

CRAFTING SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

Social Work Research

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HOW ARE YOU?

**ANY ISSUES, CONCERNS,
CELEBRATIONS, QUESTIONS,
PROVOCATIONS, DESIRES THAT
WE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT?**

AGENDA

- ❖ Check-in: how are you?
- ❖ Overview of key concepts
- ❖ Facilitated discussion
- ❖ Small group work
- ❖ Next steps

WICKED PROBLEMS

There is no definitive formulation

They have no stopping rules

Solutions are not true-or-false, but good-or-bad

There is no immediate test of a solution

Every attempt to solve the problem counts

They do not have an enumerable set of solutions

Every problem/solution is unique

Every problem is a symptom of another problem

The explanation determines the solution

The planner has no right to be wrong

Social Context

CRAFTING “GOOD” QUESTIONS



- AN ITERATIVE PROCESS
- EMPIRICAL NOT ETHICAL
- FEASIBLE AND IMPORTANT
- QUESTIONS DETERMINE RESEARCH DESIGN

CRAFTING QUANTITATIVE QUESTIONS

- Descriptive Questions
- Explanatory Questions
- Exploratory Questions

What is the relationship between [independent variable] and [dependent variable] for [target population]?

1

Research questions inquire about relationships among variables

2

Hypotheses (null and alternative) predict the expected outcome among variables

3

Use language such as *compare* groups, *relate* variables, *describe* responses to variables

PICO RESEARCH QUESTION

Population
Intervention
Comparison
Outcome

How does the effectiveness of cognitive **INTERVENTION**
behavior therapy **(CBT)** compare to
serotonin reuptake inhibitors **(SRI)** for the **COMPARISON**
treatment of obsessive compulsive **OUTCOME**
disorder **(OCD)** in **children?** **POPULATION**

Search terms: “cognitive behavior therapy”, CBT, “serotonin reuptake inhibitors”, SRI, “obsessive compulsive disorder”, OCD, children

CRAFTING QUALITATIVE QUESTIONS

1

Ask a central question(s) with sub-questions focused on a single phenomenon

2

Use open-ended questions that begin with “what” or “how”

3

Use exploratory verbs “report the stories” “describe the essence” “explore the process”

4

Specify the participants and research site

CRAFTING A QUALITATIVE QUESTION

How do our intersectional identities interact with the structures relevant to social work doctoral education and research training at a large public university in the United States?

(Oswald, Bussey, Thomas, & Ortega-Williams, 2020)

Begin with a question that covers an open and emerging design

_____ (How or what?) is the _____

(“story for” narrative research; “meaning of” the phenomenon for phenomenology; “theory that explains the process” for grounded theory; “culture-sharing pattern” for ethnography; “issue” in the “case” for case study)

for _____ (participants) at _____ (research site).

Population

Context

Relate the central question to the specific qualitative strategy of inquiry

Search terms: “social work”, “doctoral education”
autoethnography, “research training”

SMALL GROUP WORK

10 minutes in small groups
working on crafting a
qualitative or quantitative
research question



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NEXT WEEK

Session	Date	Topic	Assignments Due
8	11/3	Levels of measurement in quantitative research	Blog post #3