Writing Grants that Incorporate Qualitative Methods

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CFAR SPRC Qualitative Methods Workshop Series
Examines relationships among variables

**QUALITATIVE**

**INDUCTIVE** or theory-development driven

Helps **elucidate processes** (especially emerging over time)

Provides **detailed information** about setting or context & meanings of experiences

Emphasizes voices of participants (quotes)

**QUANTITATIVE**

**DEDUCTIVE**

Tests theories or hypotheses

Provides **measurable evidence** & gathers descriptive information

Examines relationships among variables
STRENGTHS

**QUAL**

- Facilitates collection of data when measures do not exist
- Provides a depth of understanding of concepts
- Allows identification of previously unknown processes
- Explanations of “why” and “how” phenomena occur
- Elucidate range of effects of phenomena

**QUANT**

- Yields efficient data collection procedures
- Generalizability: creates possible replication
- Facilitates comparison groups
- Measures pervasiveness of “known” phenomena
- Helps establish (probable) cause and effect

Elucidate range of effects of phenomena
Mixed Methods

Using Qualitative to *explain* findings from the Quantitative research.
- Primary focus is to explain a phenomenon.
- Dig deeper into noteworthy results for more detail and context.
- Explain and interpret unexpected survey results.

Using Quantitative to *explore* ideas & concepts developed with the Qualitative research
- Primary focus is to explore a phenomenon.
- Generalize Qualitative findings to projectable samples.
- Test concepts developed with aid from the Qualitative phase.
Utility of Qualitative Data

1. Utilize qualitative themes to differentiate individuals (how).
2. Identify important factors involved in processes.
3. Develop new items for a quantitative instrument.
4. Collect data regarding participant experiences.
5. Collect data to inform development of procedures.
6. Collect data to help explain results.
7. Evaluate process of an intervention.
Qualitative Methods: WHEN

- Research methods MUST fit research problem or question
  - New questions and initiatives
  - Complex phenomena
  - Hard-to-measure constructs
  - Interactions in specific, everyday settings

- An example: *Why are certain external and internal factors significant or not significant predictors of students’ success in school?*
Qualitative Methods: WHY

- Choice of qualitative methods should be informed by:
  - A theoretical and conceptual orientation that supports the overarching science
  - Needs of the study

- An example: *Are you drawing from learning theory (interested in how people learn), ecological theory (social and structural factors that impact learning), etc.*
Writing Great Grant Applications
Research Goal

- State an overall goal that addresses overarching research problem or question

- Types of Goals that lend themselves to qualitative methods:
  - Gain a deeper understanding of “how” and “why”.
  - Providing detailed information about experiences and life courses
  - Understanding why certain individuals or groups of individuals experience different outcomes

- Ensure that the goal informs the specific aims and research questions, leading naturally to a qualitative methods approach
Specific Aims

- Aims are driven by the research question, NOT by the methodology
- Methods should flow naturally from the aims and Research Question
- For each aim, identify methodological approach to be used to accomplish it/to tie methods with goals
Specific Aims

Aims that call for a qualitative approach are:

- Inductive in nature
- Emphasize exploration
- Contextualize individual behavior, group behavior, organizational dynamics and cultural influences
- Convey openness for learning from participants and data sources
2.1. Specific Aim 1: Perform formative research to develop ________ that convey the importance of ________ in King County, Washington.

- 2.1.A. Our research team will conduct focus group and key informant interviews with members from highly-affected communities: a) ______ and b) _______, who form the majority of incident HIV among ______ in King County.
  - Subaim 2.1.1. Our research team will continue to inform ourselves about best practices in community-participatory research, by holding brown bag seminars with leading practitioners and discussing approaches that draw from community strengths.

- 2.1.B. Develop a multimedia tool that illustrates the principles ________ for use in community discussions. This video/animation tool will be designed so that it can be accompanied by narrated text in different languages and will be iteratively piloted in English, Kiswahili, and Amharic.

- 2.1.C. Identify message dissemination channels in the target populations (xx and yy). These channels may include social network approaches (person-to-person communication), civil society approaches (churches, community events, and community-based organizations), and the media (radio, TV, and print).
Specific Aims - Examples

- Develop a community curriculum to educate the community about...

- Evaluate the feasibility and acceptability of...
Significance

- Review literature with a focus on methods.
  - Consider adding critiques related to methods that have not been used to study the topic.
- Identify gaps in the extant knowledge that suggests need for gathering qualitative data to address the research question.
- Identify rationale for using qualitative methods
  - establish importance of the problem
  - establish how your investigation will enhance scientific knowledge
Approach

Data Collection:
- Qualitative design/approach
- Purposeful sampling strategy
- Sample size considerations
- Participant recruitment
- Data sources
- Data collection protocols
- How data will be recorded
- Procedures
- Relevant ethical issues
Approach

Data Analysis:

- Data preparation procedures
  - Transcription
  - Coding and theme development strategies
- Qualitative data analysis software tools
IMPORTANT: Detailed AND specific strategies to ensure rigor of qualitative approach. Must ensure high levels of:

- Trustworthiness
- Credibility
- Transferability
- Accuracy of the qualitative findings and conclusions
Approach

Strategies to ensure rigor of qualitative approach:

- **Triangulating** multiple data sources or investigators when applicable
- **Member checking** results when participants are available to provide feedback and/or additional data at a later time
- **Inter-coder agreement** checks when reliability of codes is important
- **Prolonged engagement** when data are collected in the field.
Sampling Considerations

- If using saturation explain this concept thoroughly:
  - “sampling to a point where no new information is obtained from participants”

- Consider estimating an upper limit of expected need for participants
IRB Considerations

- Be prepared to educate IRB reviewers about qualitative research.

- Present research in phases or stages.
  - Each subsequent stage will be accompanied by a modification to the initial IRB approval.
  - Title modifications according to stage or phase referring back to original approval and informing IRB of what to expect for next phase/stage.
Examples

What are the research grants that you are working on?
THANK YOU