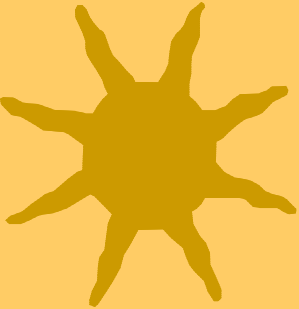


Writing Qualitative Research Proposals

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Purpose of a Research Proposal



- ★ Communicates research plan to others (e.g., funding agencies)
- ★ Serves as a detailed plan for action
- ★ Serves as a contract between investigator and funding bodies when proposal approved



Qualitative Research: Basic Assumptions



★ Reality is complex, constructed and ultimately subjective



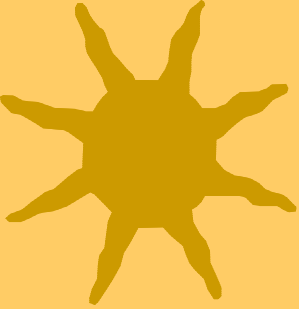
★ Research is an interpretative processes



★ Knowledge is best achieved by conducting research in the natural setting



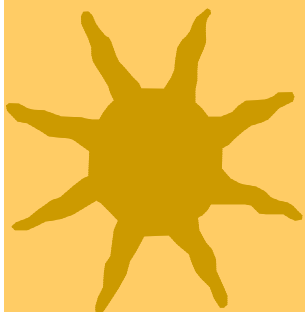
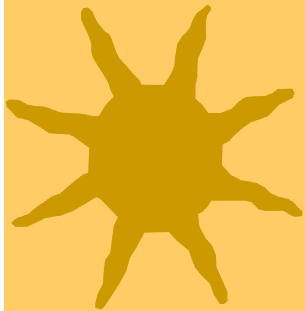
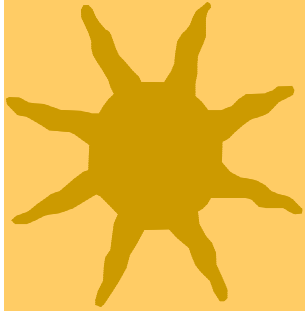
Qualitative research



- ★ Qualitative research is unstructured.
- ★ Qualitative designs are “emergent” rather than fixed.
- ★ The results of qualitative research are unpredictable.



Morse, 1994



Kinds of Qualitative Research

- ★ Grounded theory
- ★ Ethnography (critical ethnography, institutional ethnography, ethnomethodology, ethnoscience, etc.)
- ★ Phenomenology
- ★ Narrative Inquiry
- ★ Others



The Challenges for Qualitative Researchers



- ★ Developing a solid convincing argument that the study contributes to theory, research, practice, and/or policy (the “so what?” question)
- ★ Planning a study that is systematic, manageable, and flexible (to reassure skeptics):
 - Justification of the selected qualitative method
 - Explicit details about design and methods, without limiting the project’s evolution
 - Attention to criteria for the overall soundness or rigor of the project



Questions a proposal must answer



★ Why should anyone be interested in my research?

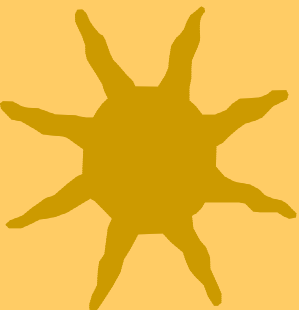
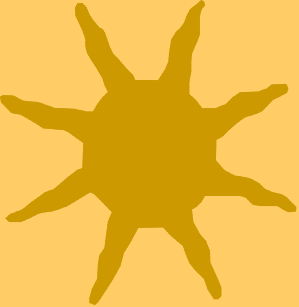


★ Is the research design credible, achievable, and carefully explained?



★ Is the researcher capable of doing the research?

Marshall & Rossman, 1989



To answer these questions:

- ★ Be practical (practical problems can not easily be brushed off)
- ★ Be persuasive (“sell” your proposal)
- ★ Make broad links (hint at wider context)
- ★ Aim for crystal clarity (avoid jargon, assume nothing, explain everything)

Silverman, 2000



Sections of Typical Qualitative Proposal

- ★ Introduction
 - Introduce topic and significance
 - Statement of purpose, research questions/objectives
- ★ Review of Literature
 - Related literature and theoretical traditions
- ★ Design and Methods
 - Overall approach and rationale
 - Sampling, data gathering methods, data analysis
 - Trustworthiness (Soundness of the research)
 - Ethical considerations
- ★ Dissemination Plan
- ★ Timeline
- ★ Budget
- ★ Appendices



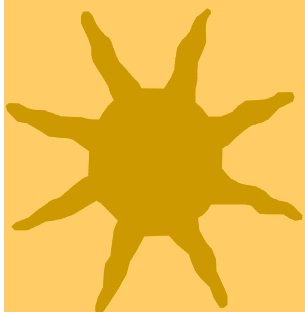
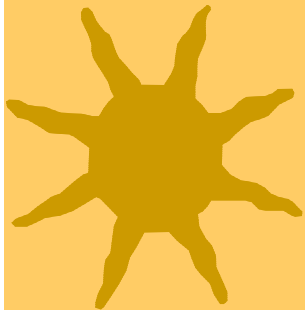
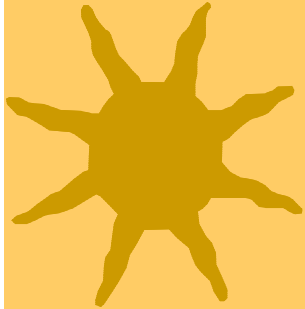
Introducing the Study – 1st para



★ Goal: capture interest in the study

- Focus on importance of study (Why bother with the question?)
- Clear and concise (details will follow later)
- Synopsis of the primary target of the study
- Persuasive logic backed up with factual evidence



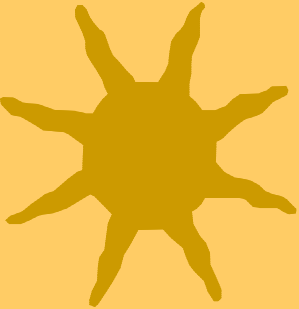


The Problem/Research Question

- ★ The problem can be broad, but must be specific enough to convince others that it is worth focusing on.
- ★ Research questions clearly delineated (sometimes with sub-questions)
- ★ Scope of the research question(s) needs to be manageable within the time frame and context of the study.



Purpose of the Qualitative Study



★ Discovery?

★ Description?



★ Conceptualization (theory building)?

★ Sensitization?

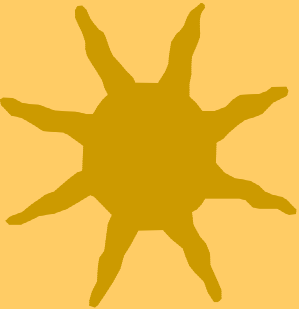
★ Emancipatory?



★ Other?



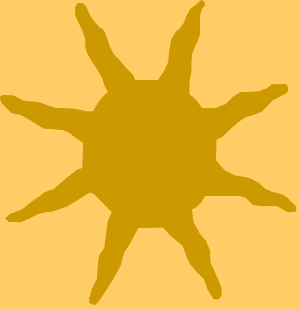
Literature Review



- ★ Selective and persuasive – building a case for what is known or believed, what's missing, and how the study fits in.
- ★ Literature is used to demonstrate openness to complexity of phenomenon, rather than funneling toward an a priori conceptualization.



Methods – challenges here



★ Quantitative designs are often more familiar to reviewers



★ Qualitative researchers have a different language





Methods section



★ Orientation to the Method:

- Description of the particular method that will be used and its creators/interpreters
- Rationale for qualitative research generally and for the specific method to be used.





Qualitative Studies are Valuable for Research...

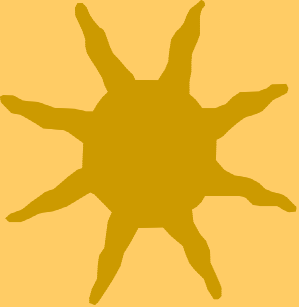


- ★ that delves in-depth into complexities and processes
- ★ on little-known phenomena or innovative systems
- ★ on informal and unstructured processes in organizations
- ★ that seeks to explore where and why policy and local knowledge and practice are at odds
- ★ on real, as opposed to stated, organizational goals
- ★ research that can not be done experimentally for practical or ethical reasons
- ★ for which relevant variables have not been identified

Marshall & Rossman, 1999



Sample



★ Purposive or theoretical sampling

- The purpose of the sampling
- Characteristics of potential types of persons, events or processes to be sampled
- How decisions about sampling will be made.

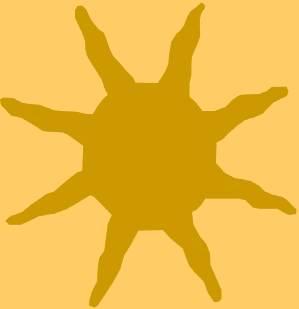
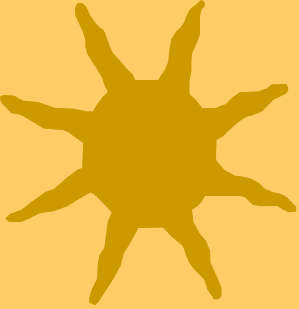
★ Sample size

- Estimates provided based on previous experience, pilot work, etc.

★ Access and recruitment



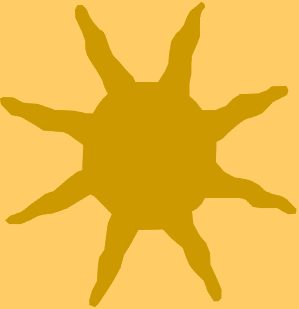
Data Collection and Analysis



- ★ Types: Individual interviews, participant observation, focus groups, personal and public documents, internet-based data, videos, etc. (all vary with different traditions)
- ★ Analysis methods vary depending on qualitative approach
- ★ Add DETAILS and MORE DETAILS about how data will be gathered and processed (*procedures should be made public, not magical*)



Data Management & Analysis



★ How will data be keep organized and retrievable?

★ How will data be “broken up” to see something new?



★ How will the researchers engage in reflexivity (e.g., be self-analytical)?

★ Convinces the reader that the researcher is sufficiently knowledgeable about qualitative analysis and has necessary skills.





Trustworthiness (Soundness of the research)

- ★ Reflected throughout the proposal.
- ★ And address this specifically, using relevant criteria for the qualitative approach used.
- ★ Examples of strategies used:
 - Triangulation
 - Prolonged contact with informants, including continuous validation of data
 - Continuous checking for representativeness of data and fit between coding categories and data
 - Use of expert consultants



Examples of Strategies for Limiting Bias in Interpretations



★ Include plan to search for negative cases

★ Describe how analysis will include a purposeful examination of alternative explanations



★ Using members of the research team to critically question the analysis



★ Planning to conduct an audit of data collection and analytic strategies



Other components



- ★ Ethical considerations
 - Consent forms
 - Dealing with sensitive issues



- ★ Dissemination

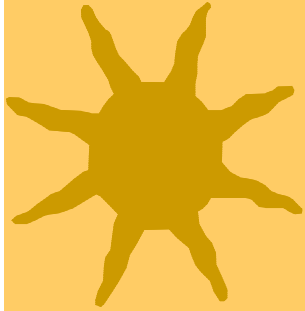
- ★ Timeline

- ★ Budget





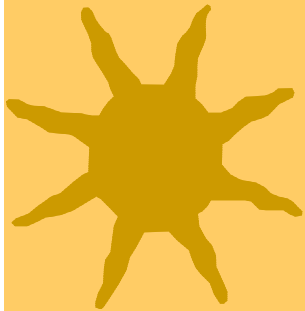
Last Bits of Advice...



★ Seek assistance and pre-review from others with experience in grant writing (plan time for rewriting)



★ Highlight match between your proposal and purpose of competition



★ Follow the rules of the competition**

★ Write for a multi-disciplinary audience