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**THE MEANING OF WORK: IDENTIFYING THE
PERSPECTIVES AMONG FILIPINO BLUE-
COLLAR WORKERS**

A RESEARCH PROJECT REPORT

Kayod ng kayod
para pamilya,
maitaguyod!

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THE MEANING OF WORK: IDENTIFYING THE PERSPECTIVES AMONG FILIPINO BLUE-COLLAR WORKERS

A RESEARCH PROJECT REPORT

I. Introduction and Objectives

Work has been a dominant part of everyday life. Researchers have acknowledged the changing nature of work amidst environmental uncertainty (Griffin, et al., 2007; Hecht and Allen, 2009; Juillerat, 2010; Messias, et al., 1997; Oorange, 2003), blurring the traditional boundaries set by theory (Barley and Kunda, 2001; Jullierat, 2010; Nicholson, 2010). This has resulted in work taking on multiple meanings and contexts (Messias, et al. 1997; Nicholson, 2010), making it harder for firms and its workers to define their roles (Edwards, et al., 2000; Morgeson and Campion, 2002; Jullierat, 2010). As such, there is therefore a need for re-examine the perceptions and attitudes that influence individuals on how they define what work is.

There is also much concern regarding theories not being able to keep up with the changes (Barley and Kunda, 2001; Juillerat, 2010) and ending up lacking an organizing theme (Nicholson, 2010). Therefore, there is also a need to re-examine theoretical and practical perspectives on the meaning of work.

This research project is concerned with the meanings individuals attribute to work. There have been previous researches on work performance (e.g. Griffin, et al. 2007) design (e.g. Juillerat, 2010), work transitions (e.g. Ali and Avison, 1997), and work roles (Hecht and Allen, 2009), little has been said on what work really means, especially from individual workers' point of view. Therefore, this work will provide those insights on the meaning of work, specifically from the individual's point of view.

Different meanings of work have taken on cognitive approaches (Rosso, et al., 2010). These include general beliefs, values, and attitudes about work (Brief & Nord, 1990; Nord, et al., 1990; Roberson, 1990; Ros, et al., 1999) and personal experiences and significance of work (MOW International Research Team, 1987; Wrzesniewski, et al., 2003). Individuals provide more meaningful insights on how workers attribute certain meanings and perspectives to certain things. (Geertz, 1973; Kluckhohn, 1951; Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961; Mead, 1934; Rosso, et al. 2010). Therefore, defining the meaning of work at the individual level is likely to be based on individual world views and value systems (Rosso, et al., 2010).

II. Research Questions

The following research questions serve as guidelines for the project. There are several expectations on individual workers to be flexible and adaptable in an uncertain environment

In this kind of work and for a paper you need to get the core idea framed much faster. I'm almost at the end of the first page and I don't know the focus - MOW, yes, individual, yes but the big issue - Filipino workers is not yet here.

(Orrange, 2003), which leads to different meanings and variations of what work is (Ali and Avison, 1997; Hecht and Allen, 2009; Messias, et al. 1997; uncertainty is a generic issue these questions point to the very issue of defining what work is, which is lacking in existing research given the changing environment.

Specifically for the target respondents' point of view (in this case Filipino blue-collar workers' perspective), the following research questions are:

- What is work?
- What are the elements that constitute the meaning of work?

III. Research Scope

Even within a particular culture, there can be some significant differences in perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes (Ali and Avison, 1997; Kahn-Hut, et al, 1982; Kessler-Harris, 1981; Messias, et al. 1997; Rosso, et al., 2010). DK We need to identify which of them contribute the

Consistent with the impact of cultural issues on Filipino blue-collar workers living and working in the West, we consider different behavior types to fully understand the meaning of work (Cummings, and Blumberg, 1987; Griffin, Jackson, 1999).

IV. Literature Review

Recent discussions on re-examining work design, organizational theory, and cognitive perspectives to develop a new model, but have not yet been fully tested (Juillerat, 2010; Messias, et al., 1997). There have also been some commentaries and observations regarding the evolution of work design that have noted several phenomena that have significantly changed the perspectives on work (Nicholson, 2010). This research work focuses further on the social and cultural factors, which have received little scholarly attention (Harpaz, et al., 2002; Rosso, et al., 2010).

Meaning can be constructed individually (Rosso, et al., 2010; Wrzesniewski, et al., 2003) from one's own perceptions and norms (Geertz, 1973; Kluckhohn, 1951; Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961; Mead, 1934; Pratt and Ashford, 2003; Rosso, et al. 2010), and/or influenced by environmental or social context (Wrzesniewski, et al., 2003). Meaning is also based on having made sense of something (Pratt and Ashford, 2003) based on the individual's behaviors, attitudes, beliefs (Bandura, 1989; Harpaz, et al., 2002; Maslow, 1968; Rogers, 1961), values, and/or motivations (Brief and Nord, 1990b; Cartwright and Holmes, 2006; Collins and Porras, 1994; Miller and Skidmore, 2004; Thomas, 1990; Oldham, 1976).

These influence the way significant aspects of individuals' word is interpreted. The meaning of work will vary based on the distinct belief, norms and values of a particular culture. So far, the cultural influences of the Western world have dominated theory and studies on the meaning of work. Eastern cultures draw on a particular set of norms and values that make the self less salient than the self-in-relation to others....

- a little bit on Filipino culture

- introduce the fact that little / nothing known on how this group understands the MOW

This is the kind of flow you need here to build direction and purpose.

This therefore implies that there is a need to compare the influences of different facets and conceptualizations involved in constructing this meaning individually.

Delving further in the aspect of culture, deriving meanings of work are deeply rooted in broad social and cultural forces (Brief and Nord, 1990a; Harpaz, et al., 2002), reflecting trends and changes (Harpaz, et al., 2002; Rosso, et al., 2010). But, even though meanings of work are largely socialized by individuals' cultural environments (Hulin and Blood, 1968; Whitely, et al., 1992), there can be more variance in work meanings within cultures rather than between cultures (Rosso, et al., 2010).

Therefore, this research work shall probe deeper into the context of a particular culture – the Filipino blue-collar workers working overseas – to acquire some more insights regarding this issue of the meaning of work. Filipinos in particular are a mix of Eastern and Western influences (Hechanova, et al., 2006). Although Filipinos have been described as a collectivist society exhibiting a high power distance (Hofstede, 1991), Westernized management and industry psychologies are the basis as to how Filipinos actually

Previous qualitative and quantitative research projects have provided interesting insights on overseas Filipino contract workers' general in work. One prevailing factor that influences perceptions on work is the i an, 1993; Tacoli, 1999). Filipinos are willing to tolerate lower conditions surrounding the work environment as long as they get higher wages and these wages are not delayed. Hence, they appreciate the fact that their jobs are temporary, and hereby want to maximize economic gains as much as possible (de Guzman, 1993). Other reasons include increasing social mobility and satisfying a desire for change, implying a general dissatisfaction with life in the Philippines (Tacoli, 1999). Interestingly, this also entails some changes in the perception of life in general: being more responsible and having broader horizons and higher ambitions (de Guzman, 1993). Furthermore, there is a general belief that if a parent migrates for employment, it should be the father since he is expected to be the family breadwinner (Uy-Tioco, 2007). Clearly, economics and the desire to give the family better living conditions that push Filipinos to seek employment abroad. This reinforces earlier notion that size is a chief influence on the meaning of work.

V. Interview Question Guidelines

Individual perceptions and attitudes towards the meaning of work are based on the actions undertaken in response to the given work situation (de Guzman, 1993; Hechanova, et al., 2006), which can be complex and contradicting at times (Tacoli, 1999). Therefore, based on the aforementioned discussion on the specifics of this research project, the questions for the interviews will involve probing at the following issues:

Western systems
in an Eastern
culture - so
underlying values
and norms
significant

Good direction -
introducing
relevant
dimensions of
culture that emerge
in the findings.

- 1) Patterns of the respondents' work life status
- 2) Descriptions on current work roles
 - a. What are the things that are stimulating and not stimulating with the current work?
 - b. What are the things that are more rewarding and less rewarding with the current work?
 - c. What are the things that are more frustrating and less frustrating with the current work?
- 3) Ideas and insights on their future plans
- 4) Ideas and insights on what is the ideal job
- 5) Reasons and motivations to be in their current situation
 - a. What are the reasons for leaving the home country?
 - b. What are the reasons for being in the current job?

VI. Data Gathering Methods

A. Data Collection by Interview Sessions

Homogeneous purposive sampling will be used, targeting Filipino workers who legally work in blue-collar jobs such as factory workers and domestic helpers. The study will disregard other factors and characteristics (e.g. how long they have been in Taiwan, marital status, age, educational background, etc.).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted. Nine Filipinos were randomly selected and interviewed during Sundays lunchtime at the old hotel building located at the corner of Chenggong Road. This location served as an appropriate area because many Filipino workers gather there before and after the Catholic Church service (one at Sheng-Li Road in the morning and the other at Jhongsan Road in the afternoon).

The researcher introduced himself and the purpose of the interview and then asked whether or not the potential respondent would agree to be interviewed. There were four sessions conducted (two Filipinos each in the first two sessions, one for the third session, and four for the last session). The interviews lasted between thirty to forty minutes per session. There were no audio or video recordings done at the request of the interviewees, so the researcher had to resort to extensive note taking on the spot. The summary profiles of the respondents are as follows:

Table format

Session	Respondent	Gender	Age	Marital Status	Current Job	Length of interview (approx.)
1	"Rene"	Male	25	Single	Factory Machine Operator	30 minutes
	"Joshua"	Male	25	Single	Factory Machine Operator	30 minutes

2	“Freddy”	Male	25	Single	Factory Machine Operator	35 minutes
	“Michael”	Male	26	Married (with two children)	Factory Machine Operator	35 minutes
3	“Ryan”	Male	30	Unmarried (with one child)	Factory Machine Operator	38 minutes
4	“Kathlyn”	Female	30	Single	Factory Machine Operator	40 minutes
	“Agnes”	Female	33	Single	Factory Machine Operator	42 minutes
	“Geffrey”	Male	28	Single	Factory Machine Operator	40 minutes
	“Victoria”	Female	29	Single	Factory Machine Operator	39 minutes

B. Data Collection by Observations

Observations were also made at the same Filipino cafeteria for triangulation purposes. These observations were made three separate times and lasted for thirty minutes to one hour per visit. Assuming the role of a complete observer, the researcher ordered lunch and sat at one table eating and pretending to mind his own business. The researcher keenly observed the surroundings while pretending not to eavesdrop. The sitting location, which was changed per visit, was chosen so as to be close enough to eavesdrop on some conversations and observe some behaviors. Right afterwards, the researcher recorded the observations through notes and were used to supplement the data collected from the interviews.

VII. Data Analysis

Grounded theory approach was used to conduct the data analysis. This approach used open coding to broadly categorize the data derived from the interviews conducted (Saunders, et al., 2007), disaggregating the interview and observation data into units. In the first round of open coding, twenty-eight (28) units were formed, which were later on reduced to thirteen (13) units by combining some of the initial units formed. In the third and final round of open coding, eight distinct categories were formed. The details of these final eight categories are discussed in the results and findings.

Axial coding looks for relationships between the categories to explain the responses from the interviewees and the behaviors found from the observations (Saunders, et al., 2007). Going back to the interview questions, the recorded flows of the interviews, and the answers shared by the respondents, there were eleven relationships found between and amongst the eight categories formed. The details of the axial codings are discussed in the results and findings.

VIII. Data Results and Findings

A. Open Coding Results

The data analysis yielded eight categories for this study. These categories were derived from the codings through interviews and observations made. Phrases and sentences from the responses were examined and matched together to form categories, finding common themes in the responses.

Just report coding results
So
The meaning of work for Filipino blue collar workers is understood through [x] categories of....

1. Motivations for Working

In this category, there are two subcategories that were formed here. Respondents shared monetary-related motivations and/or experiential-related motivations for working. Monetary-related motivations include earning better salaries and getting better incentives and benefits, which in turn allows them to save and invest. Experiential-related motivations, which were found to be motivations other than monetary considerations, include learning and experiencing new and better working environments and opportunities to become more confident, responsible and independent. This subcategory also includes making and meeting friends from different areas in the Philippines.

Sample Responses	
Monetary-Related Motivations	Experiential-Related Motivations
"...stimulating through the fact that I am earning..."	"...stimulates me are my close friends at work..."
"...incentives are much enough paid... it is the compliments to your work..."	"...I get to experience working in other country... earn more self-confidence..."
"the salary is better here in Taiwan than in the Philippines..."	"...become more responsible and independent..."

2. Reasons for Working

This category describes more of for whom or for what are you working. Based on the codings, there are also two subcategories present here. Respondents mentioned family-based reasons and/or self-esteem-based reasons for working. Family-based reasons, which dominated most of the responses from the interviewees, means to financially support, help, and provide for the respondent's family, which includes parents, siblings, and his/her own children. For self-esteem-based reasons, some respondents shared that they want to uplift their own lives, finding some sense of accomplishment and fulfilling some of their own personal plans.

Sample Responses	
Family-Related Reasons	Self-Esteem-Based Reasons
"...to financially help my parents..."	"...to find some accomplishment..."
"...to provide for the children..."	"...aiming to uplift my own life..."

3. Future Working Plans

Respondents shared one of two directions for their future working plans. Some mentioned an ideal work situation where they can work with a high pay that matches to their educational background. They also wanted a work situation that need to be far away from their families. The other direction pointed to entrepreneurship. Some respondents shared that, with the money they earn and save while working, they want to set up their own business that they would operate and manage on their own. The businesses they mentioned were small in scale.

Flow is working better here.
Try:
Future working plans related to....
It is explained through two sub categories of....

Sample Responses	
Ideal Work Situations	Entrepreneurial Plans
<i>"...rather work as office personnel (which matches with my education)..."</i>	<i>"...want to start up my own business (e.g. coffee shop, restaurant, machine shop)..."</i>
<i>"...just working atmosphere..."</i>	<i>"...want my own simple business on my own..."</i>
<i>"...I want to work in Canada or in Europe after working here in Taiwan..."</i>	<i>"...want to run a machine shop since this is what I learned in school..."</i>

4. Current Experiences while Working

Respondents shared mostly negative experiences in their current work situation. This category covered work experiences such as forced overtimes, experiences of discouragement and embarrassment from superiors, and threats of being fired and sent home due to work mistakes. It was noticeable that some respondents were using this time during the interview sessions to vent out some of their concerns relating to these negative experiences, adding that while they are indeed complaining about it, they cannot really voice out such concerns for fear of retribution from the employers.

Sample Responses
<i>"...days when we were forced to do overtime..."</i>
<i>"...have experiences of embarrassment... the boss shouting at us and don't even ask what happened first..."</i>
<i>"...pressure on the job is the most frustrating..."</i>
<i>"...experience threats of being sent back home because of making mistakes at work..."</i>

5. Nature of the Work Context

Respondents shared that their current work context involves performing routine jobs and following standard operating procedures with long working hours and nothing much happening to break these routine. Since they are all machine operators, they have to follow strict rules, regulations, and procedures imposed by the company and have to be very detailed in their work.

Sample Responses
<i>"...everyday at work I make sure that I'm following SOPs..."</i>
<i>"...everyday the same thing: turning on the machines, checking and inspecting the machine parts and the products produced..."</i>
<i>"...nothing much happens... just stand and operate the machine..."</i>
<i>"...standing the whole 10 hours busy, concentrating, struggling performing my job..."</i>

6. Personal Dispositions while Working

Interestingly, some respondents mentioned the need to make sacrifices and the need for patience as critical part of working. Some even indicated that since the tasks are so routine, they just simply go about and do it without looking for anything else. They mentioned that these are the things they need to do in order to cope with their everyday work experiences.

Sample Responses
<i>"...we need to sacrifice because of the pressure..."</i>
<i>"...we need patience especially to our leaders..."</i>
<i>"...because of the pressure, it's very hard to communicate..."</i>
<i>"...work is really hard but I just let it be..."</i>

With more time - this category would be rich, I guess.

7. Uncertainty Perceptions

Respondents also mentioned some uncertainties regarding their jobs and their future plans. Because of the temporary nature of their jobs in the factories, some respondents noted that this knowledge affected their own motivations and plans.

Sample Responses
<i>"...I cannot say for sure because I am temporary worker here..."</i>
<i>"...I cannot say because I'm not sure if I would stay here after my contract is done..."</i>
<i>"...I don't even know for sure if I still want to work abroad or just go home to the Philippines..."</i>
<i>"...contract is three years but you'll never know if I would reach three years here..."</i>

8. Defining Work

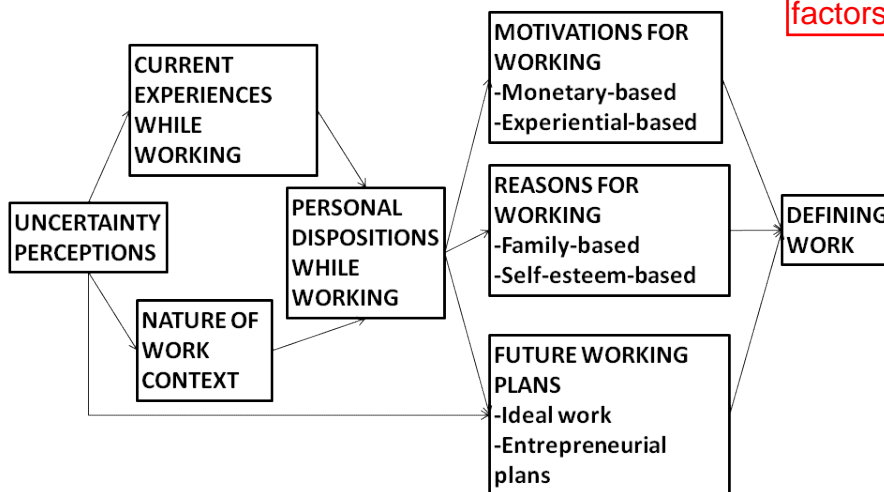
Respondents defined work as a necessity to live. Some said that work means helping himself or herself to become more worthy. They insist that work should be clean, right, and just and should be performed to make a living.

Sample Responses
<i>"...work is an occupation you need to perform to make a living..."</i>
<i>"...is intended to help you become worthy..."</i>
<i>"...work is hard so sometimes, you just take the one that is available..."</i>
<i>"...work is hard but oftentimes you have no choice but to do it..."</i>

B. Axial Coding Results

The results of the axial coding showed some relationships between and amongst the categories. Reexamining the responses yielded some cause and effect relationships (i.e. “because of this... therefore... this...”) between certain categories. A representation of these relationships is shown as follows:

Your previous section seems to be axial coding - headings and sub-factors?



1. Uncertainty Perceptions affecting Current Experiences while Working, Nature of Work Content, and Future Working Plans

Going back to the responses, uncertainty perceptions repeatedly affected some responses on the current experiences while working, nature of work context, and future working plans. Respondents often cite that because they do not know what will happen to them, they hold off future plans and focus on maximizing whatever current opportunities that they have. They also become more flexible and just accept such uncertainties as a part of their working life.

Sample Responses	
On Current Experiences while Working	“...sometimes, we will have some deviations in the SOPs, so we need to adjust quickly, adding pressure...”
On Nature of Work Context	“...sometimes, our line leader would want us to do overtime, so our schedule changes too...” “...because of overtime announcements... we therefore get little or no sleep... just sleep right after the shift...”
On Future Working Plans	“...because we don’t know what’s going to happen to us, we can’t make any certain plans for ourselves on what to do afterwards...” “...I want to work in Canada but that depends if I can save enough here in Taiwan...”

2. Current Experiences while Working and Nature of Work Context affecting Personal Dispositions

It has also been observed that the respondents' current experiences and current work contexts affected their dispositions. Based on what they have experienced so far working for blue-collar jobs, they form certain dispositions which they adopt to cope with their current situations and to manage their own motivations, reasons, and future plans.

Sample Responses	
Of Current Experiences while Working	<i>"...always scared of making mistakes because I might get sent back home..."</i> <i>"...have to deal with curfews... and overtime even if I don't want to..."</i>
Of Nature of Work Context	<i>"...our work is really sensitive and dangerous... if we make a mistake we will be threatened to be sent back home..."</i> <i>"...our work is so routine that I don't see anything stimulating about it... compared to my previous job (in Saudi Arabia)..."</i>

3. Personal Dispositions affecting Motivations for Working, Reasons for Working, and Future Working Plans

These dispositions were found to affect their motivations for working, their reasons for working, and their future working plans. These dispositions shaped the way they look at their motivations and reasons as to why they are working and how they laid out their future plans.

Sample Responses	
On Motivations for Working	<i>"...because we are not here forever, we need to earn as much as we can and in a right way..."</i> <i>"...you want to earn a lot while you are here..."</i>
On Reasons for Working	<i>"...for sure that the family will be the first thing you will think about why you're working..."</i> <i>"...you are making these sacrifices for your family..."</i>
On Future Working Plans	<i>"...since you are making sacrifices here, you want them to bear fruit someday and have enough for your own needs..."</i> <i>"...not to grow old working for the entire life abroad..."</i>

4. Motivations for Working, Reasons for Working, and Future Working Plans affecting Defining Work

Lastly, the respondents' motivations for working, reasons for working, and future working plans affected their defining what work is. It is noticeable that the respondents kept mentioning these motivations, reasons, and future plans on defining what work is, reinforcing why these relationships were formed.

Sample Responses	
Of Motivations for Working	<i>"...work... is to earn money... to my own future someday..."</i>

Of Reasons for Working	"...work is for the family... even it is hard, it's still for the family..."
Of Future Working Plans	"...work to support my future plans... for myself and for my family..." "...use what I earn to start my own business..."

C. Discussions

The results of the open coding and axial coding indicate some patterns that Filipino blue-collar workers define what work is. Some of the emerging themes that they think about the uncertainties that they have to deal with, and how do these uncertainties influence their perceptions on their current situations, dispositions, and future plans. Furthermore, their motivations and reasons for working abroad also influenced their thinking on how do they define what work is.

Keep your discussion tight on the research question. It is floating about.

Comparing these analysis results with the observations made, there are some relatively strong patterns found as well, most notably in two issues. The first is that their concerns involving uncertainties at work prominently influenced their future plans. Some respondents were observed to have some aspirations of going elsewhere (in North America or Europe), but mentioned that those aspirations depend on what was going to happen to them in Taiwan. The second issue is that their current experiences at work prominently influenced their dispositions. These experiences were mostly based on how they were treated by their employers and the overall working environment. They want to air such concerns but feared retribution, so they simply coped and try to manage those concerns in their own way.

IX. Conclusions

The responses from the interviewed Filipino blue-collar workers support the previous studies on Filipino contract workers in the Middle East (de Guzman, 1993; Tacoli, 1999; Utrilla, 2003) because of the significant difference in the nature of work. Filipino blue-collar workers are mostly construction workers while Middle East-based Filipino blue-collar workers are predominantly machine operators in production factories. Furthermore, this study takes those responses as a starting point to develop a framework to explain the meanings behind these workers' perceptions and the relationships found between and amongst these workers' perceptions and their experiences. These Filipino blue-collar workers cope with their experiences and how these experiences shape their perceptions on the meaning of work.

No - in the discussion previous section highlight how your work is same/ different from others Here hit harder with what is new/ novel in your work. Critical for publication.

This research found out that Filipino blue-collar workers' past and present experiences at the workplace prominently influence their perceptions on what work is. But these experiences were found to intertwine with their motivations and reasons for working in the first place.

These findings therefore open up new channels to further investigate these factors and relationships and how do these interact with each other to further define the meaning of work. By identifying these factors and relationships, further investigation can probe deeper to determine the significance of these factors and the relationships on the meaning of work.

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FEEDBACK ON YOUR PRESENTATION

QUICK PRESENTATION FEEDBACK			
GROUP:	ERIK		
A	B	C	D
Are ideas presented connected with the aim of the presentation?	Are the ideas presented clear supported with evidence and logical argument?	Is it easy to follow & to understand? (Are the slides clear and easy to follow e.g. use of new pictures, words, graphs)	Overall impression (is it a group presentation etc.?)
40%	30%	20%	10%

<p>Comments</p> <p>Helpful and brief recap.</p> <p>Participant observer – tell us what focused on e.g., conversations or parts of conversation related to work Notes – good helpful.</p> <p>How reduce 22 – 8?</p> <p><i>Transcript – raw data? This looks thin. These are not transcripts.</i></p> <p>Work is about becoming ‘worthy’ ... ‘survive in this world’ ‘accept uncertainties as part of life’</p> <p>Axial...forming dispositions – yes, but what are these (18) – disposition – better/clearer</p> <p>Contribution – what your findings – how different from others?</p> <p>Paper:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This is much more focused. See my edits that take you more towards building direction and motivation towards this study. - Make clearer how the interview data and observation data come together in the analysis. - The findings are interesting and use of quotes helpful. Present just results (not different levels of codes). There is some confusion here – open may be axial? - Don’t miss the opportunity to introduce how your findings answer your research questions and represent contribution. 			

FEEDBACK ON YOUR PRESENTATION

Grade: 86%