University „Babes Bolyai '' - Cluj
Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences

PhD THESIS

LONELINESS
WAYS OF COPING

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Key words:

Loneliness, coping to loneliness, ways of coping, grounded theory, qualitative research, sistemic thincking.

Initial Conditions

The study of loneliness was initiated as a necessity, following an activity developed since 2001 when I activated as a psychologist within the project "Solo Club» developed at the Catharsis Foundation. This project of psycho-social intervention (see Annex 3) had proposed to offer a context where the people who felt loneliness as a real issue can work upon this feeling in order to develop relation abilities and to identify and involve more easily within contexts that can offer resources to fight the feeling of loneliness.

The activity developed at the Club made me more attentive upon the strategies with which the people of the target group reacted and dealt with loneliness (coping strategies). I have noticed that in the case of several people it was perpetuated a series of behaviors and activities which, although offered a momentary distressful way, in the long run tended to increase the isolation tendency offering a context which inhibited the abilities to develop relations and to socialize.

The repetitive character and the difficulty of avoiding such dysfunctional adaptation reactions, the important resources offered by those functional ways to cope loneliness, as well as their importance in the rehabilitation process of the people who feel loneliness as an issue made me start over my research paper for my doctoral thesis with the theme "ways of loneliness adaptation and control". The need to identify a legal aspect of the loneliness adaptation and control strategies which can offer the basis of a therapeutically strategy adequate to each person is a major reason which was at the basis of choosing the qualitative methodology in the research of this subject, namely the Grounded Theory methodology.

Moreover, when choosing the grounded theory methodology I was determined by the fact that on international level, the Internet searches as well as the e-mail contacts with other specialists investigating loneliness did not emphasized the application of this methodology upon the coping strategies when dealing with the feeling of loneliness.

This study is oriented upon the structuring of a theory established in data upon the phenomena of adaptation and the control of the status of loneliness. This theory will stand for the premises for a further exploration of loneliness and for the construction of additional psychosocial intervention strategies (psychotherapy, support groups, social programs).

1. Loneliness

The sociologists have always regarded the personal relationships as a bind of society. When a civilization is made of isolated members it is condemned with disappearance. As well as estrangement, the high divorce rate and the criminal rate, loneliness is seen by some people as a cause or as a symptom of social decay. (Perlman & Peplau, Perspectives on Loneliness, 1982).

Loneliness can be a very painful status. It is experimented by all of us from time to time, but some people are living with it for long, long years. It is emotionally exhausting, inhibitory in the interpersonal relationships and it determines the regress from a psychological point of view. When we are in such a status we feel drained and very much estranged. The need of intimacy will remain unfulfilled, at a fundamental level, even if apparently there could be circumstances in this sense. When we feel lonely out thoughts can be distorted and we tend to exaggerate the reactions to some events from our lives which, in other circumstances, could be interpreted more easily (Booth, 1996).

Claiton E Tuker-Ladd, in his book *Psychological Self-Help* (www.mentalhealt.net) said that we, people, are social animals. If we are abandoned when very small, at the beginning we will complaint by screams and then we will retrieve in our inner self, for, at last (after approx. a fortnight), to become apathetic and detached. Referring to Rene Spitz, Claiton E Tuker-Ladd said that babies can even die if they are not held, if nobody talks with them, if nobody caresses them, if nobody plays with them. Even some monkey species have proven that abandoned babies can even die, even if the separation f their mother is very short, the cubs will be more timid and less active. The need of social contact is extremely strong.

Loneliness is more than being lonely. Actually, a lot of the people among us, if not all of us, do appreciate loneliness. The solitude represents the lack and the desire to have interactions with the others.

The type of searched contact varies a lot (Tuker-Ladd, www.mentalhealt.net): for example, someone could want a relationship with a certain person, others would like social interactions (relationships at the working place or friends), while some of us are searching the intimacy in a love affair. Some specialists do make the difference between the *social loneliness* (the lack of a group of friends) and *emotional loneliness* (the lack of an intimate relationship). Loneliness can be also *spiritual* (the feeling of God estrangement) or *existential* (the feeling of isolation).

The time references are an important element in living the loneliness, making a distinction between: the *transitory* loneliness (the occasional feelings of loneliness which are experimented by all of us and which usually last only a few minutes or hours); the *situational* loneliness (it is often the result of a disconnection of social relationships, such as the situations of divorce, death or even the move of some close people); and *chronic* loneliness (even if there were no traumatic events, the individual experiences loneliness after more than two consecutive years, with frequent difficulties in maintaining relationships on long term).

Although the feeling of loneliness was a constant concern of the philosophers since ancient times, a systematic research upon this phenomenon was achieved only in the seventh decade of the 20th century. In Romania we have identified very few papers referring to this particular subject, most of them being focused upon the social relationships and not upon their absence.

In this context the present paper is proposing to identify a series of essential elements in approaching loneliness, the purpose of this procedure being the creation of one part of the fundamental research of the decorate project.

According to this purpose I tried to present the following themes:

- *Defining the loneliness status*
- *Typology of the feelings of loneliness*
- *The causes of loneliness*
- *Living the loneliness*
- *The therapeutic intervention upon the status of loneliness*

2. Qualitative methods

During a research, after the adaptation with the proposed subject to be studied (ways of loneliness adaptation and control) and the identification of the central questions within the research ("Which are the ways within the Romanian cultural background?", "How do they manifest?"), the next natural step is to analyze the investigation methodologies used by the socio-human sciences, to choose several methodological types and to structure a research strategy specific to the objectives of the proposed study.

The whole research aims to investigate the loneliness phenomena by means which will bring into light new and unexplored aspects, especially in the Romanian cultural environment. After analyzing the actual methodological means, the most appropriate way to extract of the research field the proposed aspects it seemed to be the qualitative research.

Taking into account the small number of studies from the Romanian space which could deal with loneliness, among the various types of qualitative researches I have chosen the grounded theory methodology, with objective discovering some comprehensive theoretical explanations upon the loneliness adaptation and control phenomena in Romania. The orientation upon the identification of the theoretical aspects connected to this aspect was sustained by the new research features in the case of loneliness identified by Paloutian and Janigian (1989). The asserted that after the initial period (the 70's) characterized by investigations and descriptions of the phenomena; the middle stage (the 80's), characterized by the refinement of the instruments and the postulation of the conceptual models of the phenomena, the third age (after the 90's) should orient towards the development of loneliness focused theory (mini-theory). The choice of the grounded theory methodology was determined by the novelty of this technique in our country. As well, the research at an international level, on Internet and by e-mail with other specialists investigating the topic of loneliness, did not pointed out the application of this methodology concerning the loneliness.

The purpose of the chapter is to fundament the methodological strategy to be applied when investigating the ways of adaptation and control of the loneliness. It presents an analysis (qualitative versus quantitative), and then describes shortly the whole scientific process of investigation characteristic to the qualitative approach. There are presented, as well, different ways of structure of the qualitative methodologies (the designs of the research); the gathering techniques of these data types; the data registration techniques; the data analysis and interpretation. Along the whole paper there will be broadly analyzed the methodological aspects to be used within the research (the design of the grounded theory; the data collection by means of

individual interview and observation; the data analysis and interpretation through theoretical codification).

3. The Concept of „Coping"

Coping is one way through which a person makes a conscientious effort in order to surpass and control a situation perceived as difficult (with all adjacent and functional status sterile).

Although there is a wide debate about the conscious or unconscious character of the coping (Baban, 1998, Miclea 1997) from my point of view, both the psychoanalysis and the cognitive analysis are emphasizing the conscious aspect of coping. I am stating my ideas upon the psychoanalytical theories which are taking into consideration coping as being a superior and conscious process, while defenses are mainly and unconscious process which generates pathology - according to several authors (Haan, Vaillant). The same, in order to sustain a comprehensive model based upon cognitive theories, the authors of these orientations assert that there can be initiated cognitive sub conscious processes that can sit at the basis of environmental stimuli which are put into motion at an unconscious level (Miclea, 1997, Popa Velea 1999). These unconscious reactions and stimulations, either mainly determined by interior conflict (psychoanalysis) or by the unconscious perception of some danger or incitements, I consider, following the line of Lazarus (1985), that they do not enter in the category of coping but are merely some answers with adaptation character, different than coping. In his book S. Ionescu (2007) presented a chapter where he tried to include as many perspectives of the adaptative answer of the individual, in his attempt to present a model of integration. He presents some psychoanalytical concepts of social psychology (family or group defense, etc) or cognitive. Yet, for a plain coherence of the paper I will take as landmarks the cognitive theories of coping.

History

Preoccupations in defining and analyzing the internal mechanisms which an individual is practicing when confronting with difficult situations were encountered even since the 9th century. Parker and Norman (1995) claims that the phenomena had generated a wide literature and a variety of concepts which makes us difficult to clearly identify the important events in the evolution of the concept of coping. Serban Ionescu is placing the term "defense" for the first time in 1894 in the article "Die Abwehr-Neuropsychosen", where Sigmund Freud proposed the fundament of a psychological theory of the acquired hysteria, of the numerous phobias and obsessions as well as of some hallucinatory psychosis. In 1926, in the post face to *Inhibition*, *Symptom and anxiety*, Freud clarifies the term "defense", as being a general word for all procedures used by the "self" in its conflicts which can lead to neurosis. (Serban Ionescu, Marie-

Madeleine Jacquet, Claude Lhote, 2007). Although at the beginning of its writings Freud used concepts as refutation and defense in connection, as synonyms or concepts replacing themselves in a puzzling way, the refutation being presented as a prototype for other defensive mechanisms (Serban Ionescu, Marie-Madeleine Jacquet, Claude Lhote, 2007) in 1926, suppressing is registered together with the other defensive mechanisms described by Freud (according to Bukley's analysis ten mechanisms (S.Ionescu and collaborators, 2007)). For all these mechanisms the concept of "umbrella" represents the defensive mechanism. (Handbook of Coping, Parker and Norman 1996).

During the 60's Parker and Norman (1996), have presented a new line of research, connected initially with papers aiming to the defense mechanisms unified under the label of *coping*. Until then the term *coping* was used only informally in medical and social science. The diffusion of the notion of *coping* in the scientific language is connected mainly with the paper of R. Lazarus from 1966 *Psychological Stress and the Coping Proces*s. (Parker and Norman, 1996 , S. Ionescu and collaborators 2007, etc.). Together with him a number of writers are beginning to label several defense mechanisms (for example the sublimation or the humor) being considered as *coping* activities. Parker and Norman are mentioning Alker, 1968, Haan, 1963, Hunter & Goodstein, 1967.

In 2007 Aldwin said for the first time that there were made efforts to study the self-analysis (the self report) of the subjects upon their own cognitions and behaviors in a specific context. Until then, most of the researches were centered on one hand upon the self-analysis of the subjects aiming to different aspects of their personality, upon the attitudes of feelings or upon their behaviors, and on the other hand upon the behaviors observed in an experimental environment.

Definition

A definition comprising several perspectives (Snyder and Dinoff, 1999) is the one where coping is seen as an answer of the individual oriented towards the diminishing of the physical, emotional and psychological pressure, demand connected with the stressful life ant the daily routine.

As an adaptation in the Romanian language, I have found a definition of coping in the translation of the book written by Serban Ionescu (2007). „In English language, *to cope* means to deal effectively with something difficult, to reach out a certain intricacy. *Coping* qualifies several terms such as *strategies*, *behaviors*, *process* or *style* and could be translated by itself with the help of terms „strategies", „behaviors", „processes" or „stiles" used to cope a certain situation. If

some French-speaking authors are using terms such as "adjusting strategies or behaviors", in the French dictionary *Le Grand Dictionnaire de la Psychologie*, it is mentioned the English word "coping".

For this paper the term "coping" was introduced by adaptation and control (strategies of loneliness adaptation and control).

Theories about Coping

The most clear and exhaustive way to classify and explain the theories referring to coping was found in the paper by Carolyn M Aldwin, *Stress, Coping and Development*, *an Integrative Perspective* (2007). Further in my paper I shall use this structure in order to present several theoretical aspects which have attempted to explain to the people the answer to stressful and bothering situations.

Aldwin (2007) asserted that the study of coping is rooted in recognizing the fact that there are individual differences when reacting to stress. Thus the object of studying the coping strategies is to understand why people are so different when answering to stressful situations and how these answers are connected with their status of being well.

The theories upon coping can be classified (adaptation after Aldwin 2007):

- approaches focused upon the person – the person primarily determinates the coping strategies;
- approaches focused upon the situation – the situation determines the coping strategies;
- interactions' approaches – person + situation determinates the coping;
- Transactions' approaches – the person + situation + coping are influenced in between in a process which will evolve in time.

- RESEARCH METHODOLOGY –

I.

The Purpose of the Research

> ➢ *Offering a complex vision upon the specific processes of loneliness adaptation and control strategies upon the basis of Grounded Theory Methodology*

1. Research General Directions

♦ **Purpose**

Structuring a fundamental theory in data concerning the loneliness adaptation and control strategies (coping strategies) which can be at the basis of several psychotherapeutically and social interventions.

♦ **Objectives**

> ➢ Achieving a theory based upon data (upon the basis of Grounded Theory Methodology) for the loneliness adaptation and control strategies in the case of the Romanian women aged between 20 and 50 years old.

♦ **The main question of the research**

"Which are the ways of adaptation and control of the emotional loneliness (coping strategies) at the Romanian female subjects? How is it manifested?"

♦ **Initial theoretical marks:**

- the feeling of emotional loneliness

The most known typology based upon the relation scarcity is the one presented by (1973, apud Jenny by Jong-Gierveld and Jos Raadschelders 1982), which makes the distinction between the emotional and social loneliness:

▪ *The feeling of loneliness specific to emotional seclusion* emerge in the absence of the emotional attachment and can be deciphered only through the integration of another emotional connection or by the one which was lost. The people experimenting this form

of loneliness are capable of testing the pure solitude, even if the company of others is accessible for them. The individual can describe the surrounding world as being a sadden one, he/she feels empty, collapsed or dead

- Coping strategies:

Weiten, W., & Lloyd, . M. A. (2006) in the book *Psychology Applied to Modern Life* makes the separation between the three coping categories: focused upon the re-assessment of the situation *appraisal-focused*, centered upon the resolution of some issues *problem-focused*, localized upon emotions *emotion-focused* coping. This classification seems to be one of the most accepted, being used as well by the Dictionary on-line Wikipedia which cites this material of Weiten, & Lloyd. These authors present the strategies as follows:

The first alternative is directed upon the analysis, resolution or, if not possible, alteration of the issue creating the disturbance. It comprises mainly the accepting strategies when confronting with the stressful agent and appears when the individual is evaluating the context conditions in an attempt to accept the change. Here we can mention strategies as: defining the issue, generating alternative solutions, analyzing the alternatives from the point of view of costs and benefits, choosing the alternatives and activating. These strategies can be oriented towards the interior and exterior.

The second category is centered upon the person, it is oriented in order to settle the emotional answer of the individual who will develop it according to the impasse. This coping category is more likely to appear in situations where the individual is evaluating the situation as being impossible to be changed, thinking that nothing can be done in order to modify the threatening, provoking circumstances or harmful conditions. Here we can add several cognitive processes directed towards the diminishing of the emotional trouble (avoidance, minimizing, outdistancing, selective attention, positive comparison, positive connotation); those centered upon the increasing of this emotional trouble (self blaming, self punishing, the deliberate increase of the emotional pressure for the mobilization as in the case of the sportsmen), those oriented towards the modification of the meanings (re-evaluation), actions having the effect of situation reevaluation (physical exercises, meditation, alcohol consume, searching the emotional support). These processes can lead to self-deception and towards distorting the reality which Lazarus is including in the category of defensive, unconscient mechanisms.

The strategies focused upon the reevaluation of the situation press posses modifications of the thinking ways of the individual which for example engages the denial or the remoteness of

the issue. People can modify their way of thinking upon some matters by modifying their position and values such as discovering funny aspects of a various situations.

Theoretical landmarks identified along the constant comparative analysis:

- attachment theory;

- reaction to loss;

- social – constructive thesis;

- Murray Bowen's intergenerational theories.
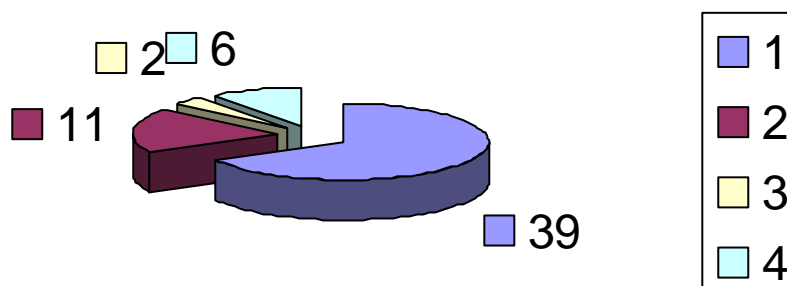

♦ **The target group**

  ➢ Romanian women aged between 20 and 50 years old.

  ➢

♦ **Number of subjects participants of the research.**

  ➢ **58 subjects:**

    o 39 women who experience loneliness as a problem

    o 11 women who do not fell loneliness as an issue

    o 2 men who experience loneliness as a problem

    o 6 psychotherapists

subjects participants at the research

♦ **Criteria for including the subjects into the research study**

➢ women belonging to the socio-cultural context, aged between 20 and 50 years old

➢ criteria generated upon the basis of the constant comparative analysis*: men belonging to the socio-cultural context, psychotherapists, people without partner who do not fell loneliness as an issue

➢ to be out of a constant couple relationship

➢ the intensity of the feeling of loneliness

     o to be at a certain level of trouble for at least 2 years (chronic loneliness)

     o does not experience loneliness as a real issue*

➢ the declaration of that person about the fact that the feeling of loneliness is or it is not a real problem

➢ a score over 50 points upon the loneliness revisioned UCLA scale

*The theory generation process through the method Grounded Theory is a dynamic process: the analysis direction, the subjects to be interviewed, the significative information samples varies from one interview to another, from one stage to another. The criteria noted with an asterisk are added after the beginning of the research.

II.

Methodology

1) Evaluation instruments used during the study procedure and for the evaluation of the psychotherapeutically intervention efficiency

♦ *The revised UCLA loneliness scale*
♦ *The semi-structured interview*
♦ *Memos*
♦ *Axial diagrams*

Grounded Theory Methodology

Grounded theory is a qualitative approach which can be used in order to analyze the processes present in the human interactions. The use of this methodology is offering the explanations

concerning some important social processes or structures fundamental upon empirical data (Philip H. Siegel, 1995).

Grounded Theory methology is based upon the papers of Glaser and Strauss who have studies the interaction between the professionals of the medical area and the dying patients. The main aspect is to develop a new theory by collecting and analyzing all data of the phenomena. This approach goes beyond the phenomenology as the explanations emerged from the research represent a new knowledge and are used for the development of some new theories upon the phenomenon.

Collecting the data was done particularly with interviews and observation but also by exploring the literature and after a thorough analysis of the necessary documents. An important element of this methodology is represented by the simultaneous collection and analysis of all data, using a known process named constant comparative analysis. During this process all data are transmitted and examined immediately after their collection. The ideas which emerge from the analysis are included in the data extraction strategy when the researcher is entering again on the field. From this reason, a researcher collecting data through a semi-structured interview can gradually develop an interview model in the following stages of the research project which will be very different.

This type of qualitative design is offering a clear structure, the qualitative approaches having a low level of this requirement, without sacrificing the flexibility or the rigor. The resulted theory is an explanation of the categories, of their proprieties and relationships. The result will lead towards a progressive corpus of knowledge fundamental in data (Linda Jo Calloway and Constance A. Knapp, 1995).

III.

Aspects of using Grounded Theory methodology upon the issues of adaptation and control strategies of
loneliness feeling

1. Collecting data

All data were collected upon the basis of the semi-structured interview given individually. Each interview had to establish a series of themes which have oriented the interview dynamics, keeping a freedom of expressing for the subject.

For the beginning all four interviews were registered with the reportphone and then transcribed completely (see annex), following that during the research to be experimented the

strategies presented by Bob Dick (taking notes upon the basis of the key concepts and their transformation into categories after the confrontation with the registrations from the magnetic band). The need to fully transcribe the first interviews is given by the initial step of the constant comparative analysis in the process of achieving the open codes.

Depending the results of the constant comparative analysis (categories, memos) achieved during each interview there were structured the themes for the next interview, thus they have varied from one case to another.

Themes used for the first interview

➢ *Childhood (pleasant or unpleasant events, loneliness).*
➢ *Self image (personal description, successes and in successes).*
➢ *Attitude towards the others..*
➢ *How is perceived loneliness?*
➢ *Which are the worst events (if there is happening something worse than loneliness)?*
➢ *How is she behaving when alone and when loneliness is supposed to be felt more powerfully?*
➢ *The future.*
➢ *The cause of loneliness.*

The reasons of themes restructuring for the second interview (hypothesis, coping strategies can be specific for loneliness or are general for all stressing events).

Sampling the theory

Upon the basis of the codes, concepts and categories generated during the constant comparative analysis there were made samples for diverse theories which aimed to complete the generated theory. In the following I will present theory samples, general concepts which were used for the theory generation.

Theory sample

Emotion Focus Therapy

Attachment theories

Narrative therapy

MRI (The Palo Alto School)

The theory of circular causality

- The experimental theory
  - Bowen's intergenerational therapy

2. Coding

For achieving the analysis grid at the basis of coding and for the category identification there were used orientative questions presented by Dick (2005) and Flick (1999).

By combining these orientative questions it has resulted an analysis chart (see annex) which guided the coding process. This chart includes:

I. *The main question of the research:*

Which are the ways of loneliness adjustment and control in the Romanian cultural environment?

II. *Analysis program at the basis of the pattern codes (constant comparative analysis)*

◄ **What?** *What are we talking about here? What phenomena are mentioned here?*

◄ **Who?** *Who is involved – the person, the actor? What is her role?* **How does the person handle the situation?** *How does she interact?*

◄ **How?** *Which aspects of the phenomena are mentioned (or eluded)?*

◄ **When? For how long? Where?** *Time and location.*

◄ **How long?** *How strong it is? Aspects dealing with the intensity.*

◄ **Why?** *Which is the motive or can it be rebuilt?*

◄ **What for?** *What is the intention, the purpose?*

◄ **What methods?** *Tactics and strategies for reaching out the goals.*

◄ **What category?** *(or categories) are suggested by this question?*

The coding process of the text segments was made in several stages starting with the initial step, the one of open codes, to the theoretical and axial codes. We are presenting examples of codes in order to present a picture of the process.

Connected with the codification with open codes this is a specific initial process for the beginning of the constant comparative analysis which presupposes the text analysis step by step

in order to fundament an initial set of categories upon which the theory will be based of. Further, the text coding process (in our case the interviews) will be centered more upon phrases or text samples.

Examples of coding with the constant comparative analysis (open codes):

Analysis sample 1 interview 1

(Sample theme: arriving in Iaşi and the relationship with her ex-husband)

Data obtained from the interview	Units of understanding/open codes
All right[1]/ so[2]/ I was not married[3]/ then4/ It was a thinge[5]/ which[6]/I did not[7]/ discuss[8]/ , So[9]/ I[10]/ left it[11]/ to flow just like that[12]/, anyhow[13]/ it was understood[14]/ from itself[15]/ that I[16]/ did not want to give up[17]/ my job[18]/ which I wanted a lot/[19], in order to remain[20]/ in Galaţi[21]/.	1. she decides to say, takes the decision to open her soul *Code: revealing (accepting the revealing)* 2. conclusion, 3. referring to marriage, (to check if I really asked her about it or she answered spontaneously) marriage is considered as an important marking point (before and after) *Code: marking points referring to relationships (relationship marking points)* 4. referring to past events 5. using a general indicator, a non-specific label which will name the emotional relationship *Code: avoiding the specific nominations* 6. referring the relationship, to its personalization *Code: personalization (relationship)* 7. using approximations, avoids clear specifications, the middle way (she did not say or did not silenced) *Code: avoiding the specific nominations* 8. she did not express her feelings and thoughts in relations with the other person (emotional relationship) *Code: revealing (incepting the revealing)* 9. conclusion 10. personal interaction with the relation 11. personalizing the relationship *Code: personalizing (relationship)* 12. she did not intervene actively in the flow of actions, of the relationship she had a passive attitude *Code: personal passiveness (in relationships)* 13. conclusion, 14. using situational axioms, generalizing things, there is common sense for all people to understand a certain message of the particular situation *Code: using situational axioms (using universal generalization quantifiers when referring to her partner)* 15. presupposes that the partner has got the message, the absence of direct communication *Code: absence of direct communication*

	16. referring to her own 17. clearly and firmly expressing the personal decision, settling the things, in contrast with codes 5 and 7 *Code: firmly expressing the personal decisions* 18. referring to her job as a competitor of her relationship 19. investing the job with an extremely important affective signification *Code: emotional involvement in the decision* 20. presenting the alternative of leaving 21. nominating the city she had to leave.
.... **(Adaptation strategy)** I thought that^{52}/, if^{53}/ I will do it^{54}/ out of love^{55}/, not^{56}/ (not) to bother^{57}/, no ^{58}/(no) I am not pushy^{59}/, no^{60}/ .... ^{61}/, I am giving him more space^{62}/..... he will redress himself^{63}/,... but^{64}/ things^{65}/are getting^{66}/ a little^{67}/crazy^{68}/.	.... 52. *o series of principles and behaviors which were before clear and axiomatic (this is how is done) now do not seem as much valid, (connected with 48), does not present the absolute reality, she has doubts, she thought so but now she has another opinion.* *Code:* connecting to the past principles and ideas 53. *presenting the strategy of solving the issue which had to lead to the desired result (code 63), a quite linear vision upon the interactions between people, if she performs a certain behavior then something will result.* Code: linear vision upon the interpersonal relationships (cause- effect) 54. *activism, initiate a behavior referring to the relationship (the same with the one mentioned at 44)* *Code:* personal activism in relationships 55. *intervention emotional strategy in relationship, if she does things out of love then the partner will change in good.* Code: emotional reaction (modeling her own person) 56. *the actual behavior is an abstention, an attitude of censorship, passivity, action oriented mainly upon her own self and not upon the partner.,* Code: censorship of her own behaviors (passivity in relationships) 57. *she is not asking questions, accepts the boundaries imposed by him in their relationship, she does not interfere in the actions developed by her partner outside their marriage.* Code: keeping the boundaries imposed by her partner in the relationship (she is not asking questions – modeling her own person) (passivity in relationships) 58. *ibidem 56* 59. *accepts the rules of the relationship as structured by her partner, she makes no attempt to change them* *Code:* keeping the rules imposed by her partner in the relationship (she does not insisted in changing them – modeling her own person) (passivity in relationships) 60. *ibidem 56* 61. *other types of similar behaviors with 57 and 59* 62. *makes a step back as regarding the behavior she thinks necessary to be achieved in a relationship, reshaping the boundaries in the relationship in order to offer more freedom* Code: modifying the rules and boundaries imposed by the subject in the relationship (modeling her own person) (passivity in relationships) 63. *the modifications expected from the partner, for the behavior strategy initiated the subject; these modifications are reported to the social standards, the partner has to behave in a certain way, the expected way (the behavior axiom) in order to straighten up* Code: behavior axiom (social standardization)

	64. (alike with 47) starting from desires, from what she wanted to reality, to what really happened Code: difference between what she wants and what is happening 65. using a general indicator, a non-specific label which will not give a name to her emotional relationship or the interactions of the members of the couple with the social context Code: avoiding the specific nominations 66. personalizing the context which is getting out of control, have an inner will Code: personalizing the emotional context (the contextual activism from the relationship) 67. using approximations, avoiding a clear specification Code: avoiding the specific nominations

Other means of codification used later during the research study were those oriented towards discourse phrases or segments. These were recorded through synthetic notes which at the moment of the analysis were dubbed by the recording on the reportphone:

Sample I36.2009.T

I cry[2]/I am usually crying a lot[3]/

I was sad[4]/

Everybody went to the party/New Eve's Party, I remained at home with my parents [5] /

    I.   *enoyment[6]/cry*

habitually I am optimistic person

    II.   *what did I like generally[7] /*

this summer my whole family, my mother/brother have spent 2 months at the seaside

I was left alone

I watched the computer/TV.HBO[8]/

All days are identical /I check my e-mails

Once I was walking through the park /

And I saw couples of youngsters[11] /

I realized that I am alone /

Tears popped out my eyes[12] /

And I have continued my walk[13] /

I saw a church and I entered[13] /

I feel relief /

About loneliness:

She is ugly "I was told that without him (the ex-partner) I am nobody"[14] /

ANALYSIS *Sample I36.2009.T*

No.	Sample loneliness	Context
1	It comes from a large family: 2 parents, one brother, one sister, possibility to contact, reaction, support, performs the relational coping	The context of the familiar factors of the relational coping Primary reaction
2	Somatic reaction through which the subject expresses emotions and the tension situation, usually detentions	Somatic reaction (of detention)
3	Crying – it is a frequent reaction of the person	Crying – behavioral pattern
4	Sad – label associated with the negative emotions determined by the absence of connections	Label – the date of the negative emotions
5	Condition connected with the status of sadness and crying "everybody goes to the party and I am staying with the parents" In the same time it reflects a context where the common coping is no longer efficient	Cognitive generalization which stimulates/accentuates the feeling of loneliness. It draws attention upon the lack of a relationship. Unfavorable context - "everybody goes to the party and I am staying with the parents"
6	Emotion associated within the discussion – anger	Secondary emotion
7	Secondary reaction Coping The subject is trying to offer himself/herself "compulsively" (spontaneously) a status of well-being. Escaping the negative feelings	Secondary reaction Well-being status "I indulge myself" Escaping the negative feelings
8	When missing the ordinary relationship network – parents/brother – will go to the computer/TV	Generalized coping Computer, TV
11	The situation that can trigger loneliness – she saw the two youngsters together – had activated the need for a connection	Events that trigger the relationship Generalized coping
12	Primary reaction	Primary reaction Crying
13	Secondary reaction She was walking in order to get comfort, she goes to the church to get into contact with the divinity/hope	Secondary reaction The church The walk
	" without him (the ex-partner) I am a nobody" The subject is annulling herself	Triggering cognition

3. Memoring

As memos I used card boards of 125 mm x 75 mm, on which I had written several hypothesis of the connections among the categories, their properties and the ways of sampling. The completion of the hypothesis was achieved either during the coding processor in during another step of the research process. On the basis of the memos from the analyzed interview there were structured the themes for the following interview and there were chosen the subjects to be questioned.

Examples of memos:

Memo I1, E1, 1

It can be a difference between the adaptation style towards loneliness and the personal adjustment style; or the adaptation style is constant during its entire life and influences the status of loneliness (referring to the first sample).

Memo I1, E1, 2

Depending the specific of the assertions it is possible that in certain situations to get involved in a very plain manner and in other to avoid the subject.
***lost relationships** (5, 7) – avoids nominating, to talk too much about herself,*
***decisions taken in the past** (17) (possible connected to relationships) – clear cut, obvious attitude*

Memo I1, E1, 3

Usually does not revel the feelings, his/hers internal life 1, 8 (adjustment strategies?)

The memos are an important element which, together with guiding the sampling and the evolution of the theory, will be placed at the end in connection with the generated concepts and will outline the basis of the theory. In annex will be placed several examples of memos in order to see the evolution of the theory.

5. Diagrams

Together with the memos the diagrams are necessary in the process of the constant comparative analysis process in order to generate theory. These are important especially in the axial codification when it is established the connation between the categories. The diagrams presented in this chapter are the diagrams generated during the research which can be revealed or not in the final diagrams put in the theory.

Diagram 1

OPERATIONALIZATION OF THE FUNCTIONAL AND DISFUNCTIONAL COPING

Description of the status of loneliness

easy   difficult

functional coping   dysfunctional coping

accepts the emotional feelings   avoid the emotions
   actualization   defense/rationalization

Behavioral change

Functional coping – communication with the people around

Dysfunctional coping
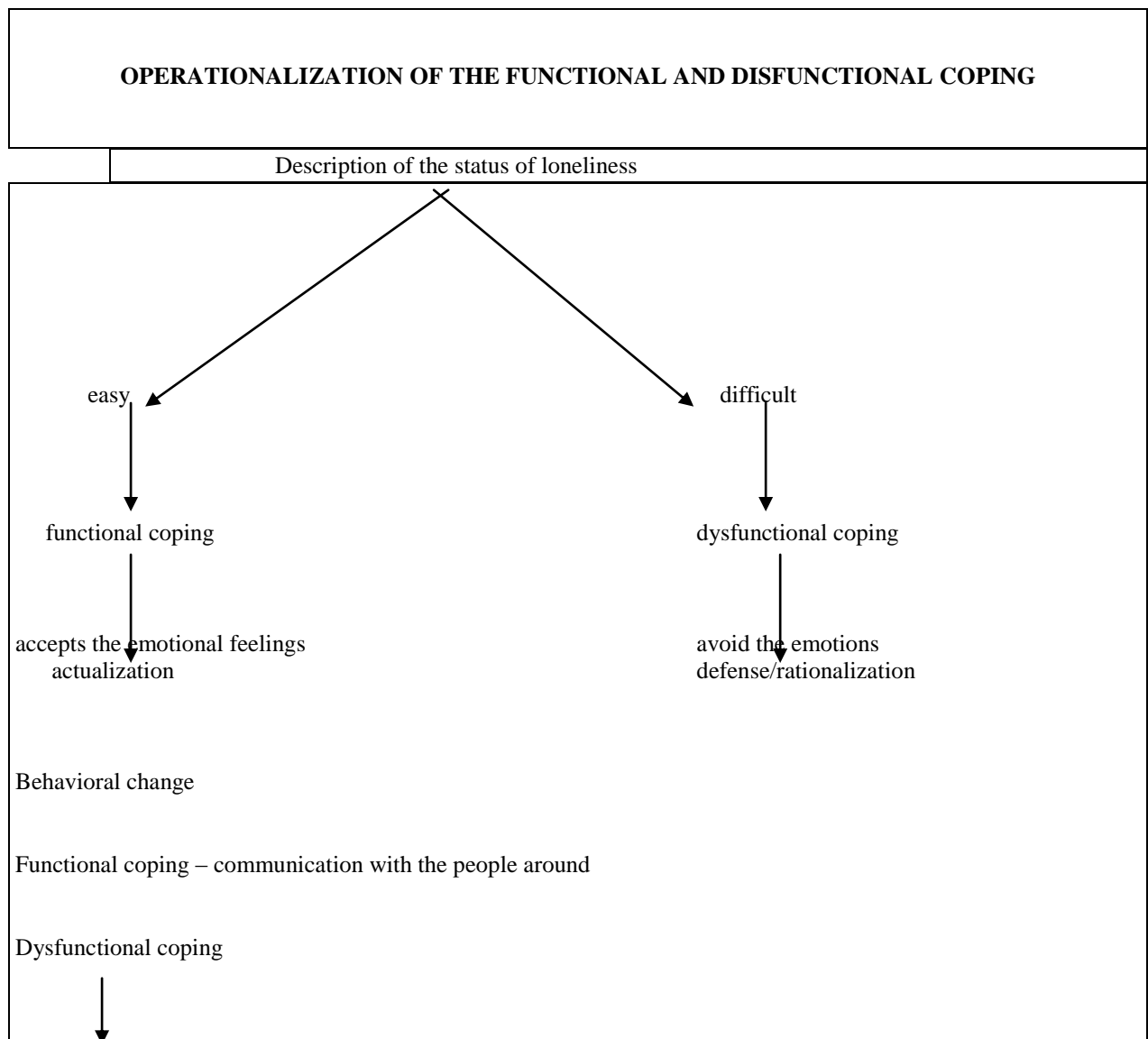
Avoiding the emotions escaping

- Cannot talk about the status

- Does not want to talk about the status

- Promises to stop living this loneliness status

- Avoids the description of the obvious situations

Diagram 2

Categories

Situations that can activate loneliness

(presumes to come with or stay with your partner or with significative people)

issues   avoids all reminders about   Unfavorable contexts
                      the relationship   of generalized coping

general   specific   party   evening   in weekends   the departure of others   holidays
                                                                                     in holidays or elsewhere
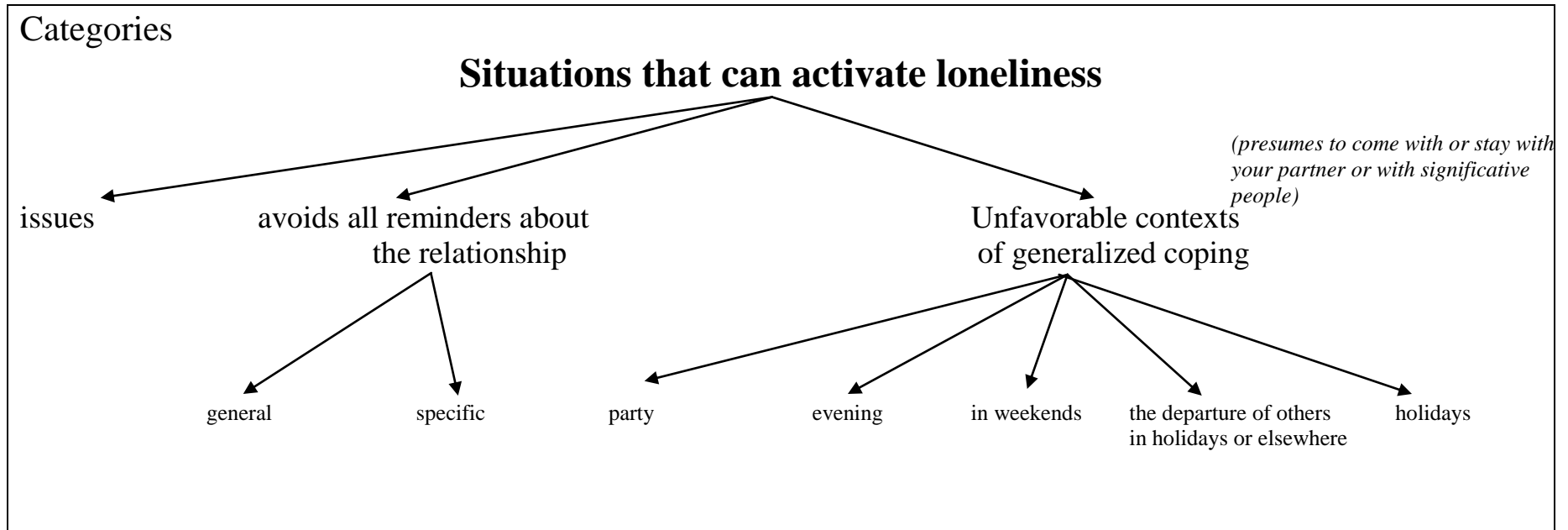
The diagram of the theory **"The circular process of loneliness adaptation and control strategies"**

the absence of a couple partner for satisfying the attachment needs

Sense of loneliness

Emotions connected with difficulties

Difficulties encountered by the person

Acute loneliness

Evaluation of the situation

PROBLEM

Triggering factors

Generalized loneliness

CIRCULAR PROCESS OF COPING STRATEGIES

PERSON

SITUATION

Coping resources

Unfavorable contest

COPING

Context connected to

Specified coping

Generalized coping

Favorable context

activism

Passivity

Reactions ss

Sec.Reaction s

activism

passivity

activism

passivity

28

Circularity – interaction

An important aspect of the theory generated by the Grounded Theory method is the circular process of coping strategies when talking about loneliness. Thus the three main categories of coping process, Person - Situation - Coping, are positioned in a system of interactions and reciprocal actions, generating the answer of one person to the environmental requirements.

The Situational elements as well as the factors connected with the Person are interwoven, sustaining or blocking each other (e.g.: the parental models are influencing the way in which I am reporting myself to the daily difficulties and their connection with the sense of loneliness). I think that the separate identification is more helpful when one wants to understand the phenomena or to react. We should not forget that there is not only one triggering cause or factor but several causes in an interaction chain, continuously reciprocally influencing.

Together with this duality (Situation - Person), sustaining the theory of circularity it enters in interaction the Coping. The coping consequences at the level of one person can be distinguished by the effects upon the present moment (surpassing the situation) as well as in the perspective through its implications upon the person functionality or non-functionality. Reported to the situation, coping is influencing the future situation of the individual and will benefit of the effects of some coping strategies that were generated in the past.

These interactions presented above, the circular causality presented in the process of coping strategies in loneliness is underlined by he fact that the effect (the sense) of coping needs a context and a person in order to be deciphered.

A simple example would be the fact that a behavior such as „retiring into the room", can have a detention effect when the person is loaded by the relationship with the others, perceives different messages or evaluations from other people connected with loneliness, the tendency to hide, as the person have the feeling of vulnerability due to the feeling and the situation (the status of being alone from an emotional point of view). The same behavior, „retiring into the room", can be one entering the sphere of process focusing coping, representing a riot strategy, which intends to punish the other people, who will change their behaviors and will react differently in the future, will no longer have the attitudes evaluated by the subject as being the causes of the occurrence of the sense of loneliness. Of course I have discovered in this situation a very strong personal factor connected to the past, to the

anterior experience; this specific reaction „retiring in the room" has the effect of punishing the other, the subject obtaining the satisfaction of his attachment needs (mother's attention, father's arrival). When we want to intervene upon the coping ways, either we embody the person in cause, or a specialist working with people feeling loneliness as an issue, it is very important to see the process as a whole, to become conscious of the implications of all factors and to propose to action upon the interactions and not upon the separated elements. We should not try to discover the primary cause (as there are several causes) but to see what we can modify within the interaction system, to change the rules of these interactions (e.g. to build several encouraging contexts and to direct upon those contexts which we are usually avoiding). Changing the rules, from the point of view of the therapists belonging to the School from Palo-Alto, we will influence the changes at the level of the elements taken separately (the sense of loneliness, the issue, coping strategies, context where I will feel more comfortable, people with which I will interact more often.).

This category of circularity – interactions has emerged within the constant comparative analysis, mainly from the multitude of variables resulted from the data (especially in the first part of the interview there appeared several concepts connected with the context and the triggering factors). We added to all these contact with the transactional perspective upon the coping and my specialization as family and couple psychotherapist. Thus we have reported the multitude of factors to the theory and, in the case of the axial codification, we have identified the category of circularity upon the basis of the theories about circular causality specific to the systemic therapy.

The circular causality sais that a person behavior at a certain moment is situated in a chain of interactions of some elements which are mutually influenced. In other words, in the case of the human behaviors the explanation and the intervention upon themselves must take into account the fact that there is no only one cause which at a certain moment can determine a reaction but a multitude of causes in interaction.
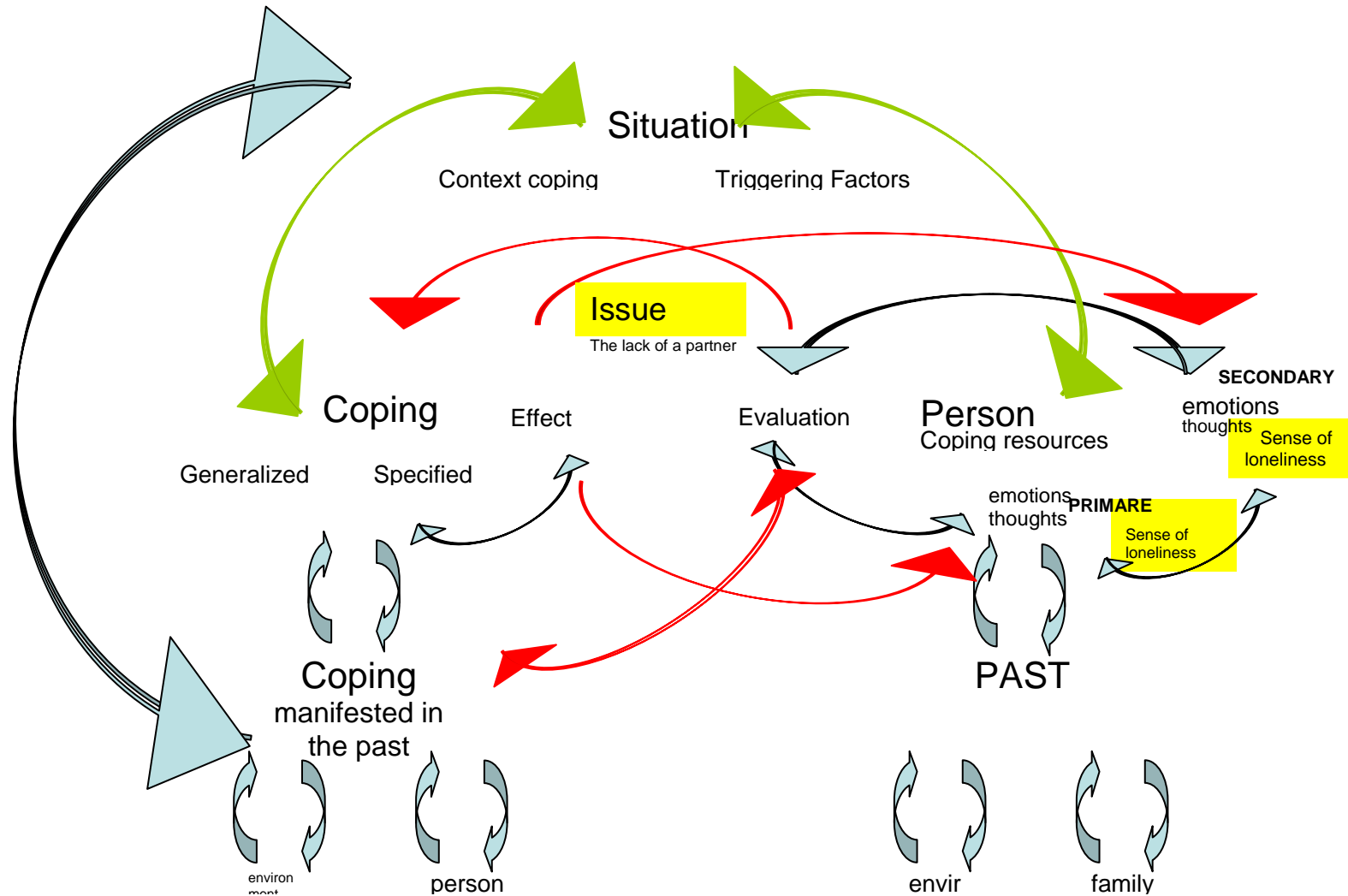
In order to make a comprehensible presentation I have started with a format achieved by myself in order to explain the interaction between two people.

Cauzalitatea circulară
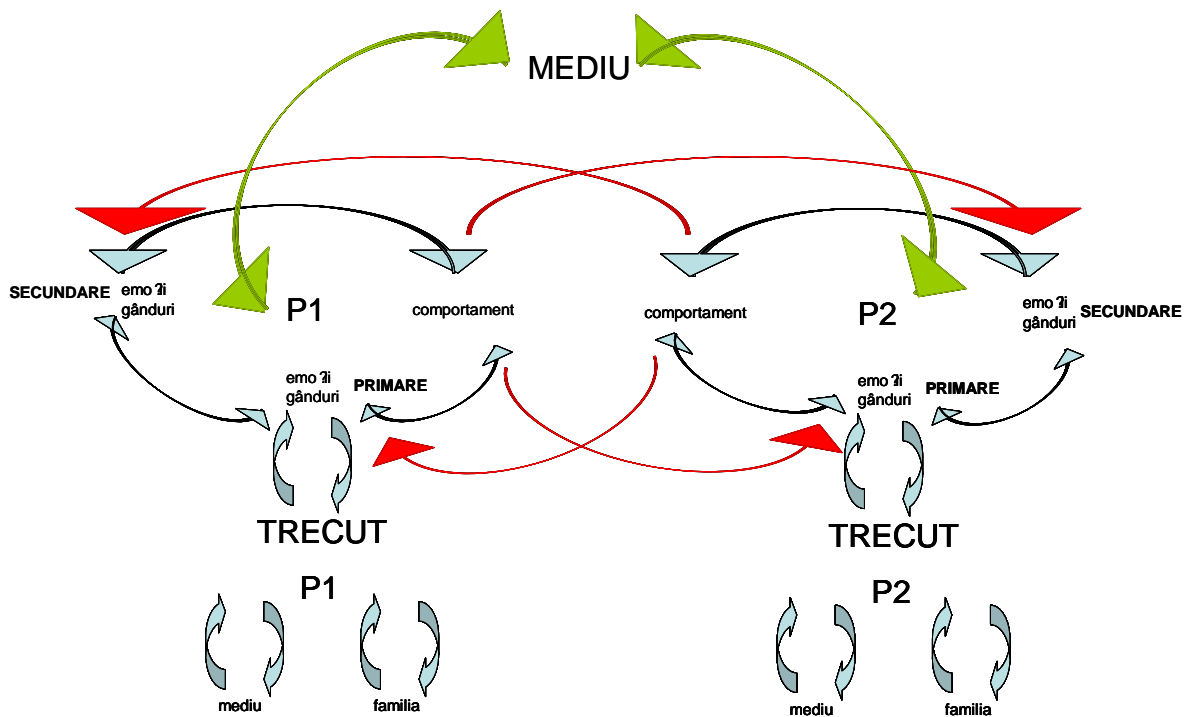
Starting with this layout I have created a diagram which, I think, could disclosure the process of interactions between the Person – Situation – Coping.

Circular Process of Coping Strategies for Loneliness

Situation

Context coping   Triggering Factors

Issue
The lack of a partner

Coping   Effect   Evaluation   Person   SECONDARY
                                                     Coping resources   emotions
Generalized   Specified   thoughts   Sense of
                                                                                    loneliness

                                                     emotions PRIMARE
                                                     thoughts   Sense of
                                                                 loneliness

Coping
manifested in
the past   PAST

environ   person   envir   family
ment

In the following I will present several examples of interactions:

- the constructed favorable context is determined by the generalized or previously secondary coping;

- the favorable unconstructed context can be used with coping valences (conjecture coping);

- the unfavorable constructed context is the coping effect for avoiding the social relationships;

- the favorable unconstructed context is connected by living the loneliness feeling (amplifying the effects of the triggering factors or it becomes itself a triggering factor);

- interactions – old coping pattern, new coping pattern (reactions towards the attachment person – mother, father), (reactions towards the emotional loneliness – a partner),

- tiredness – makes the passage from the primary coping reaction to the secondary coping reactions;

- tiredness – as a consequence of the coping activities to loneliness, it has no effect during crisis situations;

- the problem appears at the interaction between the person and the situations;

- depending the personal history and the context (favoring factors, triggering factors) the person can direct himself towards coping strategies in order to solve the problem and towards coping strategies for diminishing the sense of loneliness.

- the familial models can influence the reaction of the person towards the other (approaching/remoteness) with consequences upon the favoring context.

Using the theory

These results of the study can be used both by the people who feel loneliness as an issue in order to discover themselves and to find directions towards they can start off efficient actions to surpass the problems with the help of specialists. These specialists can be psychiatrists, psychotherapists, social workers, NGO's and sociologists. I shall present a guide for the psychotherapists and an idea for a social intervention. I think that we can find multiple and complex use of this study but it can be the objective of a focus group with the above mentioned specialists to whom will be presented the results of the research.

Psychotherapy

Therapeutically strategy (working guide elaborated from the perspective of the theory **"Circular process of loneliness adaptation and control strategies")**

On the problem we can work with all three dimensions:

Situation

– Building as many favorable circumstances as possible in order to start a couple relationship and for surpassing the condition of being lonely;

– Working upon the perspective hold by the subject upon the triggering factors (intergenerational, cognitive-behavioral and narrative theories).

Person

- Developing the social abilities;

- Working upon the reactions and the sensibilities connected with the couple relationships, the intergenerational patterns*;

- Investigating the issues hidden by loneliness;

- Developing self-awareness in connection with the attachment needs and building up a functional style;

- Identifying the risk factors: „the use of substances"/abuses/dependences/major traumas.

Coping

- Working upon the evaluation of the situation;

- Accepting all coping strategies as being useful;

- Focusing more upon the strategies of solving the issues and less upon the coping strategies concentrated upon emotion;

- Awareness and identifying a step in the process of solving the issue;

- Flexibility and multiplying the coping strategies (brainstorming);

- Guide for different coping strategies during the state of loneliness.

Social intervention

- The social projects should build as many opportunities as possible for the people alone, especially during unfavorable contexts (by night, in weekends, during holidays, during different public holidays).

Ideas for future researches

Another advantage of this methodology is the fact that by using a constant comparative analysis and by methodology (with memos) there are generated several questions connected with the studied phenomena, questions which can generate other investigations. At the end of such a procedure it can be achieved a chapter of the possible future directions to be researched (non-specific to the clear objectives of the analysis). Thinking to the moments of my academic (scholastic) journey when I was supposed to start a research (different tasks of a class or the final paper, master or PhD thesis), or the moments of practice when I was interested in a subject an I intended to search further, I think it would have been very useful for the one starting a research connected with an area to get into contact with such a list of questions.

I am presenting here a list of hypothesis and questions which can be at the basis of further studies.

- Generating an instrument to measure quantitative or qualitative different aspects of the theory;

- Classifying the answers to coping loneliness in Romania. Facilitating or burdening the socio-cultural context;

- How does it vary depending the sex;

- The theory determines research directions which can help its development and improvement;

- Which is the difference between the vulnerable contexts and the moments when loneliness is perceived as being acute;

- Using therapeutically coping as a way of working with clients with predominant acute crisis of loneliness (the main issue or one of the topics is loneliness);

- Using efficient coping strategies;

- If the therapy strategy is no longer efficient for the clients we should help them to identify more clearly the emotions of the crisis moments, to accept them and to discover coping methods which can allow them a functional way of expressing themselves, with adequate experience;

- If the efficient coping relations will favor the positive circumstances (the absence of loneliness) and will also facilitate the achievement of relationships;

- The connection between the feeling of loneliness and the coping used all the time when solving the problems (the rigid coping);

- Identifying some structures, patterns of functional and dysfunctional circularity – using the structuralist theories;

- The efficiency or the non-efficiency of coping represents topics for another study;

- The connection between the dysfunctional attachment and coping.

Conclusions- reflections upon the theory

These conclusions which are supposed to be placed at the end of a paper are, in my own approach, reflections of the emerging theory resulted after the research. This title of the chapter would be more in the spirit of a perspective of openness ands flexibility specific to the developed process and does not intend to give verdicts, to establish truths, but only to study human interactions and to reflect upon the observations made within the study in an articulate manner.

Thus I can assert that the whole initiative does not propose but to formulate a series of hypothesis drawn on the basis of the specific comparative analysis specific to the Grounded

Theory method. The values of these hypothesis is given by the fact that together with the authors' flair and experience they are generates through a thorough process connecting the theory with the field data, offering thus a more compelling feature.

Of course the generated hypothesis can be developed, validated or invalidates with quantitative or qualitative methods, being accurate starting points, even if I have added a tiny component in the paper which had synthesized the ideas emerged during the analysis that can be a resource both for me as for other researchers.

During the research I have to deal with unseen experiences, as I had a certain independence of developing the study. This freedom had changed a little the research orientation with which I was used before. I started the road guided by the initial theoretical land marks and by the question of the study:

"Which are the adaptation and control ways of the emotional loneliness (coping strategies) at female people in the Romanian cultural environment? How are they manifesting?"

These facts have helped me to experiment the freedom mentioned above doubled by a feeling of inquisitiveness and aspiration to discover more about the studied issue, especially without knowing about the finishing line. I was not constricted by hypothesis and by the specific methodology with which are controlled the variables in order to validate or invalidate more accurately.

The approach had lead me to hypothesis but I did not started from hypothesis. In expanding the Grounded Theory methodology the purpose of the interviews was not to verify if everyone was alike in order to validate the hypothesis. The themes to be explored and the question were not the same for all of them. The purpose was to stimulate the discovering of the theory, and the researcher was guided by each subject interviewed for building the theory. Each new interview can propose the focusing upon other themes, which were stimulated by the anterior interviews or by the comparative analysis accomplished due to the theory or to other materials.

Thus I have reached to a target group of 58 people: 39 women feeling loneliness as a real issue, 11 women who do not feel loneliness as an issue, 2 men feeling loneliness as a real issue, 6 psychotherapists.

The research process was oriented towards determining the connections and discovering some explanatory interactions between the elements of the studied phenomena. There were generates categories, sub-categories, concepts, properties, dimensions, relations and interactions between all these.

It was important for the understanding the theory the four concepts connected with the central category which is *The Circular Process of Loneliness Coping Strategies*. Thus all three main categories of the coping process, *Person – Situation – Issue – Coping*, are situated in a system of interactions and reciprocal actions generating an answer for the person submitted to the environmental challenges.

These interactions were described in the chapter Theory generated by Grounded Theory method, *The Circular Process of Adaptation and Control Loneliness Strategies.* (see the diagram of the beginning of this chapter.....).

An important consequence of the generated theory is the fact that when we want to intervene upon the ways of coping, either we are the person in the specific situation, or a specialist working with people who are feeling loneliness as an issue, it is important to see the whole process as a whole, to be aware of the implications of all factors and to propose to action upon the interactions and not upon the separated elements. We must not try to discover the primary source (as there are several sources) but to see what we can modify in the interaction system, to change the rules of these interactions (for example to build as many favorable context s as possible and to orient ourselves upon those circumstances which we are usually avoiding). Changing the rules, from the point of view of the Palo-Alto School therapists, we will influence the stages at the level of the separated elements (the sense of loneliness, the issue, coping strategies, contexts where I will feel more comfortable, people with whom I shall interact more often).

The circularity specific to the identified central category is given also by the fact that the effect (the sense) of coping needs a context and a person in order to be deciphered. A simple example would be the fact that a behavior, „room retiring", can have a detention effect when the person is loaded by the relationship with the others, perceives from the others messages or evaluations connected with loneliness, the tendency to hide because the person herself feels her vulnerability because of her feelings and situation (the status of being alone – from an emotional point of view). The same behavior, „room retiring", can be one entering the sphere of coping focused upon the process, being a riot strategy, in order to punish everyone else who will modify their behaviors and will react differently in the future, abandoning the attitudes which the subject are considering as being a cause of her sense of loneliness. Of course in this situation I have met a very strong personal factor connected to the past, to previous experience, this type

of reaction having a punishment effect upon the other people, the subject obtaining the satisfaction of her attachment needs (mother's or father's arrival).

In parallel with these interactions presented in the previous chapter, there were also identified a series of objective adjusted behaviors and answers (coping strategies to loneliness) which can be registered in a classification. Of course that the list is not exhaustive. The object of the study was not to describe and classify the phenomena but to discover explanatory directions.

Most of the coping categories mentioned here are relevant from the point of view of the issue, the sense of loneliness connected with the absence of a couple partner. This is why I think that it is accurate to name the coping strategy depending the messages and labels which emerged during the process of constant comparative analysis process, and not from the point of view of the established typology belonging to the general theories of coping.

The distinct elements of the theory, connected to this classification, are referring to the second category of coping and to a process observed by these loneliness adaptation and control strategies. Thus it resulted the second coping category: *the generalized coping* – corresponding to the generalized loneliness, constantly experienced and *the specific coping* particular to acute loneliness, with intense situational practices. During the specific coping there was noticed a clear process divided into two temporal connected categories: *the primary reaction* and **the secondary reaction**.

When describing the coping strategies I have noticed that I did not discovered during my interviews a series of strategies which were mentioned in the specific literature.

Thus I did not found meditation techniques, physical activities, I did not encounter coping with pets and even less strategies which presupposes the issue, discovering partners (going into different clubs, discussions on matrimonial sites, etc.).

There are several explanations and the validations can emerge from further researches. For example it can appear the feeling of shyness specific to this target group manifested by the fact that they wanted to hide that aspect which they wish to acquire (a change at the level of cognitions on this direction could point out to the clients the strategies which will solve the problem).

Another explanation is the one connected with the fact that during the interviews the subjects were referring mainly to coping strategies focused upon re-evaluation and upon emotions. At the basis of this phenomenon I think there lies the fact that I have chosen as target group people feeling loneliness as a real concern (for at least 2 years). As I have chosen this

research theme – the sense of loneliness, it means that the target group was considerably limited to subjects who are mainly troubled by the emotional effect of the problem (the lack of a partner) and not necessarily by the difficulty itself.

It is possible that in the case of the people experiencing the sense of loneliness, the emotional effect of the trouble can be so powerful that it can conquer the whole perspective. During the evaluation process of the stressing situation it is possible that the person to pay more attention to emotion, trying to stand up to it. This fact can be in the detriment of solving the issue (finding a partner), as a circular effect of coping practice. This means that by applying the coping focused upon emotions, it will detention the situation, turning away the stimulation role (specific to these emotions of experiencing loneliness) of the person, in order to satisfy her needs (in this case - affection needs). It seems that this role of stimulating the sense of loneliness towards action (attaining erotic relationships) is lost in the case of chronic, powerful emotions (when loneliness was experienced for more than two years).

An important idea is the one connected to coping efficiency and functioning. In this paper I have separated the discussion about the *effect* (as an aspect of Coping interaction with Person and Situation), the efficiency (connected to the coping specificity) and functionality (connected to the explanatory theories of the people's psychopathology). These differences are helping us to monitor the place of coping during the process (the effect), to see its adaptation function to the environmental situations (efficiency) and to calibrate the theories in order to achieve psychotherapeutically interventions, either the matter is loneliness or something else connected in some way to this subject (functionality).

I tried to think out the limits of this study and come up with several ideas which have attracted my attention and I am definitely going to explore in future studies.

Thus I have noticed that the generated data have insisted upon the person, upon the triggering factors of the loneliness feeling (internal features depending on each person), presenting more the situation and less the coping strategies.

This can be (circularly) determined by the fact that the interviewed people were very much oriented towards stories concerning the context and less upon the own person (either it was very difficult, or it was activated the control of the external control).

Another aspect is the fact that it does not underline the difference between men and women. This is due to the fact that the main method to make differences is the assessment with large samples in case of qualitative studies and the initiation of another qualitative study upon a large sample of men. During the present study I thought further and I consider that it would be

appropriate to start a new study equivalent with the one developed for the women and I have already incorporated this idea for my further project studies.

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