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Assessment 2: Using Primary Data

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While considering the purpose of this assessment, and primarily its long-term value, I could not stop thinking about various kinds of research opportunities waiting for me in the program. The more I thought about it, the more tangible the idea of doing a research appeared, and more vivid became the main theme behind the purposeful sample. The interviewees in Lifehacker's How I Work series are successful businessmen and businesswomen, with strong backgrounds and proven track records of work ethics, organizational skills, and accomplishments. They share their tips and tricks and stories of success in a similar way a researcher shares a storyline of her research (UC Davis, 2012). Combining the two ideas together helped me with making a decision on what to specify as selection criteria for the purposeful sample. This is when ten professional researchers entered my sampling pool. Getting to know their stories on a more detailed level did not only allow for practicing coding qualitative data but also provided some learning opportunities for my personal growth - a double valued lesson for a Doctoral student.

A particular interest in the topic helped me with establishing a priori, or preset code to base the selection upon (UC Davis, 2012). One of the learning objectives was to select the interviewees who share something in common and use that commonality as a priori code. (Taylor & Gibbs, 2010). Using the pre-set code of 'research' helped me in selecting a purposeful sample which included a list of successful working professionals whose job titles and/or job descriptions included a research. Seeking through all published interviews, I was able to find ten participants that matched my selection criteria from the established a priori code of a research (Taylor & Gibbs, 2010).

Although the common theme appeared rather applicable, there are some noticeable limitations to this report (Shamburg & Rabinovich, 2016). With only ten responses available for

analysis, the sampling size of the pool could be considered small. With certain emerging themes only appearing in some of the responses, synthesizing and drawing conclusions based on such small data set was challenging at times. Additionally, the staff members of Lifehacker weblog made the initial selections of the interview candidates, which predisposed the original sampling pool. This preselected set of invited individuals could be considered a limitation or the area beyond our control (Shamburg & Rabinovich, 2016). On a related note, selecting my own area of interest, choosing a priori theme with the focus on the researchers and coming up with my own questions of study are the delimitations of this report (Shamburg & Rabinovich, 2016). Furthermore, there are several assumptions embedded in the study (Shamburg & Rabinovich, 2016): all invited interviewees are successful professionals in their respective fields (which could be deduced further into questioning the assumption behind a successful professional); the work habits listed by the interviewees are helping them at being successful in their jobs (once again, the assumption of what is considered successful); the personal attributes that the responders developed helped them in maintaining a highly demanding lifestyle (the demanding lifestyle is yet another assumption).

As stated above, my purposeful sample consisted of ten individuals, split between seven females and three males. Seven individuals originated from the technical and/or scientific field, while the remaining three represented literary and/or writing backgrounds. One individual is a high school student, while the rest of them are at the different points of their careers. All members of the purposeful sample (Shamburg & Rabinovich, 2016) shared one commonality: they are all researchers. There are several emerging themes that came out of my findings. They focus on the role of music in work habits, sleeping patterns, and being a role model. In addition,

themes differ by a number of votes they received: from the majority to the minority to even distribution.

It was interesting to learn about the role that music plays in the professional life of a researcher, and how does it help with concentrating on the work-related task. I found this theme recurring among the sampled population. The majority of responders, with the exact number of seven out of ten, stated that they preferred in work in silence or listen to music with no words, not to be disrupted by the lyrics. For example, Dan Russell found the background music too distracting (Miller, 10/23/13), while Anvita Gupta, Yoelle Maarek, and Danah Boyd indicated that they needed silence to concentrate and work on tasks requiring undivided attention (Orin, 2/18/15, 1/7/15, 7/2/14). Working in a quiet atmosphere is something I can certainly relate to, and I was happy to find out that a number of professional researchers practice similar approach.

Upon closer review, I was able to locate a theme that did not reveal itself right away. This theme was not vividly present in most responses, yet it was important enough to follow up on. It provided some insight on the following question: how can a professional researcher also be a role model? Four out of seven female responders commented on their experiences of being role models. I found it particularly interesting not only because of the importance of the topic but also because the interview questions did not specifically ask about it. The responders chose to talk about this non-prescribed topic of being a role model because they found it important. For example, Anvita Gupta, the bioinformatics researcher, was involved in teaching computer science for middle school girls (Orin, 2/18/15); Aurelia Moser, the community lead at Mozilla co-ran the New York City chapter of a non-profit organization Girl Develop It, where women learn how to code (Orin, 5/3/17); Kelly McGonigal inspired others by singing along in Zumba classes she taught (Miller, 6/12/13). This emerging theme of being a role model was non-

recurring in the overall sample of ten individuals but would change its status if considered only within a pool of seven female responders. This finding made me wonder if being a role model is just as important among the female population as it is among males. This could be a topic for a research of its own.

The last theme that appeared to be recurring in the interviews is related to the responders' sleep patterns. I have vested interest in this topic since the beginning of the Doctoral program, as my own sleep patterns needed to be altered. Upon reviewing the answers of the interviewees, the following question emerged: do most researchers prefer waking up early or staying up late? The results of the data set were somewhat surprising, as the answers split close to 50/50. Out of eight responders, four researchers claimed to be night owls (with one being an extreme night owl), while the other four identified themselves as early risers. Will Young and Dan Russell stated that they prefer waking up as early as 4-4:30 am to catch up on work (Orin, 11/26/14; Miller, 10/23/13), which could be a useful lesson for me to learn from. The palette of responses presented an interesting argument about personal approaches towards professional challenges. Even though the sampling size of this study was small and there were not enough quantitative data to support either side of the argument, the results could be considered as justifiable. Since, the answers to the question about the sleeping patterns split up equally between the two groups, complementing one another (Shamburg & Rabinovich, 2016), they supported the idea of no weighted professional benefit other than the researchers' personal choice and habits.

In conclusion, this report lists three kinds of findings based on the coding of the purposeful sampling of ten interviews from Lifehacker's How I Work series. The first finding was an example of a recurring theme present in the majority of replies. It provided sufficient evidence to draw the conclusion on how does listening to music help with concentrating on a

research-related task. The second finding of this report was an example of a non-recurring theme, whose significance was supported by its content. The self-reporting of some female participants' role model experiences, outside of the scope of the questions, provided examples of how professional researchers became role models. Even though the theme of being a role model was not consistent among most replies, it was included in this report for its recurrence outside of the scripted questions and importance among the female population. The last finding of this report was an example of the equal distribution of answers within a theme, where all replies resulted in one of the two categories. The equal distribution of answers allowed for the conclusion of equivalent belonging of the responders to one of the two groups: early risers and night owls. Additionally, it allowed for no correlation between the professional success and the preferred sleeping pattern due to the personal preferences.

On a personal note, I would like to add that I found the exercise of finding themes extremely interesting, while also time-consuming. Developing the methodology and applying it at the same time was a valuable learning experience.

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