Objectives

- As a group activity, to plan a qualitative study on the topic of leadership (you may plan a study on your topic, if you wish)
- To develop a PowerPoint presentation of this group plan
- To cover some basic ideas about qualitative research (set all of us on the same footing) using the “Gunman” qualitative case study as an example
- To introduce you to the idea of traditions or “types” of qualitative research

What we need to know to develop this plan:

- What is qualitative research?
- What types of problems are best suited for qualitative research?
- How to write a qualitative purpose statement and research questions
- What tradition or type of qualitative research best fits our research problem?
- What types of qualitative data we should collect?
- Identifying our procedures for analyzing the data
- Assessing our software packages that will help with data analysis
What is qualitative research?

Qualitative research is an inquiry approach in which the inquirer:

• explores a central phenomenon (one key concept)
• asks participants broad, general questions
• collects detailed views of participants in the form of words or images

(Adapted from Creswell 2002, p. 58)

What do we need to keep in mind when designing a qualitative study?

• Focus on process as well as outcomes
• Let the design emerge
• Use inductive reasoning
• Develop a complex picture of the phenomenon (studying many ideas with few participants and sites)
• Discuss the context of the phenomenon
• Follow the “scientific method” (e.g., problem, questions, method, results)

Starting our plan

Let’s provide a title for our project
Start with a research topic and a research problem

- Identify the subject area or topic for the study
- Specify the research problem: The practical issue that leads to a need for your study.
- Complete these sentences:
  - “The topic for this study will be…”
  - “This study needs to be conducted because…”

Let’s write down the topic and the research problem leading to our study

Now we will write a good qualitative purpose statement:

- What it includes:
  - Single sentence
  - “The purpose of this study . . .”
  - Central phenomenon
  - Qualitative words (e.g. “explore,” “understand,” “discover”)
  - Participants
  - Research site

Understanding the central phenomenon:

- Quantitative research
- Qualitative research

\[ X \rightarrow Y \]

Central Phenomenon
Let’s stay away from quantitative language that might mislead readers

- What is not included in this statement:
  - Not a comparison
  - Not relating variables
  - Not proving hypotheses
  - Not measuring variables

Here is a script for a good qualitative purpose statement:

“The purpose of this qualitative study (replace later with type of qualitative tradition) will be to
  _____(understand, describe, develop, discover)
  the _____(central focus) for
  ______(participants: person, process, groups) at
  ______(site).”

Writing good qualitative research questions

- Questions narrow the purpose
- Two types:
  - Central question
    - The most general question you could ask
  - Sub questions
    - Sub-divides central question into more specific topics questions
    - Limited number

Use good qualitative wording for these questions

- Begin with words such as “how,” “what,”
- Tell the reader what you are attempting to “discover,” “generate,” “explore,” “identify,” or “describe”
- Ask “what happened?” to describe
- Ask “What was the meaning to people of what happened?” to understand
- Ask “What happened over time?” to explore a process
Avoid words such as:

- “relate”
- “influence”
- ”impact”
- “effect”
- “cause”

Scripts to help design qualitative central questions and sub-questions:

Central Question Script: (usually write only one)

“What does it mean to ___________ (central phenomenon)?”

“How would ________ (participants) describe ___________ (central phenomenon)?”

Sub-Question Script:

“(What) ___________ (aspect) does ________ (participant) engage in as a ___________ (central phenomenon)?”

Let’s design the methods for this qualitative study. What to include:

- Data collection
- Data analysis
- Data representation
- Data interpretation
- Data validation
- The type of qualitative “tradition” we will use in our methods

• Write the purpose statement, central question, and sub-questions for our qualitative study
What are the qualitative traditions?

- Narrative research
- Phenomenology
- Ethnography
- Grounded Theory
- Case Study

What criteria will we use to select a tradition?

- Intent or focus
- Audience
- Personal training/skills
- Personal comfort level with structure

Now, let’s select a tradition for our study

- Choose a qualitative tradition for our research problem.
- Tell why we chose it and how it relates to the study’s purpose.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Qualitative Traditions</th>
<th>Narrative</th>
<th>Phenomenology</th>
<th>Grounded Theory</th>
<th>Ethnography</th>
<th>Case Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus</strong></td>
<td>Exploring the life of an individual</td>
<td>Understanding the essence of experiences about a phenomenon</td>
<td>Developing a theory grounded from data in the field</td>
<td>Describing and interpreting a cultural or social group</td>
<td>Developing an in-depth analysis of a single case or multiple cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data Collection</strong></td>
<td>Primary interviews and documents</td>
<td>Interviews with 20-30 individuals to “saturate” categories and detail a theory</td>
<td>Primarily observations and interviews with additional artifacts during extended time in the field (e.g., 6 months to a year)</td>
<td>Multiple sources including documents, archival records, interviews, observations, physical artifacts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data Analysis</strong></td>
<td>Stories, Epiphanies, Historical content</td>
<td>Statements, Meanings, General description of the experience</td>
<td>Open coding, Axial Coding, Selective Coding, Conditional Matrix</td>
<td>Description, Analysis, Interpretation</td>
<td>Description, Themes, Assertions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Narrative Form</strong></td>
<td>Detailed picture of an individual’s life</td>
<td>Description of the “essence” of the experience</td>
<td>Theory or theoretical model</td>
<td>Description of the cultural behavior of a group or an individual</td>
<td>In-depth study of a “case” or “cases”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Within this tradition, what data will we collect?

- Who will be studied?
- What information will be collected?

Four considerations for selecting people/sites to study:

- Can the people and sites help us learn about our central phenomenon? (purposefully select people and sites)
- How many people and sites should we study? (keep sample size small)
- Do we have access? (gain access)
- Do we have permissions (obtain permissions)

What types of information can be collected in qualitative research?

- Observations
- Interviews
- Documents
- Audio-Visual Materials

If we choose to observe, how do we do it?

- Create an observational protocol
  - Record descriptive notes
  - Record reflective notes
- Decide on your observational stance
- Enter site slowly
- Conduct multiple observations
- Summarize at end of each observation
If we choose to interview, how do we interview?

- Decide on the type of interview to use
  - Individual
  - Focus group
  - Telephone
  - e-mail
- Create an interview protocol
- Ask open-ended questions (5-7)
  - allows the participant to create options for responding
  - participants can voice their experiences and perspectives
- If possible, tape record and transcribe for analysis

Once we collect the data, how will we analyze it? The overall process

- Let’s write down in our plan our data collection approach
  1) Sites to be studied
  2) People to be studied
  3) Permissions needed
  4) Types of data to be collected
  5) Forms needed for data collection

More specific steps in the analysis process

- Exploring the database
- Coding the data
- Developing findings - a description and themes
- (Re) presenting the description and themes
- Interpreting the findings
- Validating the findings
How do we first explore the database?

• Obtain a general sense of the data
• Write down memos on hard copy
• Think about the organization of the data
• Consider whether more data are needed

Then we engage in the coding process that involves several steps:

1. Initially read through data
2. Divide text into segments of information
3. Label segments of information with codes
4. Reduce overlap and redundancy of codes
5. Collapse codes into themes
6. Reduce codes to 5-7 Themes

How do we divide the text into segments? (actual coding)

• Transcribe the interview
• Initially read through for general meaning
• Determine coding frame (sentence, paragraph, or phrase) and determine what the person is saying in the coding frame
• Assign code labels in left margin
  – Use in vivo coding (their words) when possible
  – Do not over code - practice “lean coding”
  – Stay away from interpreting comments (10 sec rule)
• Look for overlap among codes
• Combine codes into 5-7 themes

What are themes?

• Themes are broad categories of information (codes grouped together)
• Themes can describe a setting
• Themes can describe what occurred
• In the 5-7 themes, have some be: a) what you would expect; b) what you would not expect (unusual themes)
• Themes can also be related (chronology, grounded theory model)
• Let’s practice the coding procedures using a sample two-page transcript on the topic of how department chairs balance their personal and professional lives.

In this analysis process, should we use a computer program to help?

Some computer programs available:

- N6  http://www.qsrinternational.com/
- NVivo  http://www.qsrinternational.com/
- Maxqda  http://www.maxqda.com

• Describe the procedures we will use for analyzing the data.

• Demonstration of the basic features of N6 including:
  - entering documents (we will enter the department chair project we have coded)
  - coding texts
  - tree diagram
  - searching codes
How will we report our findings? (What topics do we present in the findings?)

- We might describe the setting
- We might identify and discuss 5-7 themes (including multiple perspectives, good quotes, useful dialogue, even metaphors or analogies)
- We write in detail
- We try to make the narrative as realistic as possible (even note tensions/contradictions)
- We report the narrative in a way consistent with our tradition
  - Narrative – typically a chronology
  - Phenomenology – typically description building toward the essence of the phenomenon
  - Ethnography – description of the setting and cultural themes that display the way culture-sharing works
  - Grounded theory – categories of information leading to a theoretical model
  - Case study - description of the case and themes of the case

At the end of our study, what interpretations can we make? (Discussion section of studies)

- Interpretation is stepping back – asking what all of this means; it is not neutral
- Options:
  - We can give our own personal reflection (based on our experiences, history)
  - We can compare our findings with the literature
  - We can summarize in a general sense what we found
- We also need (as shown in scholarly discussion sections)
  - Raise potential limitations in our study
  - Make suggestions for future research
  - Discuss the practical implications for our study

As we present these findings, what visual presentations can we use to convey them?

- Create a visual image of the information in a “comparison” table
- Depict physical layout of the setting
- Describe personal or demographic information for each person or site
- Present a model of a theory

How do we know that our interpretation (or themes, or questions, or the entire research report) is accurate?

- Member checking: Members check the accuracy of the account
- Triangulation: Looking for themes across different types of data; different researchers; different participants
- Others: peer review, external audit, report disconfirming evidence, clarify researcher’s stance, thick description, prolonged time in the field
Let’s put it all together – What topics are addressed in a proposal for a qualitative study?

- Introduction
  - Statement of the problem (including literature)
  - Purpose of the study
  - Research questions
  - Delimitations and limitations

A qualitative proposal (cont’d)

- Procedures
  - Characteristics of qualitative research (optional)
  - Qualitative research strategy
  - Role of the researcher
  - Data collection procedures
  - Data analysis procedures
  - Strategies for validating findings
  - Narrative structure

A plan for a qualitative proposal

- Anticipated ethical issues
- Significance of the study
- Preliminary pilot findings
- Expected outcomes
- Appendices (interview questions, observational forms, timeline, and proposed budget)

- Let’s review the plan we have developed collectively and share plans that you have developed on your own
Principles of Qualitative Research: Designing a Qualitative Study

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