Appendix B
Sample Qualitative Notebook Report with Instructor Feedback

From

Personal Experiences of Life

Running head: QUALITY OF LIFE

Personal Experiences of a Doctoral Student Regarding Quality of Life: A Single Case Study

Author

Comment [2011]: A good brief
Personal Experiences of a Doctoral Student Regarding Quality of Life: A Single Case Study

Method

Participants

In this study, the researcher utilized purposive sampling for gathering data. This type of sampling allowed the researcher to choose specific individuals who would define the essence of the research problem, question, or study (Creswell, 2007; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Specifically, in this study it was decided that convenience sampling strategy would be used to conduct the research study. The purpose of the study was to gather data regarding the quality of life of a single doctoral student. This strategy was employed due to the nature of the study (Miles & Huberman). The study needed to be conducted during a limited time period, and in a context and setting that would allow the researcher to gather data (Miles & Huberman). Locating the appropriate type of participant, who was willing to participate in the study, was also an important factor that determined the use of the convenience sampling strategy (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007a).

In the study, the researcher was a participant-observer and presented himself as neutral. The researcher asked questions designed to illicit a response from the participant. During the interview, the researcher also asked clarification questions. One goal of the researcher was to avoid biasing the responses of the participant through the use of non-verbal gestures. Therefore, the researcher attempted to remain as neutral as possible in regards to the questioning style of the researcher. The researcher and participant were acquainted prior to conducting the study. Both the researcher and participant were members of the same doctoral cohort at the same university.
During the course of the study, the researcher ensured that the identification of the participant was protected. This was achieved by assigning codes to the participant’s identity instead of using the participant’s name (Creswell, 2007; Lipson, 1994). The researcher revealed the purpose of the study, did not engage in any form of deception, and informed the participant that she did not need to respond to any questions that made her uncomfortable (Creswell; Lipson).

This study utilized information gathered from a single participant. The use of a single participant was sufficient for addressing the research questions, and allowed the researcher to use a key informant to gather responses (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007b). Further, the participant was a doctoral student in the counseling education department at a Tier III university in southeast Texas (US News and World Report, 2005). Moreover, the university population consisted of 15,000 undergraduate and graduate students (US News and World Report). The counseling education doctoral program is in the process of seeking CACREP accreditation. The participant described herself as an unmarried single Caucasian female in her mid-20s. At the time of her involvement in the study, the participant was completing her first year in the doctoral program and was a full-time employee working in the social services field.

Instruments

The current study utilized a single instrument that consisted of six open-ended questions. A goal of the researcher was to obtain information from the participant without placing too many constraints on the ability of the participant to respond freely and, therefore, closed-ended questions were not used (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The semi-structured nature of the interview, using pre-designed open-ended questions, allowed the researcher the flexibility to...
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Guide the focus of the study while allowing the participant to respond freely without feeling restricted (Miles & Huberman).

To increase legitimacy, the research questions were presented to doctoral students and administrators for construct validity (e.g., face validity) (Edmonson & Irby, 2008). The instrument was designed with the input of 11 doctoral students and one professor. For example, the research questions were co-constructed by the doctoral students and the professor. Moreover, the research questions were co-constructed by the doctoral students and the professor.

The doctoral students and professor reached consensus about the questions that made up the instrument and the contextual nature of the questions were discussed in an open forum. Further, the panel of doctoral students and one professor discussed determining the order of the questions to avoid bias in subsequent responses. It was determined that the questions were appropriate for gaining knowledge regarding the research phenomenon.

The following six questions in the instrument were designed to relay the experience of the participant, and the instrument comprised the following six questions: (a) Aside from pursuing a doctorate, what are some of your life goals? (b) How do your professional skills help you in your personal life? (c) What does your life look like when things are going well? (d) What does your life look like when things are not going well? (e) When things are going well, how do you pick yourself up? and (f) How do you take care of yourself?

The researcher conducting the interview possessed the minimum training regarding the interview process. Moreover, the researcher was academically qualified to conduct the interview, possessed a degree in counseling, and had experience conducting interviews in research and counseling settings. The interview had one participant and a single interviewer. According to

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Adler and Adler (1987), the researcher in the current study was a peripheral member and was not involved in the day-to-day activities of the participant.

The current study was conducted at a high school in southeast Texas, and the interview took place in the teacher's lounge at the high school at 8:00 PM on February 14th, 2008. The setting of the interview was informal and lasted approximately 25 minutes. Moreover, the participant was asked a single question, given time to respond, and then presented with another question until all the questions were answered.

Procedure

During the course of the study, data were gathered using the interview process. The interview was recorded and transcribed. The recording device was an Olympus digital voice recorder. Interviewing and observation were important aspects in gathering data for the study (Crowell, 2007; Spradley, 1980).

For the purposes of this study, convenience sampling strategy was used. The researcher determined that a one-on-one interview would best serve the purpose of the study. An interview protocol was created but was not presented to the participant in the study. Instead, the researcher asked the participant the questions in the instrument protocol (Crowell, 2007). The panel of 11 doctoral students and one professor developed six open-ended questions, and the questions were ordered to reduce bias. Moreover, the actual setting of the study was agreed upon by the 11 doctoral students and one professor.

At the time of the interview, the purpose of the study was explained to the participant by the researcher. Further, the interview was conducted during the allotted time of 30 minutes, which allowed all the research questions to be answered thoroughly. The interviewer was trained...
and experienced in both academic and professional interviewing. Ethical considerations were taken into account. This study did not employ the use of deception. Further, initiatives were taken to ensure that the participant remained anonymous. The participant was assigned a code and no names were mentioned ( Creswell, 2007; Lipson, 1994). The original interview occurred on February 14th, 2008, the member checking was conducted February 21st, 2008, and the debriefing interview was conducted on April 10th, 2008 (transcript in appendix). 

The research paradigm of this study was "constructional". The current study was conducted to gain an understanding of a concept (e.g., wellness of doctoral students) from the participant's view, and the view allowed the researcher to gain an understanding of the participant's world (Creswell, 2007). Further, the questions were co-constructed by a panel of 11 doctoral students and one professor, and the open-ended format for the questions allowed the participant the flexibility to respond freely and openly. The use of computer programs to analyze data was involved, the use of multiple levels of analysis was conducted, and the researcher used legitimation techniques (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). A member checking procedure was conducted by the researcher to ensure that the comments made by the participant were accurate. The researcher also conducted a debriefing interview with a peer researcher conducting a similar study. (Transcripts are provided in the appendix section.) 

The current research was an instrumental case study involving one participant, and the study focused on a single issue. The researcher wanted to know how a single doctoral student took care of himself or herself. 

The researcher was able to gain access and conduct the interview as a result of being a member of the doctoral cohort that developed the instrument protocol and selected the physical
The use of the checklist - Appendix B

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THE USE OF THE CHECKLIST  - Appendix B

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ANALYSIS


Comment [A006]: level 1

Comment [A004]: Flattish

Comment [A004]: Why required comparison matrix

Comment [A003]: On structural details You should state that the second member should also

Comment [A004]: [On structural details, You should state that the second member should also have reviewed the qualitative and the quantitative data if you were to achieve credibility, auditability, reliability, and validity. In this case, all the data were reviewed by the second member.]

Comment [A003]: Did it
or agree with the findings of the study and was accomplished a posteriori (Cronbach). Finally, the nomination of the codes occurred before the research began and was accomplished a priori (Cronbach).

Classic content analysis was used to identify codes. All codes were identified a priori. The researcher established the codes before conducting the classical content analysis. This analysis can be used for the current study to determine the number of times a particular code is used, and as a result, the researcher can possibly determine codes and concepts that are important to the participant (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). Codes that were developed prior to running the analysis were the relationship friends, relationship family, ethical and moral principles, and self-recognition. The researcher chose to conduct the analysis by hand. During the analysis, the researcher read through the transcript and counted the number of times a code was used. To order to select and code the information in the transcript, the researcher searched for contextual clues and the frequency of important terms (Leech & Onwuegbuzie). Finally, the researcher counted the number of times certain codes were used.

A breakdown of the results from the analysis revealed that the most frequently occurring code was “self-recognition” (10 times), followed by the code “relationship friends” (6 times). The code “relationship family” was used four times, and the code “ethical and moral principles” was used four times. Table 1 lists the codes and the number of times each code was used.

Insert Table 1 about here
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Results

Observational data such as the kinesic, proxemic, chronemic, and paralinguistic
demands of the participant were gathered during the interview (Fontana & Frey, 2005). The
proxemic position of the participant remained the same throughout the interview. She sat across
the table from the researcher. Speech patterns remained consistent throughout the interview, and
the pacing of her voice decreased as she spoke of academic and career goals, but increased when
she spoke of family and friends. The interviewee did not display excessive body movements. On
occasion, she would turn her head slightly when she wanted to think about a response before
actually giving it. Also, the interviewee’s paralinguistic remained consistent throughout, and she
did not change her volume, pitch, or quality of her voice.

As a result of the analysis, the researcher was able to determine that self-recognition was
an important aspect in the participant’s life. There were other codes used for the classic content
analysis that were significant to the participant. The following paragraphs will present each
individual code, the number of times it was used, and examples from the transcription.

The code of self-recognition was the most frequently used code. It was used a total of 10
times throughout the analysis. The transcription was filled with instances that represented the
participant’s ability for self-recognition. For instance, the participant mentioned in regards to her
ability to use her counseling skills with people “when it comes to personal or like love
relationships...I don’t seem to be able to separate logic from feelings...I am usually a pretty
logical...” Also, the participant mentioned that “It’s a family is a lot harder for me to use those
skills as well though,” and “it’s hard for me to use, um empathy or trying to see, um, other
Personal Experiences of people’s points of view, and it is not necessarily really with all my family, but probably just more so with my sister and my dad."

In another instance, the participant mentioned that she knew which parts of her life were more important to her. For example, “If things are not going well in school it probably take a little more precedence over work,” and “Um, but if things are not going well with friends or family, I am much more concerned with those things than I am with school or work.” The participant also described how she picks herself up when things are not going well. She stated, “I don’t normally play the poor pitiful me…it’s not a comfortable place for me to be in,” and she said "I think a lot of us more internal.” However, she did state in regards to problems with friends and family that “It’s harder for me to pick myself up in family and friends area,” and “if something is going on with a family or friend it’s much harder for me to want work or go to school, rather than just take the day off and cry it off…” Finally in regards to how the participant takes care of herself she stated “I am pretty good at balancing things which is why I think I have more good times than bad,” and she mentioned “I just I try not to let things stress me out.” [The researcher coded these instances as self-recognition. The participant came across as knowing how issues with family and friends impact her life. Moreover, she knew of other areas in her life that she could handle. The researcher found that the participant possessed the ability to recognize qualities of herself that were pertinent to her existence.]

Next, the code of “relationship” was used a total of six times. The researcher found that the participant referred to friendships many times throughout the transcript. For instance, the participant mentioned, “I have awesome friends,” and “I feel very loved by my friends.” In response to what life looks like when things are not going well, the participant stated, “It's
because I am sad about something... I was just homesick... I missed all my friends...,” and she also stated that “I have a vast array of friends that I complain and cry to... and after I have talked to people I feel a little bit better.” Further, the participant stated “there are times when I need external reassurance from people,” and “if I have friends that are arguing and bickering and I'm usually the first person they go to.” The participant revealed during the interview that her friendships were extremely important to her, and that she needed her friends as much as they needed her.

The “family relationship” was used a total of four times. Family was important to the participant and at times she mentioned family in the present and future context. For instance, she stated “personal goals would, goals would be definitely family,” and “But I definitely want to be a mom.” Also, the participant stated that currently, “I have a great family”, and that she is concerned about her family over other aspects of her life. She stated “if things are not going well with family, I am much more concerned with those things than I am with school or work.” The participant revealed that family was important to her. Further, she valued the relationships with her family members, and eventually wanted to have a family of her own.

Finally, “ethical and moral principles” was another code that was used four times during the analysis. The participant stated that her professional skills “Help me be very objective and really being more Adlerian,” and “I try to look at things from the aspect of like everyone's vantage point.” She also mentioned that her professional skills have helped in other areas of her life. For instance, “I guess it has helped me um, in the aspect of career to work with difficult people that I may not that some people have conflicts with.” In another example, the participant stated, “I definitely believe that people that we are in control of our emotion, and that we, you
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know, we decide how we are going to feel about situations.” The analysis of the interview revealed that the participant placed a great deal of emphasis on following Adlerian principles. It was apparent through her dialogue that she tried to practice Adlerian principles such as responsibility of choice, taking into account multiple viewpoints, and the control that one has on his or her emotions.

Discussion

The four codes that were used for the purposes of the research analysis were related to one another. For instance, the “self-recognition” code was used for many different contexts. The participant spoke of her family and how she recognized that she was not as patient with them as she was with others. Also, the participant was able to recognize that she acted very illogically when she was dealing with a personal intimate relationship. The participant had the ability to differentiate and look at her actions. Another example of her ability to recognize herself was expressed when she spoke of her relationships to her friends and how important they were to her. For example, she said that if her friends were having problems, the problems impacted her life.

She said that it was difficult for her to go to work or school, and that she would rather cry.

The researcher was able to infer that the participant knew what aspects of her life were important to her, and that the participant was able to recognize those aspects.

“Relationship friend” was another code that the researcher used to identify concepts that the participant described during the interview. In her interview the participant revealed on several occasions that her friends were important to her. She spoke of how she needed them when she was feeling overwhelmed, or when she needed to cry. The participant also stated that her friends are awesome and that she feels loved by them. She mentioned being homesick and
really missing her friends. Not only did she need them, but they needed her. For example, in the interview the participant said that if her friends are bickering and arguing, they normally come to her for help to solve issues in their lives. The researcher was able to infer that the participant thrived on social contact and friendships. Upon further questioning during the member checking procedure, the participant revealed that she has had the same friends since early childhood. The researcher realized that the participant not only thrived on social contact, but she also preferred friendships that were long lasting and meaningful.

The "family relationship" code was used throughout the analysis process. The participant mentioned her family several times and in several different contexts. She mentioned that she loves her family and that when things are going well with family members she feels great. However, if any family member is experiencing difficulties, the impact on her is devastating.

The participant also stated that she has problems being empathic with her father and sister. The researcher was able to infer that the participant loved her family, but at the same time recognized her inability to relate with certain members of her family. The member checking procedure allowed the researcher to find out more about this, and it was revealed that her parents were divorced and that she is closer to her mother. In another example, the participant wanted to start her own family. She wanted to be mother. The researcher could reasonably infer that the participant appreciated having a network of family members that supported her.

Finally, "the ethical and moral principles" were also used in the analysis. It was found that the participant was a firm believer in the Adlerian school of thought. She mentioned that she tried to abide by Adlerian principles in her everyday thoughts and actions. However, there were times when she could not abide by the principles that she valued. For instance, she mentioned...
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that in regards to her intimate relationships she was unable to be logical. She also stated that with her father and sister she cannot be empathic. She was also aware of the contradiction. There were times that she displayed Adlerian principles throughout the interview. For example, she mentioned that people have the ability to make choices about how situations will impact their lives. The researcher was able to infer that the participant attempted to adhere to ethical and moral principles in regards to her family life, professional life, and personal life.

The doctoral student in this study mentioned multiple ways that she took care of herself. She mentioned social and familial relationships as a way of helping her. She also mentioned the hope of starting her own family. Also, the participant had a strong belief in ethical and moral principles. She used these principles to make decisions about her life and how she interacted with others in her life. The most important concept that the researcher found was the concept of recognizing herself. The participant was able to recognize her personal shortcomings, personal problems, personal strengths, need for friendships, and need for family.

Internal threats to legitimation included researcher bias and illusory correlation (Ostrom & Leech, 2007c). Researcher bias was present in this study from the beginning. It can be reasonably argued that the researcher in this study was focused on developing themes and sub-themes. The second threat is illusory correlation. Illusory correlation is the tendency of the researcher to create a relationship between variables when in reality there is no relationship (Ostrom & Leech, 2007c). In this study, it could be argued that the researcher was driven to establish a relationship between the themes and sub-themes. The researcher analyzed the data using classical content analysis, conducted a member checking procedure, and a peer debriefing interview to reduce bias.
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Threats to external credibility included catalytic and action validity. Catalytic validity is not established due to the limited scope of the research (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007c). This research design used a single participant, and all findings, inferences, and interpretations made can only apply to the participant in the study. Finally, action validity is whether or not the research findings are used to create change (Onwuegbuzie & Leech). This study by itself will not cause any action to be taken for change. This study was conducted knowing that a single perspective would be presented on a particular topic.

Future research studies should involve using multiple doctoral students for the purposes of determining wellness in doctoral students. For instance, an important code that was used for the current study was the need for friend and familial relationships. This aspect can be analyzed using multiple cases. Moreover, future research studies can ask similar questions to determine other themes that impact the wellness of doctoral students. In the current study age was not a factor (Age is another consideration that should be analyzed to assess success and failure rates in doctoral programs. A finding in this study that could be researched in the future is the concept of ethical and moral principles. The participant mentioned ethical and moral principles that helped her live a more meaningful life with family and friends. A future study may involve multiple doctoral students and the presence, or lack, of an ethical and moral foundation with respect to stress levels.
References


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2 missing, incomplete, or inconsistent references → 2 points deducted
14 complete and consistent references → Excellent → 2 bonus points