

Qualitative Research Sample
Published by Permission of the Author

Dissertation Proposal
Robert R. Maldonado

Akamai University

Title: A Phenomenological Pilot Study of Energy Healers Expertise and Recommendations for Energetic Disaster and Trauma Relief Training

Introduction

In order to effectively and consistently provide energetic disaster relief treatments for humanitarian disasters, there needs to be a training program to train volunteers and local social service providers. Few studies have focused on how to adequately and effectively integrate and train people in the knowledge of different energy systems in disaster relief. Some trauma relief organizations such as The Trauma Relief Committee of the Association of Thought Field Therapy, Green Cross Association of Traumatic Stress Specialists, Common Bond Institute--Catastrophic Trauma Recovery Project (CTR) and others, have had much success providing training and coordinating teams of practitioners to deploy to assist victims and workers in need during incidents of trauma and disaster. The Association of Comprehensive Energy Psychology (ACEP) has provided initial relief work and training on a volunteer basis to local service providers during disasters (Feinstein, 2008). Despite the effective use of energy psychology in Singapore, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia by ACEP members, no comprehensive training program or organizational structure exists to train a core of dedicated trainers for this type of work. The ACEP Humanitarian Committee has been tasked with developing a training model of best practices and how to move forward (Bulbrook, 2009).

A study that addresses/defines energetic disaster and trauma relief training is important for several reasons. First, it brings the strengths of many energy systems to the field in the aftermath of trauma and disasters. Second, it compiles a diverse wealth of potentially meaningful information/data from numerous experts in their respective fields that can be used to create a training program for relief workers in energetic disaster relief. Finally, it brings this information to a wider audience of practitioners and organizations to assist them in the development of their own training programs in disaster relief.

Purpose of the Study --the purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore and understand through the obtaining of information from key participants in their respective energy systems, what they can contribute to energetic disaster and trauma relief training. The overall aim of this study is to draw on the clinical expertise, field experience and the vision of key “experts” to help define the field of disaster relief training, identify needs and gaps, and make recommendations

for further development in the implementation of energetic disaster preparedness and response efforts.

Research Question

- 1) How do the experiences of the key participants contribute to energetic disaster and trauma relief training?

Philosophical assumptions of the phenomenological strategy—This study will utilize a descriptive Husserlian phenomenological strategy. The Husserlian approach aims to identify the structure of experiences as described by the research participants. Edmund Husserl, a German philosopher uncovered and described the fundamental structure of our life world emphasizing the description of a person's lived experience (Moustakas, 1994). Husserlian phenomenology, because of its descriptive orientation, is best suited for this study. This study will explore the lived experience of the participants in order to understand the essence of a person's account of their experiences as it relates to the phenomena in question—energetic disaster and trauma relief training.

Phenomenology is considered a process as well as a method, and the procedure involves studying a small number of subjects through extensive and prolonged engagement to develop patterns and relationships of meaning. In this process the researcher sets aside his own experiences in order to understand those of the participants in the study (Creswell, 2009). The researcher will explore the individual lived experiences and expertise of the key participants through questionnaires and unstructured interviews. The participants were chosen because of their unique status, experience, and knowledge of their respective energy systems as they relate to disaster relief.

This research design is appropriate because the responses of the participants will be shared and used in the development of a training model and protocols.

Qualitative research strategy

Role of the researcher—The role of the researcher in this study necessitates the identification of personal values, assumptions and biases at the outset of the study. The researcher served as a special operations commander in the U.S. Air Force, training combat helicopter aircrews and participated in military humanitarian relief operations in both Haiti and Honduras. He is a practicing energy healer and teacher in private practice certified in numerous energy healing modalities. He is also a current member of the Association of Comprehensive Energy Psychology (ACEP) humanitarian committee assisting in the development of a training model for humanitarian disaster relief. He believes that these experiences enhance his awareness, knowledge, and sensitivity to the issues being addressed in this study and will assist him in working with the key participants. Although every effort will be made to ensure objectivity, the researcher's personal bias may shape the way he views and understands the data that is collected

and their interpretation. He recognizes the need to be open to the thoughts and opinions of others and to set aside his experiences in order to understand those of the participants in the study.

Participants: The participants will be purposefully selected because of their unique expertise in their respective fields. The researcher will conduct the pilot study using a questionnaire and unstructured interviewing techniques; asking open-ended questions of the participants about their unique expertise in their respective energy system and how it could contribute to disaster relief training. An e-mail will be sent to the prospective participants asking them whether they would be interested in participating in a research study about Energetic Disaster and Trauma Relief Training. Each participant will be contacted and a convenient location and time will be determined for the interview. Prior to the interview the researcher asked the participants to sign a consent form and completed a demographic form of relevant background data.

Sample: purposeful sampling was used for the recruitment of participants for this study. Purposeful sampling is commonly used in qualitative research. It involves selecting research participants according to the needs of the study (Glaser & Strauss; Morse, 1991) in that researchers choose participants who give a richness of information that is suitable for detailed research (Patton, 1980). The selection criteria for inclusion were professional who were the leaders in their respective field and who could articulate their experiences as it relates to the phenomena being investigated—providing energetic disaster and trauma relief.

Data collection procedures—A protocol consisting of a written questionnaire and both e-mail and telephone interviews, will be used to obtain the data. A questionnaire will be mailed to each participant to be filled out and sent back to the researcher. Upon receipt and review of the completed questionnaire, a follow-up interview will be conducted to discuss and to ask the participants to explain their ideas in more detail and/or elaborate on what they have stated in the questionnaire. The researcher will use a non-directive style of interviewing using open-ended questions allowing the participants the freedom to control pacing and subject matter of the interview. Additionally, a more directive style of questioning will be used as needed when the researcher requires more clarification of information that the participants will be providing. The researcher will record the information from the telephone interview by making hand-written notes. Additional sub-questions will also be used as needed.

The researcher will initially “field test” a sample questionnaire with 2 key participants to assess the type of questions for use throughout the study and to ensure that the data from the questions are valid and reliable. In the study the telephone interviews will assess face validity by comparing the responses on the questionnaire with the participant’s real opinions. Reliability will be assessed through test-retest reproducibility by asking some of the participants to complete the questionnaire on more than one occasion. Some of the questions will be asked in more than one way to assess internal consistency. Acceptability will be determined by asking the participants how they found answering the questionnaire during the validity testing. This process will help identify main issues and form the basis of the type of questions to be used in the pilot study.

A sample of interview questions are at Appendix A

A preliminary sample of a questionnaire is at Appendix B.

Data Analysis Strategies for validating findings. Merriam (1998) and Marshall and Rossman (1989) contend that data collection and analysis must be a simultaneous process in qualitative research. They claim that qualitative data analysis entails classifying things, persons, and events and the properties that characterize them. The Colaizzi (1978) method of phenomenology uses Husserlian phenomenology to describe the essential structure of a phenomenon in its analysis. It was used to investigate the lived experiences of nurses giving spiritual care (Deal, 2010). Ballie (1996) conducted a phenomenological study using Colaizzi's method to understand the nature of empathy by nurses. Colaizzi's data analysis method appears to be an appropriate methodology for this study because it focuses on finding the essence and meaning of the experiences of the participants in providing energetic disaster and trauma relief. The Colaizzi analysis involves the following procedural steps:

First, the researcher will read all participants questionnaires and transcribe the data collected from the interviews to get a general sense of the whole and ideas presented. Next, significant statements and phrases pertaining to the phenomenon being studied are extracted from each transcript. Meanings are then formulated from the significant statements. Then the meanings are organized into themes, and these themes evolve into theme clusters, and eventually into theme categories. A color coded system will be used to highlight specific themes/categories to perform a preliminary analysis. Then, the researcher will write a rich and exhaustive description of the lived experience and from this the essential structure of the phenomena will be formulated. Validation will be solicited from the participants to compare the researcher's descriptive results with their lived experiences. Triangulation from different data sources will be used to build a coherent justification for the themes. This description will be presented in the findings/expected outcomes section.

Procedural Rigor—Qualitative validity is to be determined through the use of strategies to check the accuracy of the findings. Triangulation from different data sources will be used to build a coherent justification for the themes. Member checking will be used to determine the accuracy of the findings through taking the final report or specific descriptions or themes back to participants to determine accuracy (Creswell, 2009). Validity will also be captured through trustworthiness, *authenticity and credibility* (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Trustworthiness is determined by credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility is when the researcher analyses the data through a process of reflecting, sifting, exploring, judging its relevance and meaning and ultimately developing themes and essences that accurately depict the experience. Credibility was also established through by member checking sending participants their transcript for review and verification. Each participant was to agree with his or her transcript. Purposeful sampling in this case increased in-depth understanding by selecting information rich experiences from participants who have experienced and lived disaster relief

(Patton, 2002). Dependability was established with the audit trail which involved maintaining and preserving all transcripts, notes, audiotapes, notes, etc. Authenticity refers to the reporting of each participant's experiences in such a way that it maintains respect for the context of the data and presents all perspectives equally so that the reader can arrive at an impartial decision. Confirmability will be determined by linking the data to their sources. In phenomenological research, the researcher sets aside his potential prejudices and biases in a technique called bracketing (Creswell, 2009).

Since this report is fulfilling a doctoral research requirement, the data analysis portion of this report will be scrutinized and validated by the researcher's graduate supervisor/advisor. An additional independent review will be conducted by a colleague experienced in phenomenological methodology and approved by the researcher's supervisor.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher must anticipate any ethical issues that may arise during the qualitative research process (Creswell, 2009). Research involves collecting data from people, about people (Punch, 2005). Researchers need to protect their research participants by developing trust with them, promoting the integrity of the research, guarding against misconduct and any impropriety that might reflect on their organizations or institutions, and cope with new challenging problems (Creswell, 2009). First and foremost, the researcher has an obligation to respect the rights, needs, values, and desires of the participants. Phenomenological research solicits sensitive and deep answers to questions extracting meaning from statements and opinions. Additionally, the reputation and position of the participants are visible, especially since the findings of the study could be shared with other people and organizations.

The following safeguards will be used to protect the participant's rights:

- 1) Participants will be advised **IN WRITING** of the voluntary nature of their participation and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. They will also be advised that at any time during the process they could decline to answer any question.
- 2) The research objectives will be clearly delineated **IN WRITING** and articulated to the participants.
- 3) A **WRITTEN** consent form will be obtained from each participant (DHHS Title 45, Sec. 46.111(a)(4).
- 4) The participants will be informed **IN WRITING** of all data collection methods and activities.
- 5) Provisions will be made for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the participant's (DDHS Title 45, Sec .111(a)6.

- 6) WRITTEN transcriptions and interpretations of the data will be made available to the participants.
- 7) The participant's rights, interests and wishes will be considered first when choices are made regarding reporting the data and, The final decision regarding participants privacy will rest with the participant (DHHS Part 45.Sec. 46.111(a)(7).
- 8) The risk to the participants is considered minimal SAMPLE STUDY PARTICIPANT APPROVAL FORM ATTACHED

Writing an exhaustive description of the phenomena being studied:

As a qualitative research study, it will be presented in descriptive, narrative form rather than as a scientific report. The final report will be an exhaustive construction and description of the phenomena being studied from the voices, feelings, actions and meanings of the study participants. It goes beyond mere fact or surface appearances, but stops short of becoming trivial and mundane (Patton, 2002). This exhaustive description will enable the lived experiences of the participants as it pertains to disaster relief.

Limitations of the Study—When considering the findings, the limitations of purposeful sampling must be kept in mind. Additionally, the interview process will be evaluated for more congruence with the phenomenological approach. Questions that were discovered to be unhelpful in soliciting the expertise of participants were deleted and/or modified.

Appendixes:

Appendix A

Sample Interview Questions

1. What experience/expertise do you bring to disaster relief?
2. How does your (system)/intervention contribute to disaster relief?
3. What kind of training does your (System) require for disaster relief?
4. What has been your experience teaching in disaster relief?
5. How do you envision your (System) being used to train relief workers and local social service providers for disaster relief?
6. What do you envision as a training model for disaster relief?
7. What do you envision as a framework for post-disaster relief operations?
8. What specific training tools, materials, and programs could be developed that would allow energy practitioners to increase their efficiency in humanitarian relief operations?
9. What recommendations can you make about incorporating your system in disaster and trauma relief?
10. Do you have anything else to share?

Appendix B

Sample Questionnaire

Questionnaire on the Expertise of Key Informants in Energetic Disaster and Trauma Relief Training

The following questionnaire will be used to define the field of energetic disaster relief by helping create a model to train practitioners in the knowledge of different energy healing systems.

Background

Name:

Today's date:

Address:

City, state, zip:

Telephone: home () _____

Work () _____

- Sex (*circle*): Female Male

Please indicate your current position

Questions

- How would you rate your experience in disaster relief(very experienced, experienced, some experience, no experience)
- Does your (system)/intervention contribute to disaster relief? If so how?
- What are the things (best practices) that the majority of your practitioners know how to do?
- What training does your (system) require for disaster relief?
- What does your advanced training consist of?
- What recommendations can you make about incorporating your system in disaster and trauma relief?

Bibliography

Association of Comprehensive Energy Psychology (ACEP) Humanitarian Committee Action Plan 2009.

ACEP Disaster Relief Plan 2009

Ballie, L.(1996). A phenomenological study of the nature of empathy. *Journal of advanced Nursing*, 24(6), 1300-1308

Bulbrook. M.(2010). CAM 590—*Qualitative Research for Complementary Medicine Course Syllabus*. Akamai University

Code of Federal Regulations Title 45 Public Welfare, Department of Health and Human Services Part 46—Protection of Human Subjects (2009)

Colaizzi, P. F.(1978). *Existential phenomenological alternatives for psychology*. New York: Oxford University Press 0. Determining validity in qualitative inquiry

Creswell, J.W., & Miller, D.(2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory into Practice*, 39(3), 124-130

Creswell, J (2009). *Research Design: Qualitative, quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage

Deal, B (2010). A pilot study of nurse's experience of giving spiritual care .*The Qualitative Report*. Vol. 15, Number 15. Retrieved on Dec 5, 1010 from <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR15-4>

Feinstein, D. (2008). Energy Psychology in Disaster Relief. *Traumatology*. 14(1)., 124-137

Holliday, A.R. (2007). *Doing and writing qualitative research* (2nd ed.) London: Sage

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G.B.(2006). *Designing qualitative research* (4th ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Merriam, S.B.(1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Moustakas, C (1994). *Phenomenological Research Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Patton, M (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Punch, K. F.(2005). *Introduction to social research: quantitative and qualitative approaches* (2nd ed.) London: Sage

The Trauma Relief Committee of the Association of Thought Field Therapy—
<http://www.atft.org>

Williams, A.(2003). How to write and analyze a questionnaire. *Journal of Orthodontics*, Vol. 30,
No. 3