

## Reflection on Research Experience

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During the course of my graduate studies, I have been fortunate to be involved in a variety of research experiences, which has included exposure to several research methodologies. I have participated in studies utilizing quantitative and qualitative methodologies as well as studies utilizing a mixed method approach, namely Q-method. Through these experiences, I have attempted to diversify my research skills and abilities.

### *Character Education*

My initial research experience during my doctoral studies consisted of a study concerning the character development of college students utilizing Q-method. This study provided my first opportunity to conduct a study beginning with the selection of a topic, proceeding through IRB approval, and eventually the professional dissemination of the results. It taught me the importance of having a topic that is well grounded in the literature in order to help ensure its utility. Further, it provided me the experience of conducting research in a different location than the institution granting human subjects approval. The resulting study led to two international presentations, one concerning the results and the other concerning the usefulness of the approach, and a peer-reviewed publication.

### *Views toward Health Care*

My second opportunity to conduct research began at the request of the Cultural Competency subcommittee of the Oklahoma Taskforce to Eliminate Health Disparities. Specifically, the subcommittee had determined that new research methods were needed to better examine and address the disparities that currently exist within the health care system, which led them to request a team to study the situation using Q-method. As this was a topic with which I was previously unfamiliar, it provided me with the opportunity and experience of becoming familiar with a new literature. Through this experience, I was provided the opportunity to lead a research team of five individuals to achieve a common goal. This experience has led to an international presentation and an article that has been submitted for publication in an international journal. Further, numerous areas of future research were established, one of which is likely to be begun this semester.

### *Project CREATES*

In addition to my experience conducting research with Q-method, I have had the opportunity to participate in a large-scale, grant-based research program, Project CREATES. Through this project, I have had the opportunity to participate in both quantitative and qualitative research, including conducting observations of elementary school classrooms, administering various research instruments, psychometrically analyzing various research instruments, and more recently I have had the opportunity to manage a large database from four the schools, with data currently spanning a four-year period. As one of several graduate assistants on the project, I have also had the opportunity to collaborate with my peers to enhance the quality of all of our work. My participation in this research project has led to numerous regional and national poster presentations, and several articles are in preparation resulting from these works.

### *Care Efficacy Scale*

To further my research experience, and in preparation for my dissertation work, I have recently had the experience of working with another graduate student to develop and test a psychometric measure of care-efficacy, a person's perception of their ability to help another person in need of assistance. This construct is one of eight components that will be considered through my dissertation, and this study has provided valuable insight toward my dissertation. After selection of the construct, numerous procedures were implemented to construct a scale with highly reliable scores that has also been examined for initial evidence of convergent and discriminant validity. Through the process, we gained valuable experience regarding the use of subject matter experts as well as other issues to consider when developing a research instrument. While the preliminary results will be presented at a regional conference later this month, further efforts are underway to provide additional validity evidence that will likely lead to a manuscript submitted for publication later this semester.

### *NIH Grant Application*

In addition to conducting the studies listed above, I have been fortunate to gain valuable grant-writing experience, even if the project itself was unfunded. Meant to be an expansion of the health care study utilizing Q-method, I was able to co-author a \$255,000 grant application that was submitted to the National Institutes for Health last spring. The process of writing the grant has taught me the difficulty and time involved in preparing a grant. While the grant was unfunded, the feedback from the reviewers provides valuable insight, and we are currently considering resubmitting the grant under a different Request for Applications.

### *Summary*

The research experience I have gained, in addition to my research coursework, has provided me with a solid foundation upon which to base my future career as a scholar. I have learned valuable skills, both from my research successes and my mistakes, and have developed a wide range of research interests. Through the studies conducted thus far, I have also developed a number of follow-up studies that I anticipate conducting throughout my career.