

SAMPLE

William K. Rawlins

Sample/Segment 1

PERFORMER/NARRATOR:

I begin with an excerpt from an interview with an 88 year-old man about his friendships, which took place in 1990.

STORYTELLER:

Well I had an experience a good many years ago, but I don't know if you want to hear that or not.

INTERVIEWER:

Sure, tell me about it.

STORYTELLER:

It was nineteen, eight-seven, we had a terrible blizzard, snow storm through here. In December. And I was up when it was blowing and the roads were full, one night, to the bathroom, and went back to bed and towards the bed, I passed out. And fell flat on my face forward. And well it was a stopped up artery here in my neck. Stops things goin' upstairs. Well, scared my wife. I was out about 20 minutes near as we can figure out. And she called the County Highway Department, and they said, "Well lady, we don't know how we can help you, the roads are full, and they can't get out." And it was still blowing, snowing. Well then she, we've got a daughter lives down the road about, ah, next house down the road, she called her, of course, we have friends around the West Point neighborhood over here. And they did too, they used to live over there, close to West Point. And they've got a fire department and an ambulance over there. So she got a hold of them and most of the people we knew, was connected with that plant, oh that I knew, was friends. But anyhow, well to make it a little shorter, that was about 1:00, and 6:00 they had me in the hospital in Lafayette.

William K. Rawlins is Stocker Professor of Communication Studies at Ohio University, and a local Athens, Ohio, musician and performer. "Sample" has been performed at the International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry at the University of Illinois in May 2011, and at the National Communication Association meetings in New Orleans in November 2011. I am especially grateful to Andie Walla for her work as the videographer for this project. I also thank Sandy Rawlins, Lainey Jenks, Laura Ellingson, and Lynn Harter for their thoughtful input and encouragement.

INTERVIEWER:

Five hours later huh?

STORYTELLER:

Yeah. And while I was recuperating, well they went in and reamed that out and cleaned it out, that artery. And while I was recuperating, didn't have nothing else to do and I got to figuring out, there was about 30, 31 men involved in getting me to the hospital.

INTERVIEWER:

Yeah? Wow.

STORYTELLER:

So that was well, she –my daughter- happened to think of a neighbor and friend, a couple three miles south of us here that had a big 4-wheel drive tractor. Blade on it. And she called them, and the daughter-in-law, she was stranded there, and she answered the phone, she told her what was goin' on and what she wanted. She said, "Well Bob will be there." And sure enough in half, three quarters of an hour he was here, with that thing. And he went up north to 800, I don't know if you're acquainted with the roads or not?

INTERVIEWER:

A little bit, yeah.

STORYTELLER:

And the ambulance from West Point got that far. Well he went up there and hooked onto the ambulance and pulled it down here. And they got me in the ambulance, started back -- they wanted him to pull them back up to 800, and he said, "No, we've got the track made, so you go ahead, and I'll follow you. And if you need any help, I'll be there." Well they didn't, they got through, but when we got up to 800, there was a pickup there, 4-wheel drive pickup, two friends from people I knew from West Point, and friends, told us, the driver, to get over to 25, which is to the left. And when you get there, there's a lot of snow right there, but they'll be a tractor there. And sure enough, course at that time, I had come to, and I mean I was at myself and I could hear what was going on. Well that's something I'll never forget.

Sample/Segment 2

PERFORMER/NARRATOR:

I'd like to read now from an article published that same year in 1990 in the *Journal of Gerontology*, entitled, "Perceived Health Problems, Formal/Informal Support, and Life Satisfaction Among Older Adults."

JOURNAL ARTICLE/CONVENTION PRESENTER:

“Figure 1 contains a conceptual model (M5) that was designed to assess the relationships among perceived health problems, formal support, informal support, and life satisfaction among elderly persons.” (Krause, 1990, p. S194)

...

“*Sample*

...

The loss of subjects in panel studies may create serious problems if sample attrition does not occur randomly. For example, a disproportionate loss of subjects with low life satisfaction scores would make it difficult to accurately assess the impact of social support on changes in life satisfaction through time. Table 2 contains some basic descriptive information on the nature of sample attrition in this study. Two kinds of data are provided in this table. First, the means and standard deviations for all of the study measures are listed separately for older adults who completed both waves of the study (i.e. survivors) and elderly people who were lost to follow up. In addition, this table contains the results of a logistic regression analysis that was designed to determine whether there are systematic differences between these two groups on any of the study measures.” (Krause, 1990, pp. S196-S197)

...

“The results of the logistic regression analysis reveal that there are nonrandom patterns of sample attrition in this study. More specifically, the findings suggest that respondents who failed to participate in the follow-up interview were older, had lower levels of educational attainment, more functional disability, and less formal support than survivors.” (Krause, 1990, p. S197)

...

“Taken as a whole, the discriminant analysis and the data contained in Table 2 suggest that there are systematic (i.e. nonrandom) patterns of subject loss in this study but that these patterns are not particularly strong. The extent to which the nonrandom attrition affects the relationships among the constructs in Figure 1 cannot be determined conclusively. Consequently, the potential problems created by subject loss should be kept in mind as the findings from the study are reviewed.” (Krause, 1990, p. S197)

...

“Discussion

...

Overall, the findings suggest that formal, but not informal assistance, helps to buffer or reduce the detrimental effects of perceived health problems on changes in life satisfaction through time. This finding was somewhat surprising, as the data further reveal that elders are more likely to turn to informal network members than to formal sources of support when health problems arise.” (Krause, 1990, p. S203)

...

“Although the problems confronting researchers appear to be formidable, assessment of the relative contributions made by formal and informal support to the maintenance of well-being among older adults represents an area where social scientists can make a profound impact on public policy. However, rather than rushing headlong into the public policy arena, investigators must carefully construct a solid knowledge base with well-developed conceptual models, state-of-the-art analytic techniques, and thoroughly replicated findings.” (Krause, 1990, p. S204)

Sample/Segment 3

PERFORMER/NARRATOR:

I’d like to perform a song now that I wrote that addresses relationships between the two discourses that we have already heard. [brief pluck of the guitar]
The song is entitled, “Sample.”

SINGER/GUITAR PLAYER:

88 years old tonight; face down on a cold floor
Could this be “random attrition” or something more?
Daughter on the telephone, neighbors plowing snow
How to say it’s significantly so?
Ooo-oooh

Ignorance is all around; knowledge grows by daze.
How do we find wisdom in the haze?
How do we get so detached from the questions that we ask?
Must we be a caricature of ourselves?

“The loss of subjects in panel studies may create serious problems if sample attrition does not occur randomly. ...Table 2 contains some basic descriptive information on the nature of sample attrition in this study. ...First, the means and standard devia-

tions for all of the study measures are listed separately for older adults who completed both waves of the study (i.e. survivors) and elderly people who were lost to follow-up.” (Krause, 1990, pp. S196-S197)

Is this lyrical or merely empirical?
What is the meaning of this game of chance?
What does friendship mean to you? Have you asked yourself?
Have you forgotten how to sing and dance?
Ooo-oooh

We sample from his sighs; we sample from her fears.
We sample from their heartbeats and their tears.
Standard deviation plucked from conversation.
What makes a life count on your grid?

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The docile “center of suffering” (Dorfman, 1991, p. 50), “the costly comfort of clarity” (Schechet, 2005, p. 131),
the “facile resolution” (Schechet, 2005, p. 131) of statistical tests.
The logic of the body count – conceits of our own voices
expertly obscuring real choices.
Ooo-oooh

Where do you find significance when your day is done?
Working on a sample size of one
How do you know real meaning when your days are done?
Working on a sample size of one.
Ooo-oooh Ooo-oooh

Works Cited

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