

Data analysis using one or more analytical tools. (1500 words)

Context

The following paper considers data from two small-business owner/managers. Respondent #1 is female, aged 35 and owns a retail shop selling "nostalgia and old-time" confectionary. Respondent #2 is male, aged 55 and hand-produces "exclusive, high-end chocolate" sold at trade and retail. Both businesses had just completed their first year of trading when interviewed. Interviews followed a semi-structured format in which respondents were encouraged to reflect on influences in their lives that may have affected decisions they made in business.

Tools

Analysis of the transcribed interviews was conducted using a contextual discourse analysis method that seeks to identify themes within a narrative and distinguish relationships and hierarchies within and between themes. Using this tool, the following analysis suggests hierarchical themes in which the following have been identified:

Theme	Subset	Sentence
Control	Personal Accountability	S1/S2
	Comfort Zone(s)	S3/S4

Analysis

The research hypothesis suggests that a greater degree of 'brand new', or logological, learning takes place in small business owner/managers as they are exposed to a greater degree of 'discontinuous' events. However, in the following passage by respondent #1, it is also possible to ask whether she may have actively sought a lifestyle susceptible to discontinuity on a more common scale:

S1. "When I left school, it was because the idea of sitting in an office, in a room, putting pen to paper, did nothing for me."

This sentence (S1), as with many expressions of past experiences during the interview by Respondent #1, leaves itself open to different interpretations. In the first instance, the individual is expressing a need for amore active and arguably less predictable lifestyle. Given her apparent high level of intelligence and motivation, this could be attributed to a degree of boredom. It is known from her personal history that she left grammar school at the earliest opportunity and so it could be inferred that she did not engage with formal education, which would add credence to the idea that she became bored, and thus disillusioned with the choices she believed were available to her at that time.

An alternative interpretation to S1 would consider the sentence to be an expression of her fears that she would not cope or do well if she continued her studies. Again, it is known that her parents were highly motivated individuals suggesting a degree of

expectation on their part regarding her abilities. One way in which she could relieve the pressure might be to remove herself from the situation altogether as, in neglecting her studies, she allows herself to fail on her own terms. This interpretation is further reinforced later in the interview as she considers her reasons for leaving school:

S2. "...I got to see other people and I'm a bit of a control freak. Yeah. If I'm not in control of a situation, I'm out of the situation. It's as simple as that! And that's what I found at school; the fact I wasn't in control. I couldn't leave if I wanted to leave and I had other people telling me what I could and couldn't do. I wasn't going to stand that for very long."

Thus it can be seen that the content and detail of the conversation is contextualised by the additional information provided by the respondent. In her terms, the respondent took a decision not to remain in formal education as she wanted something 'more', even though she wasn't entirely sure what the 'more' was, but certain that it would afford her more control over her life. From this we can initially determine a theme 'Control' in which respondent's who express their preference to have a large amount of control in their lives, can be added. Issues associated with Control and self-determination, such as 'locus of control' or internalised self-responsibility, should sit comfortably within this theme although may be appropriately large enough to warrant separate headings. For example Respondent #1 became pregnant whilst still at school, adding weight to the first interpretation of S1, that of high intelligence and increasing scepticism regarding her choices. In considering personal accountability Respondent #1 found a way, either deliberately or not, of finding an alternative choice that gave her the ability to control her future (theme 'Control') and took responsibility for her actions (theme 'Control', subset 'Personal Accountability').

Additionally, in taking control of her life at an early age and bearing the responsibility of her new child, Respondent # 1 has exposed herself to greater degrees of logological learning than might otherwise have been expected of her at this stage. It is difficult to determine whether the results of her actions were intended to provide new experiences, and it was felt that this subject was too personal to pursue at the time, but it is likely that the actions themselves were seen as 'new' to her and thus suggest that she sought a degree of discontinuity at the time.

Control, as a theme, also arose with Respondent #2. In Respondent #1's case, she went to great lengths to show that she wanted control of her life: she made many of the decisions that affected her on a daily basis and was accepting of the consequences and responsibilities of doing so. Respondent #2, on the other hand, explained that overall control within their marriage as well as their business was shared equally with his wife (S3). He explained they each have their areas of expertise and usually deferred in such cases, but that control to him meant accepting the responsibility for agreeing a course of action with each other:

S3. "Yeah, so all this sort of stuff, if possible, I try to let Barbara do, because..., she is far better at it than I am... This is the difference between us: in the twenty-first century that is a meeting; to me I'm just talking to my missus about our business...But I am stirring my fudge; I'm not sitting down talking. But it is still a business meeting... Sometimes it will be all evening about this that and the other."

The suggestion of shared control is interesting in that whilst it reflects common business-practice, it significantly allows the omission of individual responsibility for discontinuous events. It isn't clear how this might impact on logological learning, but given the nature of the relationship between the two, it may be of importance. Therefore S3 will add another subset to theme 'Control', but may not contribute a great deal towards subset 'Personal Accountability'. In terms of the research questions, issues of partnership may be very important as it may affect both the learning experience and subsequent interpretations of the experience. For example, given S3 and the implicit diversity of roles, it could be asked whether half the responsibility equals half the learning experience? Alternatively, it could be suggested that the mutually supportive roles allow for reflection and knowledge transfer without, necessarily, the direct experience. Thus Respondent #2 may have enjoyed the benefits of the learning without necessarily the effort of direct contact.

Of course there is also the sense, in S3, that respondent #2 is trying to make sense of a world that he neither understands or particularly approves of:

"...in the twenty-first century that is a meeting; to me I'm just talking to my missus about our business..."

In this remark, he appears to be bewildered by the use of terminology that he regards as possibly pretentious. He seems happy to pass the role of understanding this aspect of business to his wife:

S4. "...all this sort of stuff, if possible, I try to let [wife] do, because one, she is far better at it than I am; and two, she has embraced the technology and language that people use..."

This qualifies the extent to which Respondent #2 is prepared to relinquish control to his wife and is important as it demonstrates the choices made in an awareness of the results, i.e reduced individualism and also provides us with evidence of a decision that positively inhibits new learning: Respondent #2 has said he does not want to learn this skill/terminology/language and therefore any opportunity to experience new learning in this area has been closed. S3 and S4 can therefore add a further subset to theme 'Control' of 'Comfort Zone(s)' as it is logical to assume some discontinuous events and therefore some logological learning would take place in situations where individuals are outside of their comfort zone.

The addition of this subsequent division leads us to consider the question whether all logological learning needs to be conducted outside of one's comfort zone. It can be

recognised that the very use of the term implies a degree of discomfort to the individual and, in these terms, does this suggest all such learning should be 'uncomfortable'?