

# How to Make a Good Research Proposal

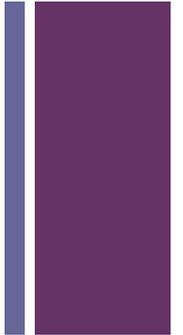
Dr. Saskia Damen, University of Groningen and Royal Dutch Kentalis & Dr. Susan Bruce, Boston College

2<sup>nd</sup> International Young Researchers Conference

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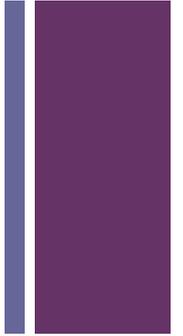
# Components of a Research Proposal



- Title and title page
- Abstract
- Introduction\*
- Literature Review
- Methods\*
- Research Plan-schedule/timeline
- External funders will require a budget section and a projection of what will be produced (articles, other products)
- References



# Title



- Title captures main idea of study only
- Use as few words as possible (although dissertation titles are often longer than titles of articles)
- Use a colon before including additional info, if you have a longer title (often used in dissertations and book titles)



# Introduction



- Present research topic; define research problem that you are addressing
- Establish importance of your research topic (need for study)-Scientific and Social relevance
  - Support importance of topic with brief presentation of key points from literature (drawn from your literature review)
- Include theoretical framework(s) for your study.
- Include your research question
- You should be including references in your introduction-even when repeated in your Literature Review section



# Introduction: Theoretical Frameworks



- Examples of theories in special education or disability studies:
  - Developmental theory
  - Sociocultural theory
  - Social Constructivism theory
  - Behavioral theory
  - Child-guided (debated as theory or approach)
  - Critical race theory
  - Critical disability theory



# Introduction: Writing a good research question



- Main question(s) and purpose
- Clearly worded
- Focused
- Non-biased
- Researchable
- Style of question will be related to the type of study you are doing-variation by quantitative, qualitative, and mixed designs. Action research has a unique form of question.





# Introduction: Research Questions, cont.



## ■ Quantitative studies

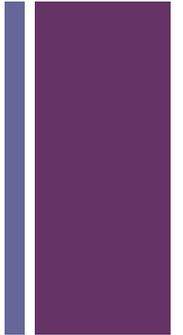
- Example: What is the effect of appointing an Attention Officer on Maltreatment in primary schools on the number of reports of child maltreatment?

## ■ Qualitative studies

- Example: How can appointing an Attention Officer on Maltreatment in primary schools contribute to the prevention of child maltreatment?
- Examples of action research study questions: How can I improve the engagement of my students during group activities in mathematics? How can we reduce the misidentification of children with disabilities who are from culturally and linguistically diverse families?
- What will happen if I.... is another common beginning for action research study questions. (Use of personal pronoun is unique to this type of research)



# Activity #1: From Research Topic to Research Question



- Form groups of 2-4
- Share your ideas for a research topic
- Shape your research topic or research problem into a research question.
- Discuss whether or not your research question is a better fit with quantitative or qualitative methods or a mixed design method?
- We will ask a few individuals to share-please volunteer



# Literature Review



- Think carefully about potential search terms and keep a record of all of your searches
- Think about how far back you need to go in your search
- Take reading notes on the literature you review
- Identify themes or categories in your notes. These can become headings in a later proposal or paper.
- Organize your proposal from there. Write your literature review and methods and then write the introduction and lastly, the abstract.



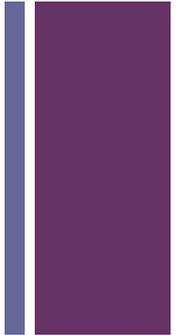
# Research Methods



- Research Design
- Participants
- Data Sources
- Your role as researcher
- Data Analysis
- Ethics



# Research Methods: Research Design

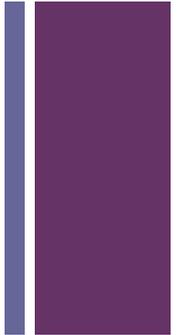


- Case Study Design
- Single-Subject Design
- Descriptive
- Experimental
- Relational
- Variety of qualitative designs

(Cook & Cook, 2016)



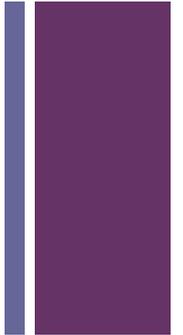
# Research Methods: Participants



- Adults and children
- Random or purposive sample?
- How many participants are needed?
- What are their ages?
- Where are they located geographically?
- What are your INCLUSION and EXCLUSION criteria?
  - Additional disabilities? Age range? And more...



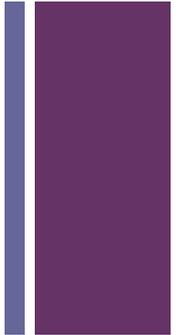
# Research Methods: Your Role as Researcher



- Will you be a passive observer?
  - Less risk to participants
  - Institutional Review boards will often classify as exempt or expedited review, as opposed to full review of board
- Are you providing an intervention?
- Is the intervention the same or different from daily practices?
- Do you have research associates or assistant delivering the intervention? What training will they require? Consider fidelity measure.



# Research Methods: Data Sources



- Observations
- Interviews
- Focus Groups
- Surveys
- Field Notes
- Documents
- Existing Data Sets
- Existing Literature (as in meta-analysis)



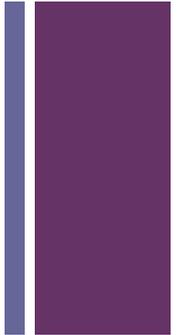
# Research Methods: Data Analysis



- Conversational Analysis (very unique in our field-across forms of communication)
- Statistical testing-T tests, Chi Square...
- Time Series Design (good for small samples studied over time, many data points possible)
- Analysis of effects in single-case experiments:
  - Visual inspection of data patterns
  - Calculating effect sizes
- Thematic coding
- Grounded Theory
  - (but be sure you are engaging in ongoing data analysis)

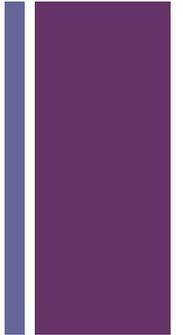
# + Research Methods: Ethics

- Consent for adults
- Assent for children
  - What to do if they cannot assent
    - watch for signs of stress beyond what is usual
- Confidentiality or anonymity-special concerns due to size of population and potentially predictive locations
- Adhere to research plan
- Prepare all research partners and assistants & monitor
- Storage of data
  - Keep codes for names in separate location from data on each participant





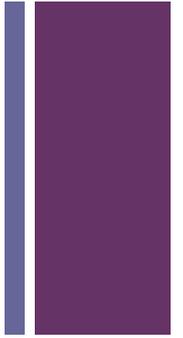
## Activity #2: Beginning to Plan Your Research Methods



- What design will be appropriate for the study you are proposing?
- Describe your participants
- What data sources will you need to answer your research question?
- How will you analyze the data?
- A few examples will be shared with whole group-please volunteer



# Research Plan



- Include timeline/schedule for what you will do and when
- Think about how long it will take to recruit participants. This takes longer in deafblindness.
- When estimating how long you will be in data collection-consider the health of participants as this impacts attendance.
- Consider time for transcription before coding
- Think about time for coding and analysis

# Writing Style

- ✓ Formal writing style
- ✓ Specific
- ✓ Well-substantiated
- ✓ Correct language
- ✓ Correct terminology and definitions
- ✓ Clear paragraph structure
- ✓ Not overly complicated



# Writing: Using Correct Terminology and Definitions

- Use people first language
  - Bill who is deafblind or Deafblind
- Define the main concepts
- Avoid use of terms such as “victims” or “suffers from...”
- Avoid use of “hearing impariment”
- Include brief description of etiologies, including information on vision and hearing

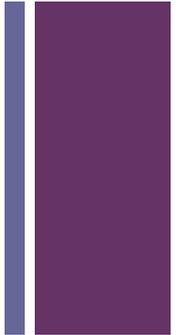
Check for grammar: [www.grammarly.com](http://www.grammarly.com)

# Ethics in Writing

- Always cite the authors whose work you have used
- Always include page numbers for all quoted material
- It may be helpful to include a few direct quotes as you do your reading notes-with the page #s for original sources.
- Make sure your other reading notes are in your own words. Double check with original sources when in doubt.



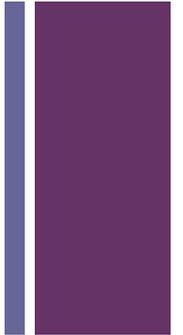
# Resources



- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design*. Third edition. Sage: Los Angeles.
  - Covers 5 qualitative approaches: narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study. Provides examples of studies and instruction on writing.
  
- Creswell, J. W. (2015). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. Fourth Edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
  - Creswell writes very strong basic texts about how to conduct research. He includes content on writing a research question, collecting different types of data, analysis, and all research phases. Great overview book.



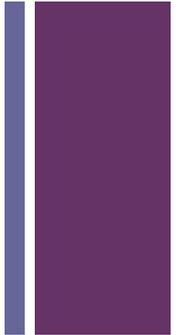
## Resources, cont.



- Flick, U. (2014). *An introduction to qualitative research*. Edition 5. Sage: Los Angeles
  - Introduces you to major traditions in qualitative research. Very helpful when describing the type of analysis you will use. Also information on forming research questions and other research elements.
- Paul, J., Kleinhammer-Tramill, J., & Fowler, K. (2009). *Qualitative research methods in special education*. Denver: Love Publishing
  - Includes chapters on ethnography, participatory action research, grounded theory, phenomenological research, policy & practice, among other topics.

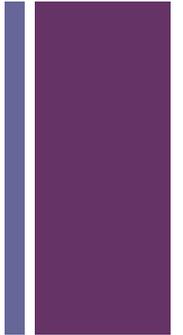


## Resources, cont.



- Kazdin, A. (2011). *Single-case research designs : Methods for clinical and applied settings* (2nd ed.). New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press.
  - Single-case research enables the evaluation of interventions that aim to alter particular aspects in the functioning of individuals. This book demonstrates how single-case designs can be used in clinical and applied settings.
- Parker, R. I., & Vannest, K. (2009). An improved effect size for single-case research: Nonoverlap of all pairs. *Behavior Therapy*, 40(4), 357-367
  - The NAP technique that is demonstrated in this article enables researchers to quantify differences between intervention and non-intervention phases and is widely accepted as a way of calculating effect sizes in single-case research.

# + Resources, cont.



- Putman, S. M. & Rock, T. (2018). *Action research: Using strategic inquiry to improve teaching and learning*. Sage: Los Angeles.
  - This book walks you through how to identify a topic to research, how to do a good review of the literature, methods, data analysis, and how to write a research plan. The content goes beyond action research
- Richards, S. B., Taylor, R. L., Ramasamy, R. (2014). *Single subject research: Applications in educational and clinical settings*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Wadworth & Cengage Learning. See [www.cengage.com/global](http://www.cengage.com/global).
  - Guides you through conducting a single subject design study.



# References

- Cook, B. G., & Cook, L. (2016). Research designs and special education research: Different designs address different questions. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice, 31*(4), 190-198.

