SVRI Forum 2017

Sexual Violence Research Initiative

18th -21st September 2017

Rio | Brazil

Qualitative Study Design and Data Analysis Workshop

Monday 18th September

Nwabisa Shai, MRC South Africa

Dr Lyndsay McLean, Social Development Direct / University of Sussex

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Introductions

Facilitators

- Nwabisa Shai, MRC South Africa
- Dr Lyndsay McLean, Social Development Direct / University of Sussex

Participants

- Introduce yourself briefly to your neighbour
- Show of hands: Experience of Qualitative Research
  - None
  - User of qualitative research
  - Some experience of designing qual research?
  - Some experience of conducting qual research? Interviews? Focus Groups?
  - Some experience of qual data analysis? Coding?
  - Experience of quantitative research?

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Objectives of the workshop

1. To introduce participants to **various qualitative study designs**, to discuss the suitability of each design for different research questions and projects on SGBV.

2. To highlight **what qualitative research can and cannot achieve** – alone and alongside quantitative research - with respect to understanding the causes and consequences of SGBV, support intervention development and measure impact.

3. To discuss various **ways of dealing with common challenges** (e.g. low-quality interviews, sub-optimal data, social desirability and other biases) inherent in qualitative research procedures.

4. To present and discuss **different approaches to qualitative data analysis** and their suitability for different types of qualitative data and different questions.

5. To facilitate sharing of practical ideas, knowledge and skills on **how to conduct rigorous and credible qualitative studies and data analysis** using real life examples of qualitative research projects.

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Workshop Plan

Time	Session	Facilitator
9:00 – 9.15	Introduction	Nwabisa Shai
9:15 – 9.45	Qualitative Study Design for SGBV research	Lyndsay McLean
9.45 – 10:15	Methodological challenges with qualitative research	Nwabisa Shai
10:15 – 11:15 (tea break)	Group work: Case studies Qualitative Study Design	Nwabisa Shai Lyndsay McLean Elizabeth Starmann
11.15 – 11.45	Approaches to qualitative data analysis	Nwabisa Shai
11.45 – 12.15	Rigour and credibility in qualitative research (with group work)	Lyndsay McLean
12.15 – 12.30	Wrap up	Lyndsay McLean

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Qualitative Study Design for SGBV Research

Dr Lyndsay McLean

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Qualitative Research Design

What are the characteristics of qualitative research?

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What are the characteristics of Qualitative Research?

- Investigates the experiences and perspectives of specific individuals and groups
- Seeks to investigate the complexity of social phenomena in specific socio-cultural contexts
- Often focuses on investigating 'why' – why people think and act as they do?
- Uses flexible investigation strategies to collect data (e.g. using open-ended questions, group discussions, adapting investigation in response to new information)
- Mostly produces non-numerical, narrative data and observations.
- Usually analysed through interpretative methods that aim at understanding.
- Cannot directly generalise results to whole population, but we can code and classify responses and data in order to identify trends, processes, key factors etc

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Examples: Qualitative Research on gender and SGBV

Can you give some examples of qualitative research which you have conducted, are aware of or have used in your work on gender, SGBV or other social issues?

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SGBV & 'What Works' to prevent it: Role of Qual Research

Qualitative research can be used to triangulate, explain and supplement quantitative research as well as to answer different research questions as standalone research. Key approaches include:

- Formative research
- Operations research
- Longitudinal research
- Retrospective research

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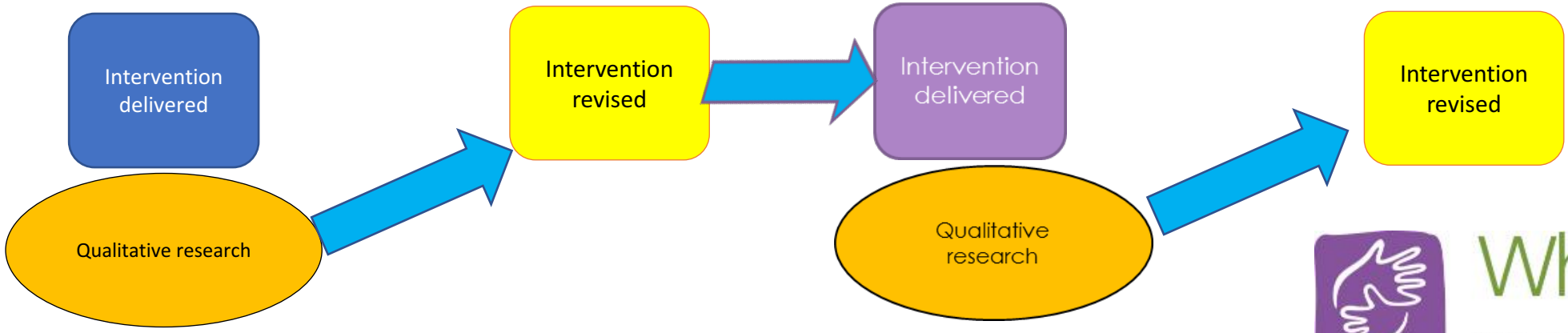
Formative research for SGBV programming

Qualitative research is often used **during programme design and testing** to:

- Conduct a situation analysis to improve contextual relevance and targeting of the programme
- To collect data to optimise implementation and contribute to programme effectiveness
- To study intervention testing and support intervention development and adaptation
- Support the design of quantitative research to measure programme impact



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Operations research on SGBV programmes

Qualitative research is often used **during programme implementation** to collect data from programme staff and beneficiaries in order to:

- Track implementation fidelity and challenges
- Identify unintended positive and negative consequences
- Provide insights into how different components of combined programmes are working
- Provide insights to refine and adapt programmes to improve their effectiveness

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Longitudinal research on SGBV programmes

Qualitative research is also used to collect data with the same group of beneficiaries at different points in time (e.g. baseline, midline, endline) during programme implementation (and often in complement to quantitative research) to:

- Generate detailed insights into processes of, motivations for and barriers to change - how and why change happens?
- Look at consistency of quantitative and qualitative findings,
- Verify how respondents understand questions and concepts
- Explore other contextual factors which may influence outcomes (beyond the programme)

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Retrospective research on SGBV programmes

Qualitative research is often used following the end of a programme to:

- Understand participants experiences of an intervention
- Explore participants' understandings of the processes of change (e.g. generate stories of changes)
- Examine wider impacts beyond those measured in the quantitative research

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Comparing QUAL and QUANT designs

	Qualitative	Quantitative
Existing knowledge	Subject matter is unfamiliar, limited understanding of phenomena / concepts	Subject matter clearly defined / familiar
Type of understanding / evidence sought	To understand people's experiences and perceptions of issues and situations (meaning)	To understand prevalence of phenomena in a population and test relationships between phenomena (e.g. causality)
Importance of understanding context	Relating particular behaviour/practices to the specific socio-cultural context	No need to relate findings to socio-cultural setting (setting is sufficiently understood)
Application of research	Often used to develop concepts and theories (inductive research)	Often used to test preconceived hypotheses (deductive research)
Research approach	Exploratory, flexible, open to discover and explore the unexpected	Systematic, structured, fixed, focused on repeatability of measurements

Comparing QUAL and QUANT designs (Continued)

	Qualitative	Quantitative
Sampling	Usually uses purposive sampling (individuals with specific characteristics)	Usually uses 'random sampling' to get representative so results can be extrapolated to whole population or sub-group
Data collection methods	Semi-structured / unstructured interviews, focus groups, observations, participatory research	Quantitative surveys, econometric modelling
Data analysis	Interpretative methods aimed at understanding – code data to identify trends, processes, factors	Statistical techniques that aim to achieve precision and statistical significance
Nature of findings	Window onto social processes and dynamics and suggest why people think and act as they do.	Findings can be generalised to whole population

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MIXED QUAL-QUANT study designs

Qualitative and quantitative approaches can be combined to minimise the limitations and maximise the strengths of each.

- Qualitative research can identify topics which are appropriate for further study through quantitative methods
- Quantitative research can help to identify topics or social groups which warrant in-depth qualitative study e.g. to understand ‘why’ questions
- Qualitative research can inform questionnaire design and wording
- Qualitative research can help to interpret the results of quantitative studies e.g. what explain the variations in response between younger and older women

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MIXED QUAL-QUANT study designs: Rationale

1. **Complementarity**

   Play the methods off each other; strengths of one make up for weaknesses of other

e.g. Combine a household survey on gender roles and attitudes with household case studies of gender dynamics to obtain both generalisable and contextualised results.

2. **Triangulation**

   Assess convergence of findings across different methods and/or respondent types to strengthen validity and confidence in results/recommendations

e.g. Numerical data on disclosure rates of SGBV survivors; survey interviews with SGBV survivors who used services; in-depth interviews with survivors, community members and service providers to get their perspectives on barriers to disclosure and help-seeking

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MIXED QUAL-QUANT study designs: Rationale

3. **Development**

   Inform next research stage with findings of the former stage

e.g. Explore prevalent social norms with qualitative approach, follow up with quantitative survey to assess how common certain attitudes and practices are

e.g. Conduct a survey; delve into 'outlier' cases with interviews

4. **Expansion of research focus**

   Extend range of what is studied by incorporating different methods

e.g. Examine SGBV programme implementation processes via NGO staff and participant interviews; examine programme outcomes via a survey

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Qualitative Study Design: Key elements

- Research objectives and questions
- Study location (and justification)
- Sampling – identity, number, diversity of research participants (and justification)
- Research methods e.g. in-depth interviews, focus groups, observations, participatory methods (and how many of each)
- Strategies to getting access / recruiting participants
- Detailed planning: research locations, profile of researchers, training of researchers, data recording techniques, translation etc
- Ethics (e.g. anonymity, confidentiality, safety) and gaining informed consent
- Approach to data analysis (e.g. coding data, inductive methods etc)

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Methodological Challenges with Qualitative Research

Nwabisa Shai

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Methodological challenges: Your experiences

What are some of the challenges you have encountered or are concerned about in qualitative data collection and analysis ?

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Five Methodological challenges

It is important to be aware of these challenges and have strategies to address them:

1. Gaining access
2. Selecting informants
3. Social desirability bias
4. Low quality data/suboptimal data
5. Respecting research ethics

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Challenge 1: Gaining Access

- Permission from the correct authorities
- Time
- Trust
- Culture and etiquettes
- Language
- Hire locals
- Positionality of the researcher

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Challenge 2: Selecting informants

How many informants, who and why?

- Must emanate from the theoretical framework
- Key informants
- Opportunistic recruitment of ‘good’ informants is valuable
- What if you are asked for advice during interviews?
- Assure confidentiality and anonymity
- Anonymising the study site can be crucial ethical consideration

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Challenge 3: Social desirability bias

The researcher needs to understand the inevitability of biases due to the processes of data collection and analysis in social research

- What is social desirability bias?
- How to anticipate or detect social desirability bias?
- How to limit this?
- Reflexivity and the power of the researcher (we will come back to this)
- Objective perspective about the topic under study
- Rapport and background of informants
- Long term studies helps to check for consistencies and uncover such bias

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Challenge 4: Low quality / sub-optimal data

- When do you find out you have low quality data?
- How can you prevent low quality data?
  - Good training of interviewers
  - Pilot test interview
  - Check data in real time e.g. listen to recordings or transcripts
- Cross-language researchers can lead to multiple inconsistences, compromised translations etc.
- Check the credentials of translators or interpreters
- Hire experienced researchers
- Focus on issues under study

Challenge 5: Respecting research ethics

- Free NIH ethics course https://researchethics.od.nih.gov/ ; https://humansubjects.nih.gov/resources
- What are the potential ethical issues related to your research? Follow guidelines
- The first step is to obtain ethics approval
- Identify ethics boards with a good reputation for upholding human rights
- Respect participants, their time, stories and opinions
- Report deviations to your ethics board
- Ethics must be followed during the writing-up as well

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Group Work: Case Studies in Qualitative Study Design

Nwabisa Shai, Dr Lyndsay McLean and Dr Elizabeth Starmann

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Group Work: Three Groups

Each group has a scenario with context, research questions + details of intervention to be researched (See handout):

1. Formative research in Rwanda to understand social norms around GBV (Lyndsay)
2. Interviews with families (couple, parents-in-law, children) in Nepal (Nwabisa)
3. Retrospective research with couples in Uganda who participated in SASA! Intervention to understand their experiences of change (Elizabeth)

Please spend 30 minutes working in your groups to develop and appropriate research design and specific research methods.

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Group 1: Formative Research in Rwanda to understand social norms around GBV

Context: GBV rates in Rwanda high: 55.6% of women reported experience of physical IPV in the past 12 months and 17.5% experience of sexual IPV in the past 12 months (DHS, 2013)

Proposed intervention: "*Indashyikirwa* - Agents of Change" a community-based GBV prevention programme including a 20-week training curriculum for heterosexual couples on healthy relationships and GBV prevention aimed at challenging social norms and shifting behaviours.

Research objective: To gain a detailed understanding of the social norms and sanctions around gender roles and GBV

Research questions:

- What are the individual and collective beliefs, practices, and social norms that operate locally to justify violence in intimate relationships?
- What individuals & institutions are the most important reference group(s) for norms related to gender roles and violence? What sanctions (actual and perceived) exist if someone departs from these norms?
- Are there locally salient ideas or traditions that could be marshalled to promote new social norms that would work against violence?

Please spend 30 minutes working in your groups to develop and appropriate research design and specific research methods.

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Formative Research Design: To understand social norms around GBV in Rwanda

- **Location:** In-depth research in three *Indashyikirwa* intervention sectors selected to represent a diversity of environments across all intervention provinces including rural, urban and peri-urban locations.

- **Methodology / sample:** 24 focus group discussions (FGDs) were completed with: unmarried women under age 25; married women over 25; unmarried men under 30; married men over 30. Two focus group discussions with each group:

(i) **First group discussion used a social vignette methodology –** a scenario we worked through with the group to probe for typical community attitudes and responses towards men who use violence against their wives, whether and to whom wives are likely to disclose a husband's abusive behaviour, and what community members typically do to intervene, and under what conditions, in IPV.

(ii) **Follow-up semi-structured FGDs** to probe for typical sexual relationships between men and women and how these relate to expectations, economic support, and commitment. These FGDs explored the characteristics men and women often look for in choosing a long-term partner, gendered expectations in marriage including division of labour in the home, household decision-making, and common causes of conflict between couples.

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Formative Research Design: To understand social norms around GBV in Rwanda

Scenario of a couple named Albert and Francine: To assess perceptions or likely actions of this couple including: Francine working out of the home, Francine being seen publicly speaking with other men at work, Albert being responsible for domestic duties, and how Albert's reaction to Francine coming home from work late might differ depending on his alcohol use or if he is known to be a jealous man.

e.g. "Let's imagine that a woman called Françine lives in this community (umudugudu). She is 24 years old, has completed primary school and is married to Albert. They have two small children. Most days Francine sells fruit and vegetables in the market nearby, as Albert does not give her enough housekeeping money to buy provisions for the household and the children.

- *In general, what would people in this community think about Françine working at the market rather than staying at home caring for her children?*
- *Would people think that the fact that Albert's wife works outside of the home reflects badly on him as a man?*
- *Probe: In what way? Who might think differently about him?"*

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Formative Research Design: in Rwanda to understand social norms around GBV

Reflections

- Social vignette method very successful tool to uncover social norms around expected behaviour of a man and a woman in different scenarios and how others might judge and sanction them and why.

- We discovered that norms around the male provider role and male household authority 'bend' and shift in response to changing economic realities, new legislation and social change.

e.g.

Economic realities have increased acceptability of a wife working but only if it is perceived that her husband does not ear enough himself to meet household needs and provided she does not earn more than him.

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Group 2: Formative research to understand dynamics of VAWG in families of migrant men in rural Nepal

Context: An increase in violence experienced by wives left behind in rural communities in Nepal when their husbands migrate, perpetrated by in-laws, communities and associates as well as husbands when they return.

Intervention: VSO Nepal intervention targeting wives of male migrant workers with livelihood training and working with wider communities of VAW prevention and to support VAW survivors.

Research objective: To gain a detailed understanding of changing gender roles and identities and dynamics of violence

Research questions:

- Prevalent attitudes toward gender roles, identities including ideal traits of young and older men and women as well as teenage boys and girls?
- Experiences of and dynamics leading to different forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG), including violence perpetrated by intimate partners, in-laws and community members?
- Experiences of male out-migration and the impact it has on young married women and the families they leave behind, particularly in terms of their economic status?
- Existing services and response/support mechanisms to VAWG, experiences and potential gaps in these

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Research design to understand dynamics of VAWG in families of migrant men in rural Nepal

Location: 2 villages in Baglung district Nepal

Methodology/Sample: IDIs with 16 Young married women, 8 married men, 8 older women with in-law status, 6 teenage girls, 4 community leaders, and 4 FGDs with teenage girls, older men, older women, service providers

"A woman has to perform most of the household chores, cook food, and dispose of animal dung, wash the clothes of younger ones... particularly that of father and brothers, as we have custom where men are not supposed to wash their clothes by themselves. During agricultural work, it is again women carrying out "parma".[1] (Teenage girl)

"She must save the earning sent by the husband, she must take care of her children and she can even take up a home-based employment or tailoring (sewing/cutting), or even take up studies if she is interested," (Older man in FGD)

"Before marriage, I was free… I could go anywhere to roam, go to play with friends, or to attend a function. My parents easily gave permission. Then I didn't need to think much. But now, where I am married, even though my family and husband give permission to do something or go somewhere, there remains a fear of what society will say. Would they talk behind my back saying his wife has done this and that? Will they make up things and say wrong and bad things about me?" (Young married woman)

[1] *Parma* is a form of reciprocal labour.

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Research design to understand dynamics of VAWG in families of migrant men in rural Nepal

Key findings:

- Prevalence of traditional gender norms where young married women were expected to be submissive to husbands and in-laws while young married men were seen as breadwinners and heads of households
- Social expectations on women also emphasised the need to be of "good female character" by keeping to domestic chores and using remittances sent by husbands wisely – how a woman faired in upholding these expectations was linked to the family's good reputation
- Men and women perceived a woman's work to be in the domestic arena and their activities were not recognised as work. Yet, some pockets of change in attitudes and behaviour were observed e.g. acceptance of women having paid work outside home
- Indications of significant physical and psychological violence by returning husbands and mothers-in-law in their absence, including remittances controlled by in-laws, increasing economic dependency and vulnerability of women
- Culture of silence around VAWG and weak support mechanisms in communities

Reflections on design: The focus on the family level worked well to provide us with different views but we acknowledged the need to hear more from men including fathers-in-law who are the actual heads of families

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Group 3: Retrospective qualitative research with couples who participated in SASA! intervention in Uganda

Context: The study was conducted in high-density, impoverished communities in Kampala, Uganda. Rates of HIV and IPV are high, with 9.5% of women and 4.1% of men aged 15-49 estimated to be living with HIV and 45% of ever-married women reporting IPV at some point in their lives.

The Intervention:

- A phased community mobilisation programme that aims to change community attitudes, norms and behaviours that result in gender inequality, violence and increased HIV vulnerability for women
- Entails the training and ongoing mentoring and skill building of community activists, health workers and local authorities, to support their own transformation and inspire their activism to address gender inequality and GBV in their communities. CAs **conduct a variety of activities to engage women and men, groups and institutions within the community over 2 years.**

- **Research objective:** To understand the processes that led to change in the relationships of couples exposed to SASA!

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Research design: couples who participated in SASA! intervention in Uganda

Sampling: Purposive: 20 individuals (10 men and 10 women) across intervention communities who reported in follow up survey:

- some exposure to the SASA! programme
- change in relationship since exposure
- previous physical violence with partner, but not in past year (to ensure safety)

Data collection:

- In-depth (semi-structured) Interviews
- Partners were interviewed on the same day, with each individual being interviewed privately by a researcher of the same sex
- Participatory timeline tool used during interviews to help with recall issues

Analysis:

- Framework analysis: Matrix-based method that permits the researcher to systematically organise 'raw' data under thematic framework matrices for continuous analysis across themes and cases, while retaining links to the original data
- A joint map of the couple's relationship and process of change was developed from their two separate accounts

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Research design: couples who participated in SASA! intervention in Uganda

Reflections / Insights yielded

- Reflection around healthy relationships and communication skills learned through SASA! activities or community activists led to more positive interaction among many couples, which reduced conflict and IPV.
- This nurtured a growing trust and respect between many partners, facilitating change in longstanding conflicts and generating greater intimacy and love as well as increased partnership among couples to manage economic challenges.
- **Facilitators of change:** Perceived need or desperation to change = increased desire to engage with SASA! and apply the learning in their relationship; relationships with more severe forms of IPV underwent the most change and were the healthiest in the sample post-intervention; activity attendance + CA direct relationship support led to greatest change in couples
- **Insights for practice:** IPV prevention interventions may benefit from the inclusion of relationship skills building and support within the context of community mobilisation interventions.
- **Insights for research**: Study draws attention to the value of researching and working with both women, men *and* couples to prevent IPV; couple research is very time consuming/expensive, but also yields vital data not captured when only 1 partner is interviewed

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Approaches to qualitative data analysis

Nwabisa Shai

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Data handling and analysis

- Different stages of data handling and analysis
  - During and immediately after data collection - fieldnotes and analytic notes
  - During initial analysis- initial coding, sub coding
  - During further analysis and writing – summarising and interpreting data

- WHO HAS ANY EXPERIENCE OF DOING ANY OF THE ABOVE?

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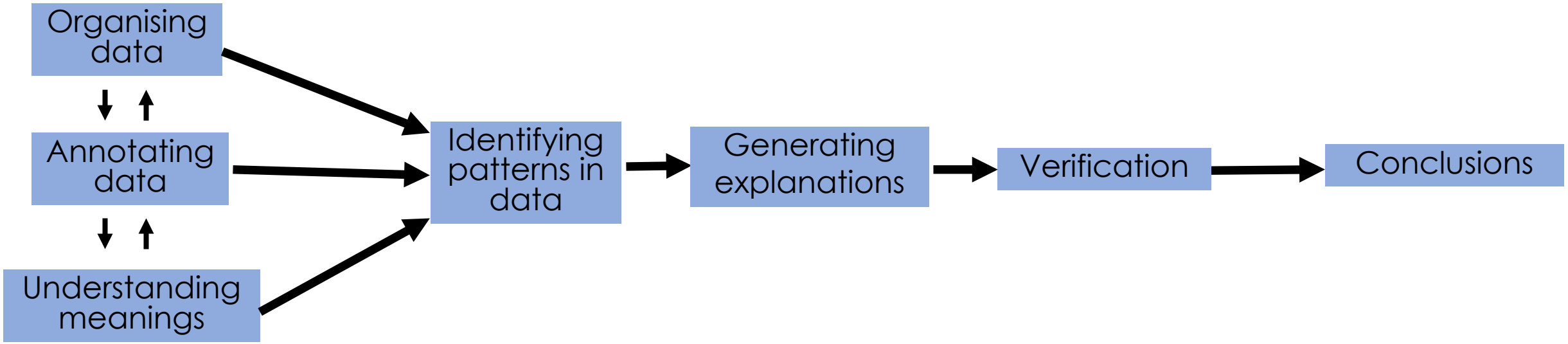
Qualitative data analysis: Process

There is **no single fixed procedure or approach** for analysing qualitative data. However, most common approaches follow **the following process**:



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During data collection: Field diary / notes

- A series of notes recorded by researchers in the course of fieldwork, during or after their observations of a specific phenomenon under study
- Evidence that gives meaning and aids in the understanding of the phenomenon
- Write this up as soon as possible
    - Include your impressions of places and persons, scenes observed, snippets of conversation overheard etc.

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Analytical notes

- Make notes to records your developing understanding of the data in relation to theory and context
- Notes can be made from a transcript, from notes made in an interview or re-listening to a tape
- Can help you:
  - realise when no new information is emerging
  - guide recruitment of informants
  - guide scope of next interviews
  - help you test out emerging hypotheses in the field

TIPS

- Sketch out the main information arising from the interviews
- Include questions raised, possible hypotheses, possible explanations etc
- Record in a way that summarises main findings of interviews so far
- Information from every new interview should be added in

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Coding (analysis by themes)

- **Aim:** To draw together the extracts from all the interviews which give information on a particular topic / theme (assigned a ‘code;)
- Process of identifying common themes, sub-themes, summarising, synthesising, looking for patterns, commonalities and differences
- Keep two questions in mind:
  - The initial research question: What am I actually interested in?
  - A much more detailed question: What is the informant talking about?

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Coding process

- Read and re-read all transcripts, one by one, marking up the parts which relate to each code (theme)
- Some extracts fit in with more than one code - put them in both
- Some parts of interviews don't fit in codes - don't worry just leave them (unless you think the data is pertinent and then create a new code)
- CAUTION - every time you move a bit of text into a code keep with it the interview no./pseudonym and page no.
- You can use software like NVIVO to support coding and then analysis

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Codebook

- Product of working on each code in turn
- What is the informant talking about?
- Interrogate the data to learn what is in it
- Re-order the data from each code again into sub-codes
- Further sub-codes - this stage gives a chance to form codes that come from the data and not from you
- Sub-codes can be smaller than initial codes

Code Book

Category	Code	Sub codes	Description	Theme
Marriage/partner relations	- Divorced - Widowed - Remarried - Living with partner/girl friend	- Inclination to date HIV positive women - Not easy to date negative person	- Participants marital or dating status during the time of ART	Marriage and dating relationships dynamics
Employment and income	- Sources of livelihood	- Social grants - Not working - Self employed - Working	- Participants sources of income and livelihood	Sources of livelihoods
Years since commencement of ART	- Range 6-12 years	- Was sick and commenced ART - After TB treatment started ART	- The number of years from the time participant began treatment - Five or more years in this research is being regarded as long term	Number of years on ART
Circumstances leading to testing	- Intentional testing - Unintentional testing	- Volunteered to get tested - Death of spouse - Was sick - Had TB	- What were the driving forces for participants to test for HIV	Circumstances & context of HIV testing
Reaction to diagnosis	- HIV status Results notification	- Shocked - Accepted - Difficulty to speak about - Surprised - God knows why me	- Participant's initial reaction to test results	Reactions to results of HIV diagnosis
Ill health	- Side effects - Unable to walk - Bedridden - hospitalised	- None - Got dark - Vomiting - Diarrhoea - Nausea - Pimples	- Participants state of bad health in the course of long term ART	Ill-health, ARV side effects & treatment adherence
Psychological impact of living with HIV and taking ART for a long time	- Psychological aspects of long term ART	- Felt sad - Lonely/isolation - Depressed - It hurts - Hopelessness - Resentment	- Participants psychological lived experiences with taking ART for a long period	Psychological impact of living and taking ART for a long time
Social Impact of living and taking ART for a long time	- Social aspects of long term ART	- Gossip - workmates - Work conditions - Stigma	- Participants social experiences of taking ART for a long time	Social impact of living and taking ART for a long time

Category	Code	Sub codes	Description	Theme
		- Loss of work - ART dependence		
Social support systems	- Source of support	- Family - Comforting - Will be okay - Friends	- Participants sources of support for their continued adherence - Optimism about one's condition	Social Support systems

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Summarising codes

- The next stage after coding is summarising the findings, starting with the small sub-sub-codes very cautiously, one by one
- Write some paragraphs about each (sub)sub-code saying what informants are saying about each
    - do not paraphrase your informants at this point, keep as close to their words as possible-
    - use as many quotes as possible and keep longer quotes when they look really powerful
- These simple summary paragraphs are the first things you produce which begin to look vaguely like a final product
- Add extra depth by giving your analysis more thought
- Look for contradictions/differences
- You could hypothesise that some personal characteristics explains such differences

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Generating hypotheses

- A hypothesis is an idea about the relationships between different parts of the data
- Qualitative research is not used to test one a priori hypothesis, but it can be used to generate and test ‘mini’ hypotheses which are grounded in the data
- As we analyse the data we can explicitly look through the data for other examples – or bits of information – which shed light on the same thing
    - If they all support the hypothesis then we can have some confidence in our interpretation.
    - If one of them seems not to support it we need to reformulate our hypothesis.
    - We can do this either by throwing it out or by considering that it may only apply in certain circumstances.
    - As you build the summaries you should continuously start generating & testing mini-hypotheses

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Analytic induction

- Analytic induction is the process of generation of mini-hypotheses in the data and testing in the data
    - Do other pieces of data support the hypothesis – in which case? Is interpretation is probably correct?
    - Or, do they partially support it – in which case it should be modified or qualified

- This process has used two techniques:

  A) constant comparison of emerging hypotheses against the data

  B) search for deviant cases which would require the hypothesis to be modified

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Example of hypothesis generation

For example: Study on barriers to condom use

- 2 women in violent relationships did not use condoms and said they feared asking because they would be accused of infidelity
- Hypothesis: IPV is a barrier to condom use
- Action: look at the women and see if they are also in abusive relationships
- Finding: some experiencing IPV use condoms and some do not
- Action: do those who do and those who do not have something else in common e.g. a recent STD in their partner in the users
- Modified hypothesis: IPV may be a barrier to woman asking for a condom but not condom use
- Action: check data for distinction between ASKING and USE of condoms

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Drawing conclusions: What to think about

- **Which people?**
  - When interpreting the data, think about the people you interviewed: do different types of people (rich/poor, male/female etc..) have different opinions/experiences? Can you generate a hypothesis about such differences? Are there exceptions to this in the data?
- **Where? When? Which circumstances?**
  - Think about place, timing and circumstances: Are there certain places where certain things happen and certainly places where there do not or cannot? Are there certain people you can talk about some things to and not others? Are there certain timings when certain things get talked about which perhaps are not discussed at other times?

Check for negative or 'deviant' cases that do not fit:

- Sometimes you should both modify your hypothesis and describe deviant cases as they provide good evidence of why the hypothesis needs modification
- That's important especially if the hypothesis is supported theoretically or commonly cited in the literature

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SVRI Forum 2017

Sexual Violence Research Initiative

18th -21st September 2017

Rio | Brazil

Rigour and credibility in qualitative research

Dr Lyndsay McLean

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Why is rigour and credibility important in research?

- Research must adequately support decisions which depend on its results
- If we want to influence policymakers and practitioners etc, the results of our research must be justifiable, reliable, defensible, convincing, secure

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Common errors in research

- What do you think are some of the most common errors in research?
- Why does research get criticised by funders, other researcher or in the media?

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Common errors in research

- Drawing conclusions that are not sufficiently supported by the data and findings
- Making generalisations from samples that are too small or unrepresentative
- Omitting to contextualise the research historically, politically, socio-culturally etc
- Failing to reference other studies & existing data (risk of duplication, research fatigue)
- Failing to recognise and minimise the sources of bias in research
- Ignoring data that does not fit the hypothesis or argument

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Rigour and credibility in research: Key concepts

Validity
The accuracy or 'truth' of our results (the trustworthiness of our data) (qual and quant)

Reliability
Getting the same reading regularly from the same circumstances (the replicability of the results) (quant)

Confirmability
The extent to which the results could be confirmed by another researcher. (Qual and quant)

Generalisability
The extent to which the results can be extrapolated from the sample to the whole population studied (quant)

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Small Group discussion

In small groups, take 10 minutes to brainstorm on the following question:

How do we ensure rigour and credibility in qualitative research?

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Key strategies to increase rigour and credibility

- Research Design: Avoiding bias and increasing rigour
- Data collection: Accounting for researcher bias and ensuring reflexivity
- Data collection: Reducing biases in data recording techniques, translation and transcription
- Reducing biases in data analysis/reporting

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Research Design: Avoiding bias and increasing rigour

KEY QUESTIONS

- Have the political objectives or philosophy of the organisation of researcher influenced the choice of research topic and the research design?
- Are the research questions loaded / biased?
- Are the research questions incomplete e.g. only focused on obtaining information to confirm hypotheses or assumptions
- Are the methods selected appropriate to collect the necessary data?
- Do the methods chosen allow the data to be triangulated and/or cross-referenced (across methods, respondents, questions)?
- Will the strategy to select participants ensure that a full range of diverse experiences and opinions are captured?

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Data collection: Researcher bias and reflexivity

- **Research is a social interaction** and the physical, social and cultural characteristics of the researcher as well as his/her perspectives, assumptions and prejudices can influence the data collected.
- **Reflexivity** is about systematically assessing how we and our characteristics impact on the research, reducing biases where we can and being honest about the impact we have on our research:

  - List how your characteristics (e.g. ethnicity, age, gender) differ from those of participants and how this might affect the research
  - Consider the power relations involved in your research project and your status with respect to the participants
  - Clarify your own personal value systems (theories, world view). Acknowledge areas where you know you are subjective
  - Try to analyse any assumptions or preconceptions you have about particular people or a situation and questions yourself repeatedly
  - List areas of potential role conflict or lack of neutrality - are there particular types of situations / people that you avoid - will this influence who you approach and how?

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Data collection: Reducing biases in data recording and transcription / translation

- The main problems are inaccuracy or incompleteness of data and poor translation
- Note-taking: researchers often start to interpret data in choices of what to note /not to note
- Translation is also challenging – some concepts don't translate easily, poor translation can affect data

- Digitally record the interview if possible (if you have the equipment + the participant accepts this)
- If not take as detailed notes as possible using the actual words of the participant, develop techniques for speed (e.g. shorthand, symbols) - and then complete immediately afterwards
- Note the questions that the researcher/ you asked + note who said what, especially in focus group
- Note down non-verbal communication like body language and facial expressions
- Note other factors that may have influenced the interview (e.g. an interruption, other people present)
- Translation by people familiar with the issues for better accuracy
- Check translation with local practitioners and/or back translate

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Reducing biases in data analysis/reporting

KEY QUESTIONS

- Are you looking for data that confirms your prior assumptions or theories?
- Do different sources of data (collected through different methods, from different respondents and across questions from same respondent) triangulate (i.e. they are consistent)?
- Are you excluding 'negative cases' which don't confirm the hypothesis or fit the emerging conclusions.
- Reflect on how you are writing your account. Are you quoting more from one respondent than another? If so, why?

→ You should try to understand and explain any inconsistent data or examples and if necessary reject the hypothesis or change your theory / conclusions

→ In important cases where you detect significant bias or data is missing, you may have to re-interview or check back the respondent or reanalyse the transcript

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Criteria to evaluate credibility of qualitative research

- Are the methods of research appropriate to the nature of the question being asked?
- Is the connection to an existing body of knowledge or theory clear?
- Are there clear accounts of the criteria used for the selection of cases for the study (sampling) and of the data collection (methods) and analysis?
- Does the sensitivity of the methods match the needs of the research question?
- Was the data collection and record-keeping systematic?
- Is reference made to an accepted procedure for analysis?
- How systematic is the analysis (e.g. consistency of analysis, treatment of negative cases)?
- Is there adequate discussion of how themes, concepts and categories were derived from the data?
- Is there adequate discussion of the evidence for and against the researcher's arguments?
- Is a clear distinction made between the data and its interpretation?

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Final word

"In my view, validity and interpretation in any form of qualitative research is contingent upon the 'end product' including a demonstration of how that interpretation was reached. This means you should be able to, and be prepared to, trace the route by which you came to your interpretation… The basic principle here is that you are never taking it as self-evident that a particular interpretation can be made of your data but instead you are continually and assiduously charting and justifying the steps through which you interpretations were made." (Mason 1996: 150)

→ The key is to systematically account for the context and circumstances under which the data were produced and identify the sources of potential bias

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Wrap up

Dr Lyndsay McLean

- Any final questions?
- Your feedback?

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