

In the Field: Experiences with Young Adults the First Year after High School

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Problem of the study

- ▶ 1) Understanding of what transition from school to work means to these young adults. I identified work and/or educational expectations and goals participants had at the time of the study.
- ▶ 2) Understanding of the connection between vocational school experience and these young adults' present involvement in education and work. How has vocational schooling prepared students or provided them with resources and support to plan for their future?



DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

- ▶ Employed a qualitative research method. The study is multifaceted, using both phenomenology and case study approaches within the qualitative design.
- ▶ The phenomenon explored is “the transition from school to work.”



Study Participants

PROGRAMS	Males	Females	Black	White
Auto-Mechanics	2	0	1	1
Carpentry	1	0	1	0
Cosmetology	0	4	3	1
Electronics	1	0	0	1
Health Science	0	1	1	0
TV Production	2	0	0	2
TOTAL	6	5	6	5





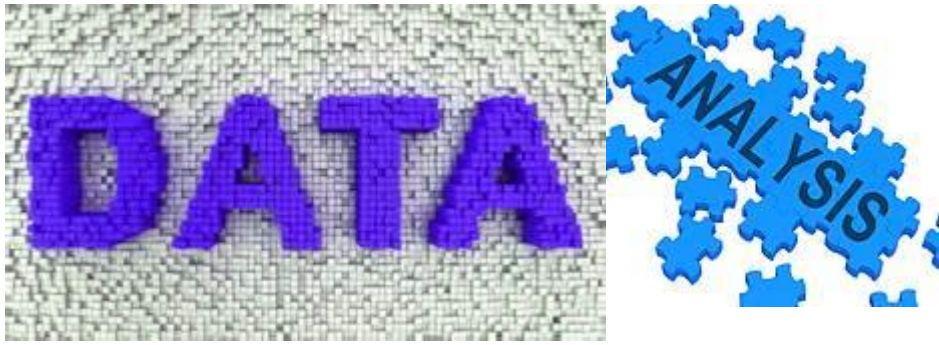
- ▶ Had in-depth interviews on three different visits with each participant. These visits were spaced at regular intervals during the first year after high school.



In the field

- ▶ Coping with disappointments of canceled appointments.
- ▶ Visited neighborhood of participants prior to the date of interviews.
- ▶ My Nigerian origin gave me some advantage of being an *outsider* who wants to understand participants' generational culture and wants to be part of the *insider*.
- ▶ Used Bell's (1988) approach in my interview. Open-ended questions and listened with minimum interpretation
- ▶ Silence during the interview process.
- ▶ Listening to participants story with interest leads to vignettes.





- ▶ Volume of data was overwhelming
- ▶ Listened to interview tapes several times while driving in my car.
- ▶ Putting the puzzle together - took six months!
- ▶ I used a variety of qualitative research analysis methods to capture the multiple views of my participants.
- ▶ Five primary types of analysis: coding, narratives, vignettes, and case analysis and cross-case analysis method.
- ▶ Narratives, in particular, gave rich stories and meanings. The narratives were broken into five sub-areas: **abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, and resolution** using Riessman's (2008) method.



Some Results

- ▶ Young male adults in my study faced more difficulties in their transition. For the young women in this study, career, jobs, and college education took priority. The black females particularly valued school knowledge because they believe it will provide them greater fiscal autonomy in their adult lives.
- ▶ The results of the study strongly indicate that sexual stereotyping has been a persuasive element experienced by the young adults in this study. Enrollment of men and women in vocational programs was primarily by traditional sex stereotypes. Women enrolled in Health Science and Cosmetology and men in Small Engine and Welding. The gender division of labor paralleled the division of labor in the home.





Conclusion

- ▶ The following are some of the conclusions of the research analyses:
- ▶ The integration of vocational and academic education from both the vocational school and the high school programs appears to be insufficient for students to feel prepared for post-secondary education.
- ▶ The jobs that they took the first year after high school were not related to their vocational program.
- ▶ Career counseling of students and preparation for work survival skills are not adequate.
- ▶ Vocational school enrollment continues to reflect occupational gender lines.
- ▶ At the post-secondary levels, males in the study did not show determination to pursue higher education compared to their female counterparts.
- ▶ Male transition showed a pattern of producing another working class generation. The females, for the most part, were creating a social class identity for themselves different from that of their parents.
- ▶ Race matters in the way participants' value education and school knowledge.
- ▶ Local economic and social conditions influenced participants' job opportunities independent of their educational preparation.





- ▶ Bells, S. E. (1988). Becoming a political women; The construction and interpretation of experience through stories. In Riessman, C. K. *Narrative Analysis*. Newbury Pary: Sage Publications, Inc.
- ▶ Riessman, C. K. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. Los Angeles: Sage.



THANK YOU



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Questions

