Qualitative Critique of S. T. Payton’s Article:
The Informal Power of Nurses for Promoting Patient Care

1. Does the phenomenon lead itself to study by qualitative methods or would a quantitative approach have been more appropriate?

The phenomenon studied by Payton (2008) regarding the informal power exerted by nurses to promote patient care was most appropriate for qualitative study. According to Nieswiadomy, “qualitative research focuses on gaining insight and understanding about an individual’s perception of events” (2008, p.59). The purpose of this research article was to study how nurses exercise various forms of informal power within the health-care system to advocate for their patients (Payton, 2008). The research question is subjective in nature and could only be answered by gaining an understanding of personal insight and accounts from nurses at the patients’ bedside. Bedside nurses who encounter the communication barricades of a hierarchical health care system, as described by Payton, on a daily basis. A quantitative research approach would have been inappropriate to answer this question due to the lack of objectivity and limited amount of empirical data that would be found.

2. Does the study focus on the subjective nature of human experience?

This study does focus on the subjective nature of the human experience. In this study, the researchers took what the participants said about their experiences and used that as basis for their analysis. This study focuses on what was narrated by the nurses who were interviewed. It also was concerned with how they felt about their experience.

3. Is the specific qualitative approach named and described?

Nieswiadomy lists 5 different types of studies for qualitative research. These include phenomenological, ethnographic, grounded theory, historical, case studies and action research as the 5 types of studies (Nieswiadomy, 2008, p. 172-179). The study conducted states that narrative analysis was used (Payton, 2008, p. 4). According to Payton, narrative analysis deals with the stories or narrative the subjects provide (Payton, 2008, p.5). The study does state they used grounded theory methods for analysis (Payton, 2008, p. 5). According to Nieswiadomy, grounded theory studies take the data that was gathered and form a theory that is grounded in the data (Nieswiadomy, 2008, p. 174). After reading the descriptions offered by Nieswiadomy and the description used by Payton, I believe that the research is most closely related to the phenomenological studies instead of grounded theory. In a phenomenological study the researcher looks at the participants experience through what they say and describe (Nieswiadomy, 2008, p. 172).
4. Will the study findings have significance for nursing?

I think this study is very significant to the nursing profession. It helped to reaffirm thoughts and feeling experienced by many different nurses regarding the nurse-doctor game. This type of study can be used to benefit the interactions between nurses and doctors and hopefully try to reach a more effective form of communication. It also helps to show other nurses that they are not alone in the experiences, and there are other nurses who have experienced the same type of problem in their practice.

5. Does the researcher clearly describe how participants were selected?

Yes, the researcher clearly describes how the participants were selected. After the researcher obtained approval to conduct the study, ads were placed in newspapers and hospitals to get volunteers to participate. In order to be part of the research, the participants had to be baccalaureate prepared nurses (BSN), nurses who work in a hospital setting, work differing shifts in a variety of settings, and in a variety of hospitals. The researcher wanted nurses with a BSN due to the fact they felt these nurses have more extensive education than other registered nurses. A hospital setting was chosen because the researcher felt it would provide a better understanding of informal power in an organizational context.

6. How was the sample size determined?

Six nurses were selected to be a part of the research study. Ten nurses responded to the newspaper and the hospital ads, but only six met the qualifications the researcher needed to conduct the study.

7. Is the data collection and recording process fully presented?

The data collection process used in this paper followed the steps of narrative analysis presented by Catherine Riessman. These four steps include: “orient to the telling of narratives, transcribe the collected narratives, analyze the transcribed narratives, and report them in an appropriate manner” (Paynton, 2008). The first step in this process involved creating the research question and developing the interview questions. These questions were formed and constructed to obtain narratives from the participants. Each of the six participants had an initial interview and three follow-up interviews within six months. The interviews were conducted in an area away from the participants work environment in order to maintain confidentiality. The conclusion of the interviews was decided after six months due to repetition of themes during analysis (Paynton, 2008). The second step of narrative analysis involves transcribing the collected narratives. To achieve this step each interview was audio-recorded and then transcribed. The techniques of Conversation Analysis research were used, so all words and utterances were transcribed. A total of 183 single-spaced pages of narrative data were collected (Paynton, 2008). The presentation of the data collection process was very complete. The steps utilized were listed and discussed. Interviews were conducted until no new information was being collected. Nieswiadomy states “Both the large amount of data collected and the length of time spent collecting data helps increase the reliability and validity of qualitative study findings” (2008).
8. Is it clear how the researcher bias in data collection was avoided?
This study had both variables to help prove its reliability and validity. One area of concern in this study was how the researcher avoided bias while collecting data. There was not any evidence presented in the paper of how this was avoided.

9. Is the data analysis method consistent to the approach of the study?

“Content analysis involves creating categories of data and developing rules for coding data into these categories” (Niesiadomy, p.64, 08). According to Nieswiadomy, “Coding is the basic data analysis tool of qualitative researchers” (p.64, 2008). Because of the qualitative nature of his research coding was an appropriate choice for analysis. He used open coding to identify any common themes of informal power use in the narratives he had collected (Paynton, 08). Next selective coding was used to identify specific categories for the ways informal power was used (Paynton, 08). He arrived at two categories: “Managing Organizational Constraints” and “Managing Hierarchical Constraints” as well as four informal power strategies.

10. Are the study findings clearly presented and the limitations acknowledged?

The author attempted to present his findings as they were expressed by the nurses he interviewed. “The findings are presented below in a style labeled by Van Maanen (1990) as “realist tales.” Realist tales “push the most firmly for the authenticity of the cultural representations conveyed by the text” (p. 45) by writing research reports from a third person perspective that conforms to notions of objective social scientific forms of writing”(Paynton,08). He also requested that his participants review his findings to validate authenticity (Payton, 08). Paynton again reviews the themes he discovered in their narratives in his conclusion. “The ultimate code for nurse throughout this study was to serve as patient advocates” (Paynton, 08). He summarizes though there have been advancements in “collaborative communicative efforts” between healthcare professionals nurses still feel they need to resort to informal power strategies in order to advocate for their patients at times (Paynton, 08). However, he does fail to acknowledge any limitations to his study.
11. Are suggestions made for further research, based on the study findings?

There were no direct suggestions made by Paynton for further research in this article. However Paynton states that,

As these issues continue to be negotiated in healthcare organizations, there must be a continued focus on ongoing interdisciplinary approaches to educate healthcare professionals regarding ways to work collaboratively that both promote patient care and validate professional roles. A focus on teaching strategies that both serves to provide adequate patient care and validates the professional roles of all healthcare workers can move the healthcare profession toward a model that is holistic in its approach to the health of all professional groups that interact together in healthcare organizations. (Paynton, 2008)

This statement would infer that further research studies would be appropriate and perhaps necessary to the advancement of collaborative efforts for health care professionals.

References

