is also similar to Maslow's (1968) concept of self-actualization. According to Maslow, "the achievement of self-actualization...paradoxically makes more possible the transcendence of self, and of self-consciousness and of selfishness. It makes it easier for the person...to merge himself as a part in a larger whole than himself" (p. 212). Campbell (1949) spoke of this journey of Becoming in *The Hero With A Thousand Faces*. Fosdick (1943) discussed Becoming when he said, "Personality is not so much like a structure as like a river—it continuously flows, and to be a person is to be engaged in a perpetual process of becoming" (p. 27). Wheatley and Kellner-Rogers (1996) spoke about the process of Becoming when they said, "Life wants to discover itself. Individuals explore possibilities and systems emerge. They self-transcend into new forms of being. Newness appears out of nowhere" (p. 66). Rogers (1961) outlined the process by which people become persons through the therapeutic relationship.

Wilkins (2003), who developed a theory of coaching, linked the coaching process with transformative learning (Mezirow, 1990, 2000) and suggested that "Coaching requires direct action. It is active [sic] not passive, demanding forward movement from both coach and client" (p. 13). In the process of Becoming, both coach and coachee are moving forward in a self-directed manner.

Process of Becoming

The process of Becoming includes five areas: Beginning the Journey, Learning for Becoming, Gathering Colleagues on the Path, Re-Identifying, and Continuing the Journey. The processes can overlap with each other. This is consistent with the work of Hudson (1991), who suggested that adult life and development should be viewed as a series of cycles, rather than in a linear fashion.

Beginning the Journey

People who are Becoming make the decision to begin the journey of Becoming. Actually, they are taking yet one more step in their journey that has already included many cycles that have brought them to where they are in life. Adult learners "become ready to learn something when they experience a need to learn it in order to cope more satisfyingly with real-life tasks or problems," according to Knowles (1981, p. 44). One participant likened his process of Becoming to a quest:

> *"I have been on a quest since 1993 to really get to the essence of understanding those mental processes and helping educators to understand those processes that happen in the classroom in order to be effective."*

Another participant wanted to learn in order to better support those with whom she worked as well as Become, herself:

> *"I really started looking for some way that I could support teachers who were going through the National Board process...The more I read about Cognitive Coaching...it seemed like it was a good fit, so when I started the training myself, I did it with two views...I could be a support provider, but I also wanted to [become a trainer]."*

People choose areas in which to Become that are aligned with their values, beliefs, and personal schemas. As a result, what people learn makes sense to them. One participant believed that her areas for Becoming were with her from birth:

> *"It's inborn. I've always sought to learn in the area of dance. As I look back, I can see how I always unconsciously knew what would make me happy. Perhaps it's synchronicity, but I have always intuitively made choices that put me on the path that I was born with."*

Another saw Cognitive Coaching as being aligned with her worldview:

> *"[Cognitive Coaching training] wasn't a huge shift in my thinking...It fit how I viewed the world."*

In addition to choosing areas in which to Become that are aligned with their values, people move toward areas that others have modeled for them. One participant had admired people who could communicate effectively and was drawn to Cognitive Coaching training in order to obtain the skills that they had. She said:

> *"[Cognitive Coaching] gave some foundation and some language to what I observed other people doing, what it seemed to be, naturally. The good and the great communicators that I was around and had access to—I always wondered what made them great people."*

For another woman, a chance meeting spurred a lifetime interest for her:

> *"When I was 21 years old, I met a woman from Switzerland who spoke seven languages. For whatever reason, I have always wanted to be like her. I have learned four and have three more to go."*

Learning for Becoming

After people have identified the ways they want to learn in order to continue their path of Becoming, they seek out learning opportunities. Because what they are learning is aligned with their values, and they see how what they are learning can help them to be even more effective, they want more. They are "hooked" (Geer, 2004, p. 41), and they want to continue learning.

People create many situations to assist themselves in Becoming, including attending

classes, creating experiences, and learning from mentors. In addition, coaching can be a beneficial process for helping people who are Becoming. The nonjudgmental, trusting atmosphere created by coaches facilitates people in their process of Becoming. As people feel valued by the coach, they, in turn, are able to value others. In addition, as coaches work with people, the coaches, themselves, are furthering their own process of Becoming. In a similar way, Daloz (1986) suggested that teachers gain from interacting with their students. Participants discussed the importance of being in a nonjudgmental atmosphere and valuing others:

> *"It's simply not the way that we interact with people. To have a moment when people are there for you in a nonjudgmental, nonconfrontational way, to me, that is A GIFT, in all capitals…It is a gift because it's not a norm. It's not how we do business on this planet right now."*

> *"What I would like from Cognitive Coaching is I would like to be able to really value people, really listen to people—I guess in that way, improve myself."*

As a result of being valued and being in a trusting, nonjudgmental atmosphere, coach and coachee are able to connect deeply for the benefit of both.

> *"When you are in coaching, you are as close to finding a connecting at the level you want as anything else—connecting deeply, not superficially, not like Los Angeles. It's serious connecting. It immediately presupposes that you will surface deep structure, you will ask people to reflect, you will have people be in a thoughtful state of mind. You don't necessarily get this. You are connecting in the best way—hunger of the human spirit to be one with another person."*

As a result of the coaching process and Becoming, people are able to think powerfully about their lives and how they are Becoming. Dewey (1991) suggested that "reflection is aimed at the discovery of facts that will serve [the] purpose [of guiding one on one's path]" (p. 11). According to Mezirow (1990), "reflection on one's own premises can lead to transformative learning" (p. 18). A participant talked about the impact of coaching on thinking:

> *"We met the other day, and each person explained that for them, the coaching experience always clarified their thinking. Sometimes, they weren't even sure they had a problem. When they were done, they were very clear what it was they were dealing with….That was fun."*

As people are Becoming, they compare where they are now with where they were in the past and feel pleased with their progress. According to Daloz (1986), it is common for people to compare where they are with where they previously were. One participant compared his abilities to listen in the past with his abilities to listen now:

> *"Before, I was in no-man's land…It was just a conversation…Now, I subconsciously start to analyze how I am listening."*

Gathering Colleagues on the Path

As people move forward in their process of Becoming, they surround themselves with others who are Becoming. They want to have company on their path. The proliferation of learning organizations (Chawla & Renesch, 1995; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Senge, 1990) could possibly be based on people's desire to be around colleagues who are also Becoming. Participants talked about the importance of giving and receiving in relation-ships of mutual Becoming:

> *"I'm helping people become clear, make peace with their choices and their voice in their life, more empowered. I'm always seeking out people who help me do that. I'm trying to become that through becoming a coach. I want to be around people who can do that for me, and I want to offer that to others, so it is reciprocal."*

> *"[In coaching], I can learn from other people, which is kind of selfish. I think in the end, I have to get something from it, so for me, it's that satisfaction I get. It's getting to know people better instead of taking them for granted. The kinds of questions we ask will deepen their responses. Even if it's a light conversation,… the interchange will be richer, and I will learn more from that person. For me, it's really valuing people more."*

In order to have colleagues on the path, people coach others to help them Become. People desire to share their experiences with others around them, with the organizations in which they work, and ultimately, with the world. Participants talked about their pas-sions for sharing what they were learning with others:

> *"It's important to me. It's not just a skill that I want to keep to myself and use. I'd like the others to use it with their colleagues and students because I think it's worthwhile and powerful and think it will effect change—change cultures of schools to make them more learner-focused, so that's a powerful feeling for me. That's what I'm hoping will happen."*

> *"What I wanted to do was to…improve my school, and so institutionalizing Cognitive Coaching, at least in my section of the school, I made it something that was done regularly."*

> *"[Coaching] has applicability to everyone, everywhere!"*

Re-Identifying

As people Become, they adjust their identities to align with who they are Becoming. Some people change their identities as soon as they start on the path to Becoming, and others change their identities when they are well down the road to Becoming. Daloz (1986) said, "At the end of the journey lies a new identity" (p. 154). He went on to say, "The struggle to be something more than the person others have made…is one of the most

compelling struggles of our adult lives" (p. 154). Mezirow (2000) spoke about this new identity in his last step in transformation, which is "a reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective" (p. 22).

While Erikson (1968) discussed the development of identity in adolescents, only recently has identity development in adults been explored (Côté & Levine, 2002). Côté and Levine suggested that identity development consists of the interaction between a person's personality and his/her interaction with others and the social structure. The following quotes show participants' change in identity as a result of Becoming:

> "*Cognitive Coaching became who I was and am. The skills are so ingrained in me that they are who I am.*"

> "*It's something that I'm conscious of is now a part of me. It's not just something that I...think that is important that people learn how to do. It has become a part of the way I think.*"

> "*I even changed my name to go along with who I had become. It no longer fit me.*"

Continuing the Journey

The journey of Becoming continues throughout one's lifetime. People achieve their goals and move on to new things. They assess their progress in an area and determine that they haven't yet arrived at their destination. They either set new goals to further their achievement in the area that they are working on, or they determine that they have learned enough in that area and set goals in new areas. Either way, they continue on the journey to Becoming. Jung suggested in his concept of Individuation that the journey toward wholeness was a lifelong journey (Jacobi, 1973). Costa and Garmston (2002) said:

> Of course, the goals of an idealized state of holonomy are never fully achieved. In addition, there is no such thing as perfect attainment of the states of efficacy, flexibility, craftsmanship, consciousness, and interdependence. These are utopian energies toward which we constantly aspire. The journey toward holonomy and the five states of mind is the destination. (p. 141)

As people Become, they compare where they are with where they want to be in the future and never quite measure up. They always have more Becoming to do. Rogers (1961) suggested that people who are in the process of growing are open to having new experiences and are willing to continue in the process. One participant talked about her journey and how she had not yet arrived:

> "*It's very much empowering and liberating to me in the sense that it's become more and more natural in the things that I do...I feel like I'm internalizing it. It's coming together. It's not there yet.*"

As a result of Becoming, people are even more motivated, and they want to help

others. According to Dovidio and Penner (2001), when people have higher levels of self-efficacy and feel confident in themselves, they are more likely to want to help others. A participant spoke about his desire to assist others:

> "I want to be someone who is helpful. For many people, recognizing what we have done already doesn't work that well, the importance of looking at things another way, wanting to be supportive of other peoples' thinking. That's our role, our responsibility as professionals—to help other people think."

People are even more willing to continue the process of Becoming because their experiences have changed their lives and helped them to feel powerful, effective, energized, liberated, motivated, and understood. They have experienced the excitement of growing, and they want more. One participant talked about how Cognitive Coaching training had impacted her life:

> "This training was really an epiphany, and has impacted my life in ways that I think I'm not even aware of yet, putting my foot on a path for communication, because I can see its importance in leadership, which I can see in my future."

In short, coaching is a gift for helping people in their process of Becoming.

> "It almost feels like a gift. It's important to me, and it's meaningful to me, and it's something that I want to share with people."

Implications

The theory of Becoming shows how people move forward toward wholeness. It has the following implications for coaches:

- People who come for coaching are searching for wholeness. They are Becoming, and coaches can assist them in their journey.
- As coaches help other people in their process of Becoming, coaches can also benefit by having the opportunity to move toward Becoming.
- The process of coaching can potentially transform people, organizations, and, ultimately, the world.

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