Design Options Research Proposal Assignment

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Design Options Qualitative Research Proposal Assignment

Introduction

Many students graduate college inadequately prepared even after completing all the required coursework. In fact, recent research conducted on more than 2,300 undergraduates found that 45 percent of students show no significant improvement in the key measures of critical thinking, complex reasoning and writing by the end of their sophomore years (Arum & Roksa, 2011). These same students are hired by employers who, according to an American Association of Colleges and Universities research survey, find that students feel more prepared than they actually are (Education.com, 2015).

If students do not fully apply themselves, then they may be considered responsible for the result of being inadequately prepared. Nevertheless, such poor results are more likely a surface level reflection of a deeper systematic problem with the overall course architecture than resting with the students themselves. The group of high-achieving students continues to learn in the very same educational environments as all students. Regardless whether it is their intellectual capacities solely, or in combination with cognitive processes related to approaching learning and particular instructional methodologies implemented, these individuals are the link, and a qualitative strategy of inquiry should provide insight into how to approach the educational process best as a student learner and what steps educators may take to improve it for all students.

Deficiencies in preparation adversely and directly affect students’ productivity upon entering the workforce and negatively influences their ability to maintain gainful employment and provide for their families, and inevitably contributes to developing issues concerning their psychological well-being. The development of mental and behavioral health problems in new graduates can be attributed to the predicament in which they find themselves governed by
Proposition Seven of what has been referred to as the “Insecurity Thesis.” As presented in the text by Heery & Salmon (2000), the uncertain or insecure nature of employment conditions not only imposes economic costs on employees but psychological costs as well (p. 7). Specifically, as a result of the inadequate academic preparation in this case, the detrimental effect that job insecurity has on the psychological well-being of people includes heightening levels of anxiety, depression, feelings of uselessness, waning self-confidence, and overall dissatisfaction with oneself and one’s environment (Warr 1987; Nolan, Wichert, & Burchell, 2000). In the event this trend continues, far-reaching effects also have the potential to include stifling societal maintenance and progression indirectly due to diminishing returns, as resources continue to be directed toward an educational process that has not lived up to its full potential.

Despite there being a disproportionate number of students who graduate without adequately learning the subject material in addition to essential skills such as critical thinking and effective communication, there are a select few who excel academically and are successful learners. To learn the key to success, one must learn from cases of success, which are both necessary and sufficient with regard to the issue of dealing with success and its negation (i.e., cases in which one does not succeed referred to cases of failure). From the perspective of the researcher as an observer, when one approaches the study of successes regardless of the context in which they occurs, it can be argued that while learning from the failures may provide the best opportunities for growth from the perspective of those who actually fail (i.e., what they are doing incorrectly), without cases of success to which to compare there can be no way for those who do not know what deficiencies they need to correct in order to derive benefit; therefore, for those who fail the study of success is both necessary and sufficient to achieve the goal of learning how to succeed. Nonetheless, from the perspective of those who do succeed and the researcher as
observer investigating, the study of successes without including the failures will always be self-sufficient because, while it may be helpful, the comparison to failures is unnecessary to ascertain what works (i.e., results in success) so that those who fail may derive benefit from the research.

**Rationale.** If successful students want to learn how to succeed, then they need only to study themselves because they are the ones succeeding. From the perspective of those students wanting to find out how to succeed who are not, they should study successful students because successful students know how. For researchers investigating the phenomenon of success in students in order to provide valuable insight, need only to study successful students to learn what is conducive to their success because they are successful and both those who do succeed may add to their repertoire, and those who fail may derive benefit from the findings of the study. In no way is the author discounting the worth of struggling students themselves or the information they could provide researchers of other studies. Nevertheless, for the current research problem and according to the aforementioned argument presented, the author finds that for every way that there is to succeed there are an infinite number of ways not to succeed, which implies minimal benefit as relatively little may be gleaned from learning from the negation of success when compared to, and without first learning, what success is.

If there were an equal number of ways to both succeed and not to succeed, then the probability of achieving success would be fifty percent, which would imply that success is no more determined than chance. Nevertheless, this cannot be the case since successful students regardless of their experience with failure are ultimately significantly more successful than what would be predicted by chance alone, or they are considerably less successful than chance predicts. Furthermore, no matter how many events were attempted with different approaches resulting in repeated failures, although the probability of succeeding for any given student may
initially fluctuate or decrease with every trial, once the knowledge of how to succeed is gained after a trial or event, thereafter, success becomes permanent with probability steadily increasing, as each subsequent trial occurs. Therefore, disproportionate yet significantly greater, or fewer, trials of success over time cannot be purely due to a chance occurrence substantiating them as the primary focus of the research.

**Background**

The traditional educational process is designed around learning experiences both inside and outside of the classroom. Regardless of where it occurs, learning may be thought of as either a product or a process. Those who view learning as a product measure its relative success or failure based on the observation of results achieved (Carr, 1992?). Conversely, others who view learning as a process consider the changes in the behavior of an individual that occur over time as a result (Lachman, 1997). The focus on behavioral changes in this definition may be found among traditional behaviorists (Learning-Theories, 2016). Regardless of the concept of learning with which one agrees, the educational system has been established to achieve this end and aims to accomplish it through various instructional methodologies.

An *Instructional methodology* can be thought of as the manner in which educators deliver information to their students (University of Tennessee, 2016). Within the context of educational environments, the choice of instructional delivery of course content may result in either of two forms of *learning* by the student: *Passive* and *Active*. *Passive learning*, which is associated with the behaviorist view of learning, is typified by the experience from the perspective of the student who plays no role in the learning process (Learning-Theories, 2016). An example of *passive learning* occurs in classes taught through traditional lecturing formats where students must sit and listen but are prohibited from discussion amongst themselves and questioning is
discouraged. In contrast to this, active learning occurs within the context of educational settings that permit and encourage students to be involved in what they learn by thinking while they are doing the learning (Bonwell & Eison, 1991).

The rationale behind active learning is that by having students participate in the process, the experience becomes more meaningful and personal. Through participation combined with frequent assessments that allow for real-time feedback and adjustments, there is an overall reduction in delay receiving timely input from educators so that corrective measures may be taken. The assessments that occur throughout the learning process are known as formative in that they help to shape or “form” the learning of the student with rapid feedback from educators or experts (Carnegie Mellon University, 2008). These structured and non-structured formative assessments that comprise active learning strategies contrast with the summative assessments that occur at the culmination of the traditional learning process. Summative assessments aim at gauging the result of the instruction to evaluate what students have learned (Carnegie Mellon University, 2008). Strategies of instruction that incorporate both forms of evaluation in addition to encouraging student cognitive and corporeal engagement are responsible for the beneficial effects observed when employing active learning in educational environments.

**Review of Relevant Literature**

Research findings support the conclusion that traditional methods of instruction such as lecturing that result in passive learning are ineffective at sustaining the attention of students. Stuart & Rutherford (1978) note that findings suggest that student concentration dwindles after the first ten to fifteen minutes of a traditional lecture. Such a loss of focus has also been found to negatively impact students' ability to retain information beyond the initial ten minutes of lectures (Thomas, 1978). The author concludes that, although it may be ineffective by itself in the
traditional format, these findings appear to portray lecturing in a negative light. Nevertheless, the problem is not the lecturing itself; it is the passive learning forced on the students to whom the lecture is given.

Considering the passivity mentioned above students are expected to endure, an attempt to address the need for student engagement in traditional lecture courses has led to research that offered ways to transform the lecture into a more interactive experience. By capitalizing on the strengths of the lecture with minimal to no modification, the strategies that were developed and refined took into consideration what was discovered about concentration and attention span to integrate periodic breaks from lecturing and allow both structured and non-structured student interaction (Rowe, 1980; Mazur, 1997). Although the reduction of lecture time to increase educational outcomes may seem counterintuitive, by reducing the amount of lecturing time in a course, students were ultimately deriving greater benefit by learning more. Thus, it appears the slightest addition of an active component in the learning process was positively correlated with gains in student learning. Nevertheless, the student interaction activity was comprised of a combination of different things, which makes defining the individual contributions of each component of the activity problematic.

A review of the literature confirms that employing active learning strategies does produce significant positive effects on learning. Interactive lecturing as a form of active learning has been shown to be significantly more effective in producing learning as an educational outcome (McKeachie et al., 1987). Hake (1998) also found significant gains in conceptual knowledge and increases in problem-solving examination scores compared to traditional lecturing methods of instruction when such strategies are employed. Furthermore, increases in positive student outlook, attitude, and tenacity have been positively correlated with the active engagement of
students in small collaborative discussion groups in addition to increases in formative assessment during the learning process when compared to traditional instruction methods (Springer, 1998; Knight & Wood, 2005).

Although progress has been made with respect to representation in the extant literature being more reflective of the types of individual strategies that exist, only the benefits of implementing particular active learning strategies have been reported; there is insufficient data on the cumulative or interactive effects.

There is a consensus among authors responsible for studies published on active learning in that they share similar opinions regarding the shift toward engagement during education. Cross (1987) stated that more learning occurs when students are actively engaged in the process as opposed to passively involved. Cross’ remarks are consistent with those who feel that active involvement, either cognitively or physically, is how students learn (Astin, 1985).

The author’s interpretation of these remarks is that actively involving students appears to provide meaning on a personal level, which reinforces the importance of the students' participation. Regardless of how many students may be in a particular class, or group, on a personal level, the participation grounds them firmly within the experience. It is such grounding that imparts a deontological aspect to the process in that students feel a sense of duty or obligation to learn, which will compel them to give whatever effort necessary to achieve that end.

Based on the author’s review of the literature, there seems to exist a disconnect between what students feel they are supposed to be experiencing in the learning process and what they do experience in traditional classroom environments. For many, old lecturing formats offer no incentive to attend class since the students feel as though they could derive more benefit from the
reading own their own than by passively sitting in a lecture hall. This mindset of the students underscores the importance of implementing active learning strategies in the educational environment; doing so not only increases learning but it reinforces classroom attendance by incentivizing it with engagement, personal involvement, and gains in knowledge. Whether the strategy is simply lecturing less as in the pause procedure (Rowe, 1980), utilizing classroom assessment techniques (CATs) of Angelo and Cross (1993), or incorporating technology to mediate the active learning as in TechoCATs (Lieberman & Creed), as long as students are engaged by the instructional method of the educator and actively participate while thinking about what they are doing the process will significantly increase learning.

It is difficult to deny that there is a significant increase in student learning as a result of employing instructional methodologies that rely on active learning strategies. Nonetheless, while not outright in opposing active learning, there have been some who are reluctant to incorporate such strategies for a number of reasons each of which may be countered. While implementation of active learning strategies from the perspective of the educator appears to reduce or limit the amount of total available time to cover required content, this argument does not preclude the use of techniques requiring little if any additional time. In fact, the pause procedure previously mentioned (Rowe, 1980) has shown that with a reduction in lecture time students were able to increase performance on tests that reflect an increase in learning. Furthermore, educators opposing the use of active learning by citing barriers to employment such as preparation time, the number of students, or that students will be hesitant to make use these strategies are also unjustified in their reluctance. There are currently available prepared resources for activities to implement (Angelo & Cross, 1993), personal response systems or clickers that are readily available for large lecture classes (MacArthur & Jones, 2008), and
students are very receptive to active learning strategies when provided instructions on how to do so.

The author’s research has been designed to with the purpose of filling a void that exists in the literature concerning the interactive effects of components along the active learning spectrum. While some of the active learning strategies consist of a conglomeration of techniques aimed at engaging students with the information they learn, others are relatively pure strategies. The importance of these relatively pure strategies is that they allow the researcher to manipulate or observe them separately.

Despite these isolated techniques having been shown to influence learning with respect to their contribution to the process of learning as a whole, it is rarely the case in the real world setting that only particular techniques can or will be employed. To increase the ecological aspect of external validity, it would prove beneficial to represent the actual world environment more accurately. A more accurate representation of the natural educational setting may be accomplished by investigating pairs of active learning strategies at the very least. Nevertheless, there is a paucity of evidence in the literature directed toward investigating the interactive effects of multiple active learning techniques. This study is aimed at producing evidence of the effects of such interaction among strategies.

Furthermore, the author hypothesizes that the interactive effects of active learning strategies are synergetic; pairing them results in interactive effects that exceed the principal effects of either strategy implemented individually.

The research hypothesis is that the interactive effects of the two active learning strategies in the study, the Socratic Method of Questioning and Ability Based Learning, are significantly greater than the sum of the individual main effects. The rationale behind this hypothesis is based
on it being highly unlikely that combining two individually positive main effects could result in less of an effect than the sum of the individual effects. The null hypothesis for this study is that there will be no significant difference between the interactive effects of the two active learning strategies in the study and the individual main effects of these strategies.

**Literature Research Strategies**

The key search terms used were *learning, student, theories, instruction,* and *active learning*. The research strategy employed consisted of first utilizing the University at Buffalo Libraries to conduct a general inquiry to obtain an idea of what was available using the terms as mentioned above, as well as google scholar. The author used these initial results to outline a path based on important concepts related to this study from the core understanding of learning. To ensure that a full selection of works was considered, a query using the same key terms was conducted on eric.gov, using EndNote, and Questia. The important concepts were used to provide explanations for, and contrast between concepts that were pertinent to the author's research allowed the context for the framework of this study to be developed. Both current literature and seminal works were considered based on relevance to the topic and not solely the date.

**Significance of Study**

The importance of this study is that by determining the interactive effects of paired active learning strategies, classroom instruction may be customized to enhance student learning and overall experience. The results will address the stated research problem by assisting educators in implementing specific research supported sequences or complementary active learning strategies, which will have been shown to improve educational outcomes. By conducting this study, there is the potential to obtain findings that may later be used to combine and customize them in order
to maximize interactive effects related to student learning. Future research can be directed toward optimizing main effects through studying the outcomes of combinatoric course design that implements the most effective pairs of active learning strategies into clusters that may be geared to the subject, gender, content amount, and specific ordering. The author believes that his approach could potentially improve the impact that active engagement has on student learners by guiding subsequent research into the best approach to customization of active learning techniques to increase effectiveness, efficiency, and economy of content delivery in the higher educational setting.

**Methodological Approach and Rationale**

The purpose of the proposed qualitative study is to develop a theory of effective learning in higher education. To achieve this goal, we documented the semester-long journey of fifteen male, and fifteen female high-achieving undergraduate upperclassmen enrolled in an introductory physical science course to explore key influences responsible for their learning success.

**Rationale.** The high-achieving students continue to learn in the very same educational environments as all students, which includes those who graduate inadequately prepared. Regardless whether it is their intellectual capacities solely, or in combination with cognitive processes when approaching learning and responding to instructional methodologies, these academically successful learners are the key to understanding what is effective in maximizing all student potential. A qualitative strategy of inquiry will provide insight into how as student learners to approach the educational process best and what steps educators may take to improve the experience for all students. Findings from the study of such exceptional learners may help guide the development of more effective learning and instructional strategies and sharing the
results of the research may also be beneficial to other aspects of the educational experience for those enrolled at the State University of New York at Buffalo and other institutions of higher education.

**Research Design and Epistemological Assumptions**

This qualitative study will be conducted from an emic perspective within the context of a research paradigm based on axiology, ontology, and epistemology (Terrell, 2009). From an axiological standpoint, the author views learning, or the acquisition of knowledge, as a process and not merely a product (Lachman, 1997). Learning in any form provides the greatest value to humankind, and it may be transferred in a variety of different manners. The author also assumes that students are choosing to take courses of their own volition and are applying themselves 100% when enrolled. Based on this assumption, the author views both educators and researchers, as being ethically obligated to uphold the principles of beneficence, non-maleficence, the autonomy of participants, and justice in conducting any study.

Ontologically, regardless of whether or not the existence of multiple objective realities can be confirmed, assuming that relatively speaking the reality of the educator is fixed as it exists within the scope of an educational environment, the educator who employs a variety of techniques for multiple students whose realities (i.e., learning style) may differ ensures that the greatest number of students may benefit. Using an analogy, were the author to place a locked gate to a secure area combined with a sign containing the universal warning color red, the written word stop, a figure depiction with a circle around it and line through it, and an audio announcement “Stop, people not allowed,” the realities of the color-blind, the illiterate, the deaf, and the dumb, the author has taken multiple possible steps and accounted for the possibility of each to “learn” within the context of their individual realities through my singular reality.
Lastly, concerning epistemology given the nature of learning, the author views his role as a researcher in an active light insofar as active participation does not have the potential to detract from or call into question, the validity of the results of the study. The author will actively participate in the research and personally interact with the participants in the study, which means the author will be conducting research from an emic (i.e., insider’s) perspective (Terrell, 2009). Therefore, in consideration of the author’s stances and the overall aim of this study, the methodological approach the author will employ to conduct the research will be that of a qualitative strategy of inquiry.

**Research Design Rationale.** Although Hattie (2015) believes that the method of teaching may likely be less critical than any attributes of the instruction in the method (p. 8), the author does not make a distinction between the attributes of the teaching within a method and the method employing the teaching that has the attributes. In fact, the author is unsure that there is a need to make any distinction with respect to the method of teaching because there are other factors likely to play at least as important a role. During this study, a grounded theory may develop that results in the method itself ultimately not being as essential to the process of learning as another variable for which we have not yet accounted in prior studies.

For this reason, we will be bracketing our preconceptions before commencing this study (Luckerhoff & Guillemette, 2011). Once everything has been set aside, by observing, interviewing, and analyzing documents written by, and about, the two high-achieving student learners, their families, and educators who teach them, the theory that develops will ultimately be based on the facts contained within the data itself.

**Definition of Terms**
Instructional methodology integrates the manageable, relevant, and sufficient amount of subject content and determines the most effective, efficient, and economical modes of transferring the information to the students (University of Tennessee, 2016). Active learning strategies will be defined as any instruction that involves students in doing things that get them to think about what they are doing (Bonwell & Eison, 1991). Learning is viewed as a process by the author that incorporates a product and will be defined as a relatively permanent alteration in one’s behavior resulting from previous experience (Lachman, 1997).

Participants and Setting for the Study

The participants selected were chosen based on extreme or deviant case sampling principles for their exceptional academic learning abilities (Martella, 2013). The study will be conducted at the University at Buffalo in a classroom setting for an introductory physical science course in which each student is enrolled during spring 2017.

Rationale. Purposeful sampling utilizing extreme cases allows us to obtain insight into the experience and process of learning. In addition, doing so will result in the ability for researchers to determine how much of the participants’ success may be attributed to different aspects of the experience. The higher education classroom environment is suitable for the site of the study because it is the “field” in which the experience occurs and is the natural setting for the participants.

Data Gathering Procedure

Data will be obtained over the course of the spring semester of 2017. Student participants, instructors, classmates, and families will be interviewed at the beginning of the semester before the first day of class. At a minimum, there will be bi-weekly documented interviews by audio recording with the participants. Also, there will be in-class observations
recorded with video and audio consisting of a total of two hours of time weekly on random days and times during which class convenes to avoid the potential for participant behavior and practices to be modified based on anticipation. Participants will maintain journals to document their experiences throughout this study and have agreed to allow the information to be used in the analysis phase. At the end of the semester, student participants, instructors, and parents will be interviewed to gather information on the experience of participating in the study.

The author will provide an outline of how he plans to utilize his time when conducting research before beginning, as well as maintain a detailed log of the manner in which time was spent during all aspects of the research process for comparison purposes. Personal dictation equipment and software will be used to record the specifics related to what was observed and transcribed in the office. In addition, a notebook will accompany the author in order to make handwritten diagrams, ideas, or comments that will complement the notes from the field concerning the researchers’ thoughts, sentiments, and experiences.

Recordings of interviews and the journals of both participants and instructors will be transcribed verbatim, and field notes and journal entries will also be routinely reviewed to ensure completeness of information before analysis. The use of a qualitative data analysis software program for PC will be implemented called NVivo that was developed by QSR International.

**Rationale.** Considering the introductory course is traditionally three credit hours, in-class observation and recording time of two hours weekly of audio and video recording will provide more than enough footage for analysis. It is better to obtain more data than needed than to collect an insufficient amount. NVivo software that will be used acts to facilitate research and “is designed to help organize, analyze and find insights in unstructured, or qualitative data (QSR
International, 2016).” NVivo software allows the research to be more efficient by saving time when coding data for organizational, storage and retrieval purposes.

**Observations as Data Sources**

A qualitative strategy of inquiry will be employed to gather data for this study. Since the goal is to develop a theory as the research is being conducted, through a constant comparative approach the theory developed will be grounded in both the perceptions of the participants as well as in the data obtained (Martella, 2013). The data sources will consist of documented recordings of participant observations of both students and instructors in the classroom setting, interviews with instructors as well as students both at the start and finish of the course, and document analysis of video, transcripts, participant and instructor journals (Martella, 2013). In addition, triangulation of data sources, analysts, and theories will be attempted to establish the credibility of the sources by validating information, verifying the accuracy of the information, and interpreting data from different perspectives (Martella, 2013). There will be various researchers each of whom will be involved in the interview, observation, and documentation process throughout the study. The findings and conclusions will, in accordance with Skinner (1972), be presented as a descriptive portrait of the facts from which detailed theory is derived (Creswell, 2009).

**Rationale.** Attempts to minimize observer effects will consist of allowing for acclimation during the beginning of the study to permit time for the participants to become used to the presence of the observer. In addition, any potential observer effects will be documented in the investigation field notes to allow critical research consumers the opportunity to determine whether the effects documented invalidate the conclusions. Furthermore, in conjunction with data being obtained from a variety of sources, any thoughts or feelings that the observer has will
be noted when he or she observes them in an effort to mitigate potential observer bias (Martella, 2013).

**Interviews as Data Source**

The standardized open-ended interview is the interview style selected for this study. Since the study attempts to describe what occurs during the process of learning in the educational environment, experience/behavior, opinion/value, feelings, knowledge, sensory, and background/demographic question types will all be used (Martella, 2013).

**Rationale.** This format for the interview was chosen for its strengths, which include a structured format, decreased variability during the interviewing procedure because of structure, the increased focus on what is needed allows the collection of a wealth of information. In addition, scoring and evaluation is simplified (Martella, 2013). As opposed to restricting question format to particular types that potentially risk not getting crucial information, the usage of all kinds of questions allows all information to be obtained from participants. The determination of relevant data may then be made during the analysis by the researcher.

**Data Analysis, Reliability, and Validity**

The author has followed the guidelines provided by Martella (2013) for the evaluative criteria for judging reliability and validity in qualitative research (p. 311). The steps that will be taken include: Triangulation of data, notation immediately after the observation, interview, or document viewing occurred, inter-observer note comparison for discrepancies and similarities when analyzing, delay in analysis of at least twenty-four hours to allow time to process data before drawing conclusions, and repeated observations and multiple interviews before, during, and after the completion of the study over the three month period.
In addition, any potential observer effects will be documented in the investigation field notes to allow critical research consumers the opportunity to determine whether the effects documented invalidate the conclusions. Furthermore, in conjunction with data being obtained from a variety of sources, any thoughts or feelings that the observer has will be noted when he or she observes them in order to mitigate any potential for observer bias (Martella, 2013).

Although the question of validity with respect to qualitative research is debatable, it can be agreed that determining cause-and-effect relationships is not the primary concern of qualitative research (Martela, 2013). Nevertheless, detailed descriptions and meticulous documentation will allow for transparency of the study, epistemological assumptions of the researchers to be known and facilitate any future comparisons to findings of this study. The presentation of the focus in depth will be to explain the context within which the data will be obtained. Moreover, the roles of the researchers and the reasons for selecting chosen participants have been disclosed. Lastly, the author will enlist the help of an experienced qualitative research methods researcher to monitor the study throughout and provide oversight to ensure the study is conducted in the most efficient format.

**Establishing Trustworthiness/Interrater Agreement/Interrater Reliability**

Through the use of the evaluative criteria for judgment of reliability and validity (Martella, 2013), the author intends to establish and reinforce the integrity of the evaluators and to minimize the opportunity for trustworthiness to jeopardize the findings of the study.

**Rationale.** Although a fair amount of subjectivity is involved in this qualitative strategy of inquiry, bracketing, triangulation procedures, immediate recording of notes and sentiments, as well as the emic perspective from which this study will be conducted should allow any biases that the evaluators may bring to be readily disclosed. It is the responsibility of the critical
research consumer to determine to what extent the data, viewpoints, and study as a whole are coherent and support the conclusions drawn. In this manner, no attempt to deceive the research consumer can be said to have occurred.

**Limitations to Methodology**

The qualitative strategy of inquiry for this study does have its limitations. While thirty participant-students is not an overly large sample size, it will provide enough data to establish a level of confidence in the themes of the findings and serve as motivation for a larger scale study in the future that is contingent on what is found. The emic perspective from which it is conducted results in both the researcher and participant mutually affecting each other (Martella, 2013), which could call into question the findings since a different researcher interacting with a participant would likely result in different findings. Furthermore, observer bias and observer effects are always an inescapable concern since the observer acts as the measurement device for the study with the potential to threaten the validity of the findings, which include participants as observers when making entries into their journals.

Perspective is critical to the research problem, as was covered earlier in this paper. There is always a dichotomous aspect with respect to individual participants’ factors in a study as they relate to the potential explanations for research findings. Concerning the occurrence of success, for example, a combination of internal and external, or situational and dispositional factors precede the outcome. Although the author acknowledges the risk of an apparent tendency to overemphasize and attribute the actions of others, or lack thereof, to dispositional factors from an etic perspective (Jones & Harris, 1967) while undervaluing dispositional explanations of our own behaviors (Jones & Nisbett, 1971), without precision in controlling experimental or correlational conditions as situations, there is no effective way to determine how much success may be
accounted for by one’s disposition versus one’s situation. Furthermore, the author argues that the tendency to do so is contingent on whether the actions of oneself or others are perceived as positive or negative and is not necessarily accurate.

The author suggests that regardless of the inherent truth of the matter as being distinct from the impression that it makes, an action that one explains as being based on the disposition of another is more likely to have been perceived negatively or undesirably whereas an explanation of one's own action as situational probably indicates that one perceived it as negative or undesirable in oneself. The author proposes that the phenomena of attribution bias and actor-observer bias are explained by the fact that people tend not to desire, see, or acknowledge negative qualities in themselves, but may more easily recognize them in others. Furthermore, it is not that simply others’ actions or behaviors tend to be explained in dispositional terms and one’s own in situational terms, it is that the tendency is based on how the actions and behaviors are perceived that determines whether the attribution will be dispositional or situational. If the author is correct in this assertion, then there exists more bias within the attribution bias itself, ad infinitum. The author hypothesizes that a prediction can be made as to which factors the actions or behaviors will be attributed (i.e., dispositional versus situational) based on not simply by whom they are perceived, but by how they are perceived. While the author is aware of such potential bias in explanation occurring with regard to actions or behaviors, success is a result; results may be subsequent to or caused by actions or behaviors, but results are equivalent to neither an action nor a behavior. Therefore, because of this fact that attribution bias is not a threat of concern, as an error in explanation of success that occurs in no way influences the actual occurrence of that success.
In addition, while multiple triangulation procedures were used together to compensate for particular shortcomings of each data gathering method, distortions in perceptions and perspectives in interviews, the length of time of observations, and authenticity of documents are all potential weaknesses when conducting qualitative studies (Martella, 2013). Another weakness of the method of the standardized open-ended interview includes restrictions on the information obtained from participants because of structure and the loss of natural or spontaneous communication, which could potentially eliminate critical information from data in the responses. Some would argue that three months is insufficient time to document participants and that were the duration of the study carried out for longer, or during a different three-month period, the findings could differ with the same observer(s).
References


