

Analysis of first Interview

The reason this person was chosen to interview because I come from a very military family. My father was in the Naval, my brother, my oldest son all served in this branch and I have first cousins, second cousins, uncles, sister- in- law, brothers- in- laws and close friends who have all served in some branch of the military. As a young college student, I even contemplated joining some branch after completing my under-graduate work. My desire was to ask the burning question ‘What prompts one to serve?’ “Why does a young man or woman choose to serve in the military” What events in life pushes one to make this decision?” “Is it the same or similar for everyone?” “Is one more motivated by peace time or war?” “Or is it just a matter of getting the short straw in life?”

The first interview was scheduled in his office at the university. He felt we would be undisturbed and that it would be quiet. And it was. I have known my study interviewee for three years since we work at the same university. He started as a work study student and because of his special organizational skills the professors who did field study began to rely on him for packing, storing, and categorizing their equipment. I knew he was a veteran and he had a serve experience while serving that has left him emotionally disabled. He has a little dog that is with him at all times to help him cope with day to day life. My approach was to ask him a series of questions that where not directly related to his traumatic event so as not to stress him or bring on flashbacks. I just wanted to know why he joined and what his thoughts about making that decision was. So these are the questions that I thought I would ask: What is your current age, and what age where you when you enlisted? Why did you choose this branch of the military? When did you enlist and where? Where there any circumstances that motived you to enlist? And finally, did you plan on being a career man or just serve a four-year term?

I decided on these very general questions because I felt they would give me an idea about his emotional state when he made the decision to join. This interview was more like a case study that would

give an in-depth portrait of the man and why he made the decision to join. I even thought of doing two interviews with different veterans had served during peace time, where there was no major conflict internationally going on. But I decided to focus on just the one subject. Which I'm glad that I did. I found this analysis was difficult enough and often felt that I was not equipped enough to even do this one well. The book I felt did not prepare me adequately to really know what I was doing. Thank goodness there was no emotional damage to speak of. But that is always a possibility when you are delving into someone's past that maybe associated with a traumatic event.

In the process of the interview it was almost impossible to keep this individual on task and to only answer the questions that I was trying to answer. I knew, because of the sample interview we conducted in class with our classmate, that one question could lead to a whole new set of questions and that the interview can take on a mind and direction of its own. So I was prepared for that I thought. He was determined to give me his life's story. Only on the second interview was I able to almost regain some level of control over the interview process. Really, I could have easily just let this be an ethnographic study and I think it still can lend itself to this type of analysis. The major culture and historical period of his military service was war in Iraq and the threat of Isis. His longest years of service was right after 9-11 which is a volatile time in our history like the effects of Pearl Harbor on my dad's service. There was a constant need to ask more pointed questions because he invariably left a lot out trying to relay everything about his life. He felt it was important for me to understand his reasoning. Unfortunately, he just gave me feelings of him being "a blow horn" about his life. I am glad I did not want him to discuss any of his tragic tours of duty where he was emotionally scared.

During the first interview, he kept talking about his decision as not being the right time for him to enlist earlier in his life. So I asked why. His answer did not seem to really give me much depth into his decision-making process for joining. But he also came from a strong heavily military family. As one who

knows what this looks like I think he may not really have a clear idea of why he joined except that was all he knew. Many young men follow in their father's footsteps when it comes to life long careers. He admired and respected his step-father greatly and seeing life in the military as a meaningful avenue for himself. He was a true military brat, but felt he was not a mischief child, yet he recounted what I would perceive as very mischievous activities. To him this was all in good fun. He kind of looked down on the military personnel whose children he felt were bratty whose parents only served the four-six-year tours of duty. His family where career lifers.

The interviewee is glad to be living in this time in history, since he is a history buff, all the many events that have occurred in his lifetime makes him feel extra special. He calls it the "sweet spot" in history. All these events are happening and he's here to experience them. There have been many "sweet spots" in history and he was not there to experience any of them. And there will be many more to come after he's dead. As a matter of fact, he laments over the things he feels will be happening after he's dead and gone. He can only do as most of us do read about the past and let the future take care of itself.

Second Interview Analysis

The second interview began with me setting some ground rules so that hopefully this interview does not last as long as the first. Also, that I can get my questions answered without my interviewee going on a historical tangent of his life. I am doubtful, but I'm going to try. My textbooks review of the different types of qualitative studies did not give me enough insight on how I think I needed to handle this case. But I try.

I never got to the point of my questions on the first interview, but before we even began I gave him the parameters that I wanted to stay within to help control his ramblings. It is my hope that I can get to the real reasons of his choice and how that choice has affected the man he has become.

This interview was done at his office as well. This time before we began I took pictures of his many military memorabilia that covered the walls and shelves of his small space. I am glad that he is proud of his service as I am as well. It takes a certain type of young man or woman to give up a key portion in their life for service to country and others. I so admire them for that. But I know that these experiences take a major toll on the type of person they eventually become.

Many of my former high school classmates died in Vietnam or died later as a result of chemical exposure during that conflict. It not only changed their lives but the type of person they became and the values that they held dear. This type of commitment it seems is not thought out that clearly even though listening to my interviewee one would think it was a well thought out process. I know many young men in my generation was just caught in the draft that sucked up so many young lives of my generation. The all-volunteer service that we have today does not seem to offer any better set of circumstance for choosing service either.

During this process, I reviewed his statements in comparison to synchronous and asynchronous applications being careful not to cross the lines of memory that would delve too deeply in his two tours of duty in Iran. That is where he served deep within that country, which were very volatile in his life. I found that he became sometimes mistaken as to the exact time frame things happened in his life. I think we all sometimes confuse exactly when a major event occurred along our life's timeline. But he considered himself a history buff and felt he could not make mistakes in his timeline of events. But he did. He felt a series of historical facts all happened within one year and they didn't. But I tried to gently correct those facts without making an extended point to go into exact dates and times. It was enough that he felt they made some impact on his life that he valued.

Since I did not get to complete some of the questions I was trying to ask in the first round I made sure to present them in the second interview. He is a single dad of a ten-year-old daughter. He never mentioned his first wife or how he got custody of his child. So that was one of the questions I made sure to ask on the second round. He has a second wife, but he spoke very little about her as well. He gave me a lot on his step-father's history, but none of his biological father and very little about his mother. I gathered he has great respect and admiration for his step dad, who I discovered is of Native American descent. He mentioned that when his step dad was very young he was taken away to a special school on a reservation without parental consent. I questioned him about this incident and how that happened.

I tried to get back to get a clear answer to my initial questions that I never got a chance to get answered. He spoke only of his step-dad and that side of the family. I asked if he were an only child and only then did he talk about his two older half-sisters that was fathered by his step dad. They were not raised with him and are much older. But he is an only child of his mother and his biological father has an additional child after him. The one thing for sure was he was searching to find out who he wanted to be until he met that Marine at the framing shop at Michael's. I think, though he does not say it, he was very

impressed with this young man. That's why he spent the whole summer before formal enlistment with the Marines around the recruiting office. He needed to belong to that group. His office shows the pride he takes in knowing that he served in this branch of the armed forces. I have two cousins and a close friend, who recently died, that felt the same way about that branch of the armed forces. All of them had great pride in the knowledge that they served. Just setting in his office I can see it everywhere. It makes one feel connected to this young man and what he did for his country and his own self esteem.

Throughout this second interview I could not keep down my sense of pride in what this young man did and others like him. This happened when he was a tender developing adult who suddenly found himself with new goals and purpose that would resound throughout the rest of his life. What a sacrifice! Few do; but so many profit from it. Our freedom is brought at a very high price. Not enough Americans appreciate the value of the cost of those freedoms we enjoy. I understand why in some countries every young man and woman must serve sometime in military service as a condition of citizenship.

As a final reflection, I have learned so much from this simple interview about people, their perspective on life and how they value what they do. As a future qualitative researcher, I have found this experience to be thought provoking and caused me to really look for thematic ideas within the data that I collected. What exactly is the person trying to impart or tell about themselves. And It has made me look within myself as to what pass knowledge and experiences that I bring to evaluating another. Is my baggage good or should it be re-evaluated based on the new information that I have learned about people and the choices we make?

This interview had me to do a lot of historical research just to understand what my interviewee was talking about and to get a better understanding about what he felt and the situation he found himself in. My educational philosophy has not changed just my approach to how I will view those who I study. It's not just the getting of the interview; but it's understanding the time, situations, and

emotional impact that life's events have on each one of us. Qualitative research requires a lot more depth analysis than what is required in quantitative research. You must look beyond the spoken word and try to see what is implied or even what is being avoided and why. It is not just interpreting the numbers.

I don't know if I'll ever be a good qualitative researcher, but I have learned considerably about myself and how I understand the human condition.

These are the pictures that hung from the walls in my interview subject's office. I am including them in this write-up because it adds to the picture of this young man and gives the reader a look into his personal space. They are not in any order but they were photographed from the walls of the office.

Most are from his time in Iraq, one is his recent degree that he earned in Geology from TCU and the rest are his military commendations. I hope this gives some clear insight about the man and why he became a Marine soldier.









