

Criteria and Evaluations of Proposals with Qualitative Emphasis

Proposals for qualitative research tend to be more tentative and open-ended (than quantitative proposals) allowing for an emergent design. Qualitative researchers and scholars recognize that the degree of specificity in a written proposal depends on the extent of preliminary work in the site or network selection, identification of particular cases for investigation, or locating and previewing archival collections of documents. Having said this, the proposal can be sufficiently specific to indicate systematic research to produce trustworthy research while still allow for the initial focus and design to be reformulated as the data are collected. A generic, general format might be:

- I. Introduction
 - A. General Problem Statement
 - B. Preliminary Literature Review
 - C. Foreshadowed Problems
 - D. Significance of Proposed Study (Theoretical and/or Practical)

- II. Design and Methodology
 - A. Site or Social Network Selection
 - B. Research Role
 - C. Purposeful Sampling Strategies
 - D. Data Collection Strategies
 - E. Inductive Data Analysis
 - F. Limitation of the Design

III. References

IV. Appendices

Description and Guidelines of Format

I. Introduction

A. General Problem Statement

- v Clear, succinct statement of the research problem that allows the reader to recognize the importance of the problem and the area(s) in which it is embedded.
- v A description of the background of the problem. Typical: "To describe and analyze..." an ongoing event or process in a discovery orientation.

B. Preliminary Literature Review

- v Presents the initial conceptual frameworks used in phrasing foreshadowed problems/questions.
- v Demonstrates a need for study by revealing "gaps" in the literature
- v Cites broad areas of scholarly thinking.
- v Illustrates why certain concepts may become relevant in data collection and analysis.
- v Justifies the need for an in-depth descriptive study.

C. Foreshadowed Problems

- v Stated as broad, anticipated research questions that may be reformulated in the field.
- v Preliminary information often helps to shape the problems about what is likely to occur at the site and where and when phenomena may be observed initially.
- v The problems may also be connected to the literature base.

D. Significance of the Study

- v Describe how the study can add to the development of practical and/or theoretical knowledge.
- v Ethnographic studies may develop concepts or theoretical explanations for what was observed.
- v The intent to state implication for educational practices based on the findings are noted very generally and tentatively, with plans to coordinate literature base and findings.

II. Design and Methodology

A. Site or Social Network Selected

- v Described its suitability to investigate the phenomena and processes stated in the foreshadowed problems.
- v Identify how typical the site is to other institutions to allow for possible extension of findings.
- v Show logical relationship between the potential information to be elicited through personal contact and the foreshadowed problems.

B. Researcher's Role

- v Describe the research role(s) to be assumed for data collection (e.g. observer-participant, participant-observer, interviewer, etc.)
- v Delineated role as much as possible in terms of the expected social relationships and role sets during data collection.
- v Make sure role is logically appropriate for the foreshadowed problems.

C. Purposeful Sampling Strategies

- v The intent is to obtain small samples of information-rich cases of individual, social scenes, or processes.
- v Specify types of strategies: (e.g.: site selection, comprehensive sampling, maximum variation sampling, network sampling, reputational-case selection, extreme-case, intense-case, typical-case, unique case, etc.) to match to evolving research foci.

D. Data Collection Strategies

- v Although specific data collection strategies will emerge in the field, the intent to use multiple methods should be explicit, to enable corroboration of the data.
- v Specify which strategies will be used, the form(s) of interview or observation and/or artifacts expected to be collected in the field.
- v Describe the expected length of field residence and the (natural) boundary of the event to be observed.
- v Describe what form(s) the data will take (e.g.: field notes, summary observation, interview records, transcripts, etc.)
- v Describe how the data will be catalogued, stored, recorded, retrieved, etc.
- v Consider issues of "trustworthiness" (i.e. credibility, transferability dependability, and confirmability).

E. Inductive Data Analysis

- v Describe strategies that will facilitate discovery in the field with interim analysis, coding topics and developing categories, and techniques of pattern seeking and establishing the plausibility of patterns.,
- v Consider a diagram of the inductive process.
- v Describe how the results will be presented (e.g.: description narrative, topology, theme analysis and interpretation, grounded theory).
- v The presentation of data analysis and the results should logically relate to the purpose of the research and foreshadowed problems.

F. Design Limitations

- v Cite any limitations that can be identified at this time (scope of study, methodology, and design features).
- v The limitation of scope relates to the original problem statement.
- v Consider possible difficulties in assuming the research role, purposeful sampling, and naturalistic events that the ethnographer cannot interrupt legitimately.
- v Consider possible design limitations (see data collection strategies and inductive data analysis above).
- v Consider how the researcher might capitalize on threats.

III. References

- v All cited research presented in APA format.

IV. Appendices

- v All relevant items such as:
 - v Letters of permission granting access to the site;
 - v Agreements of informed rights for human subjects;
 - v Protocols for obtaining informed consent in a social network;
 - v Possible (hypothetical or from pilot study) examples of field notes, summary observation, interview records, transcripts;
 - v Possible coding or data reduction procedure
- v List of records and artifacts known to be available at the site or through the social network
- v Proposed time schedule for completing the study.