

Qualitative and Mixed Methods in Community-Based Participatory Research

Deborah K. Padgett, PhD, MPH
NYU School of Social Work

NIH 2009 Summer Institute



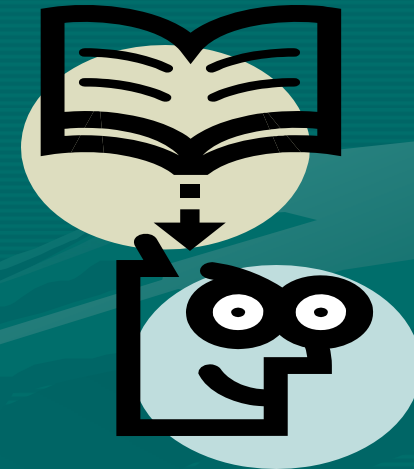
Qualitative and Field Methods in Health Research: A Long History

☐ 'Shoe leather' epidemiology
John Snow, the water pump and cholera (the parish priest supplied the critical information)

☐ Medical detectives

☐ Field studies in biology and disease etiology

☐ Disease (objective) vs. Illness (subjective) distinction



Qualitative Methods in Health Research: Favorable Trends

- ▣ Growing awareness of limits of quantitative designs and methods (HIV/AIDS epidemic)
- ▣ Inter-disciplinary growth (embrace of social sciences e.g., social capital; social causation)
- ▣ Multi-factorial etiologies—downstream *and* upstream
- ▣ Context, dynamic change and eco-systems perspectives
- ▣ Cross-cultural health research (e.g., local knowledge; culture-bound syndromes)
- ▣ Strong concern with “no health without mental health” (e.g. *Lancet* series in Fall, 2008)

Qualitative Methods in Public Health Research: More Recent History

- ▣ Community-based participatory research (CBPR)
- ▣ Rapid Ethnographic Assessment
- ▣ Photo-voice techniques
- ▣ Cross-cultural global health—role of culture, social structural factors



Uses of Qualitative Methods in Intervention & Health Services Research

- Feasibility testing
- Instrument development
- Elicit provider, patient and/or community input;
- Fidelity assessment and ‘evidence-based process’
- Post-hoc understanding of how and why intervention worked (or did not work)
- Links between multi-level CBPR projects

Advantages of Qualitative Methods in Collaborative Research

- Gives voice to disenfranchised or underserved, i.e., focuses on data expressed in their own words
- Designs are flexible and responsive to local conditions
- Methods of data collection are egalitarian, low-tech and accessible
- Incorporation of social values acceptable (not viewed as bias per se)



The Iterative Nature of Qualitative Research in CBPR



Planning &
Design w/ Partners

Sampling &
Recruitment
w/Partners

Data
Collection &
Analysis w/ Partners

Choosing Which Qualitative Method

Method Approaches

- Grounded Theory
- Ethnography
- Case Study Analysis
- Narrative/Discourse/Conversation Analysis
- Phenomenological

Techniques of data collection

- Individual or focus group interviews
- Observation
- Use of documents, archives, photos, film

Qualitative research designs should be detailed and specific

Exercise in specification—before AND after (given the detours inherent in qualitative methods)

Design options:

- ✗ Use of comparison group(s)?
- ✗ Retrospective (e.g., individual life experiences, organizational or neighborhood history)
- ✗ Prospective; longitudinal (multiple time points)

Sampling and sample size: *Purposive*, but which type? maximal variation, criterion, etc. *theoretical sampling* in GT; inclusion/exclusion criteria

Incorporating Strategies for Rigor*

1. Triangulation of data
2. Member checking
3. Prolonged engagement
4. Audit trail
5. Negative case analysis
6. Peer debriefing and support

Overall goal: *trustworthiness*

Overall strategy: *evidentiary adequacy* (Morrow & Smith, 1995)

*Padgett, D.K. (2008). *Qualitative methods in social work research*.
Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Strategies for Rigor in CBPR

1. Triangulation of data (*interviews, observation, available documents*)
2. Member checking (*part of CPBR partnership?*)
3. Prolonged engagement (*part of CBPR values*)
4. Audit trail (*maintaining documentation of research as well as partnership, e.g., minutes*)
5. Negative case analysis (*more likely in analyses involving grounded theory/hypothesis testing*)
6. Peer debriefing and support (*part of CBPR teamwork*)

Types of Qualitative Data Collection & Data Sources

Data Collection

Format and *Data Type*

Observation	Participant Observation <i>Field notes</i> <i>Maps</i>	Photography (Photo-voice)	Video
Interviewing	Individual <i>Audio tapes</i> <i>Transcriptions</i>	Focus Group <i>Audio tapes</i> <i>Transcriptions</i>	Ad-hoc Field interviews <i>Field notes</i>
Existing Documents	Published <i>Public/private reports; research</i>	Non-published <i>Agency/clinic records, etc.</i> <i>Gray literature</i>	Community-generated data <i>Memos, minutes, etc.</i>

Data Analysis and Interpretation

- Matrices and tables (Miles and Huberman, 1994)
- Graphs and schemas
- Case summaries and multiple case study analyses
- Content analysis of documents
- Coding--grounded theory (GT); thematic

Uses of QDA Software

Advantages:

- Efficiency—organizing and moving files/excerpts
- Easy access to files and codes

Limitations:

- Working on a screen (small visual and tactile plane of activity)
- Software does *not* analyze or interpret data

Logistical Challenges of Qualitative Methods

- Locating methods expertise for the team
- Allocating time for in-depth interviews and observation
- Allocating resources (transcription and translation costs)
- Training and supervision during data collection to maintain quality control (researcher-as-instrument)

Skepticism, Concerns and Misconceptions

- Concerns about 'small n'
- Concerns about bias and subjectivity
- Generalizability and external validity challenged
- Belief that flexibility means 'anything goes'
- Preference for internal validity (over ecological validity)?

Mixed Methods Applications

- Public health; epidemiological studies
- Policy analyses and program evaluations
- Intervention research
- Longitudinal studies
- Randomized controlled trials

Concurrent Mixed Method Designs: Hypothetical Study of HIV/AIDS Prevention Intervention

Quantitative 'Side'

Needs Survey

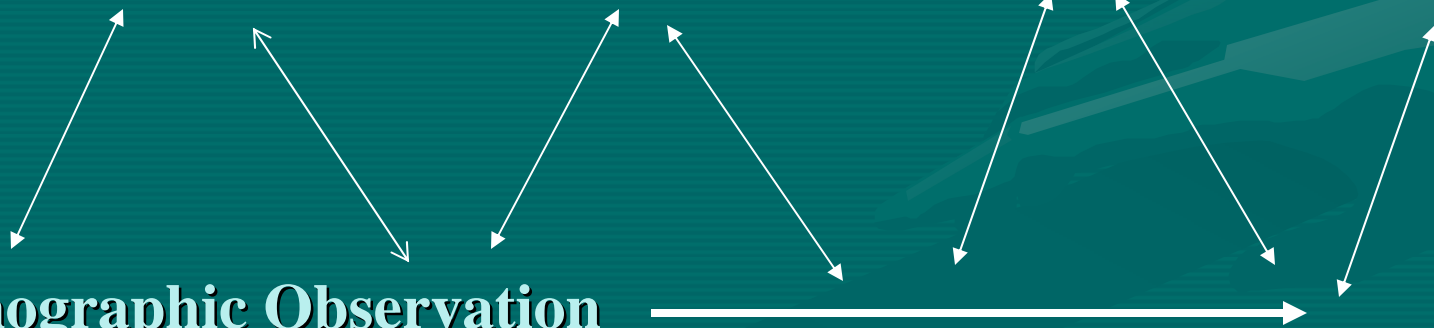
Pilot Test

Implement

Disseminate

Ethnographic Observation

Qualitative 'Side'



Sequences in the Use of Mixed Methods in CBPR

- **Formative** → focus groups, key informant interviews, observation and mapping
- **Early-Mid Phase** → Surveys, interviews, mapping, pilot testing of measures
- **Intervention Phase** → Baseline measures, post-measures, observation
- **Evaluation/Reflective Phase** → Focus groups, observation, interviews, surveys

Challenges of 'Mixing' Methods

- ➔ Logistics of combining different approaches to sampling, data collection and analysis; dual expertise required
- ➔ Resource intensity required, e.g., statistical power and sample size vs. labor intensity of in-depth interviews and observation
- ➔ 'Discrepancy Problem' vis-à-vis triangulation
- ➔ More is not better—mixing is not always optimal

In Conclusion....

- Qualitative and mixed methods are an excellent fit with CBPR
- When rigorous, they are highly fundable by NIH and others
- They bridge the values of social justice with those of research

