Ruth: Oh, no. Now that I actually want to do this study, I’m not sure that I can do it! How can I come up with a reasonable design by next week? That “prospectus” thing!

Marla: Come on, now. We’ve read a couple of excerpts from proposals. Remember the one by Fisk? Where she studied all about that chapel? That gives us some idea of what goes into a design.

Anthony: And that one by the woman from Malawi who was looking at how school feeding programs could be made sustainable through something called social marketing. Kent said she had an especially strong conceptual framework. Remember—that’s the “what” of a study.

Ruth: Yeah, but both those were big studies. I think they were dissertations. This is just “small scale”! I’m not sure that studying a dissertation helps me at all. What about you, Anthony? What do you think? You’ve always got the answers!

Anthony: Well, I’ve been thinking about it. Kent said that we needed to keep these small so they’d be manageable. “Doable” was the term. We need feedback from him whether what we want to do is OK, so I’m going to put something down and see if it flies.

Marla: What are you thinking about?
Anthony: I’ve thought about it some, and I’ll attend a couple of arts events, hang around the center a bit and talk to people there, interview the director, and oh, yeah, survey the community a bit. A kind of mini-ethnography.

Ruth: Sounds pretty solid to me, but what do I know? I’m still struggling with, like, that conceptual thing—how do I “conceptualize” my topic? I haven’t done any other reading yet that might help me out.

Marla: But at least you really care about your topic. That’s one of the things Kent mentioned as being important—that you’ve got to be truly interested. That’s the “want-to-do-ability.” What matters most to you about these kids?

Ruth: Their experiences! But that’s still too broad. It all seems so important. And I keep thinking that if I start down one track, I’ll miss another important one.

Anthony: But wait! Kent said that it’s important to remember that these projects are . . . What did people say in class? A “taste”? Practice? Not our life’s work. Remember that discussion just before the break about having to let go of some stuff? To “bracket” it? It’s not like this is the only piece of research you’ll ever do, right?

Ruth: Well, sports are such an important part of my life. I guess I really want to know—like deep inside their heads—how kids with physical handicaps think about sports, think about their bodies. I worked with deaf kids, but now I want to know about kids in wheelchairs. Marla, what are you thinking about?

Marla: Pues, I guess I’m really interested in bodies, too! But for me, it’s how women don’t take charge of their own bodies. I remember when I worked at the clinic two years ago. Women from the barrio would come in for a prescription—and then we’d never see them again. I often wondered what happened to them. No—I was really worried about what happened to them.

Anthony: But isn’t that their business?

Marla: Sí, it might be, but I heard some of the PAs and social workers talk about it. So maybe it’s worth asking—and looking for answers.

Anthony: What are PAs?

Marla: Oh, they’re physician’s assistants, the ones who do just about all the frontline work in clinics.

Ruth: Great! You really have something that matters. I’d say it’s what Kent called “should-do-able.” But I see lots of ethical stuff there, too.
Marla: Ethics… You know I want this work to make a difference. It’s a bit scary to me to think about intervening in women’s lives without their participation. I want to involve the women, so I already decided my design will have to be participatory.

Ruth: You both sound like you have a design. Anthony, tell me more about your setting.

Anthony: Well, since you asked. I’ve decided to take on this community arts program and how it’s working. I’m fascinated by the idea that it’s a grassroots, community-initiated effort, but I want to know how it’s working—if it’s working. And so do the funders!

Marla: What do you mean by working? Is that the same as what the funders mean?

Anthony: Yeah, I need some idea of what “working” means. I mean, if I’m going to explore effectiveness, I’ll need some idea of what “effective” means. I have done a bit of reading for one of my other classes, the one on program evaluation. They talk a lot about “program theory” and “criteria for judging effectiveness.” That stuff might help.

Marla: Seguro. Pero, you’ll have to find out what the goals of the program are, what folks had in mind when they planned it. I think it matters who had what in mind. And you probably ought to find out what a “good” arts program in general looks like.

Anthony: What do you mean?

Marla: The community people might have a different idea from the agency that funded it, and there may be some stuff that experts say should be there that isn’t. Even though Kent said we didn’t have to read a lot on our topics for this course, it might help you out doing a bit.

Ruth: Sounds like you’ll have to find out what the people who proposed it said, and what they had in their heads as they thought about it, and what the experts think. And don’t you need to be careful about politics? Maybe that’s the “should-do-ability” thing.

Anthony: OK, sounds good. But there’s another thing—what if the artists close doors on me? Or what will you do if the kids won’t talk to you? And what if you can’t find women to join up with you, Marla? So we need to have a plan, but can we change it? I’m going to ask Kent right now.
Anthony, Ruth, and Marla are puzzled by Professor Kent’s assignment to come to the next class with a prospectus, that is, a one- or two-page description of what they hope to do for their small-scale studies. The past few weeks have been enlightening and helpful because they read excerpts from a couple of qualitative studies. They feel somewhat daunted, however, by this new challenge—designing their actual qualitative research studies—no matter how “small scale.” Kent underscored how writing a prospectus is similar to writing a proposal for a larger, more comprehensive study, but on a smaller scale and with certain considerations relaxed.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Our three characters have embarked on the complex process of designing qualitative research projects. It is confusing, exciting, and just plain old hard work. Many considerations go into the preliminary decisions that are represented in a written proposal. Marla, Ruth, and Anthony will consider three: the feasibility of the project (the do-ability); their own personal interests (the want-to-do-ability); and the significance and ethics of the study (the should-do-ability) (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Think of these considerations as points on a triangle or circles on a Venn diagram (Figure 5.1). For some studies, feasibility becomes a paramount constraint; for others, it is the ethical issues that may arise. The goal is to find some balance in these considerations so that you can proceed with a manageable project that is sensitive to the ethics and politics of the situation and is sustained by sufficient interest. Interest in the research questions is critical. Even a small-scale project can become tedious. Unless you have a deep concern for the topic, the project likely will flounder. Similarly, designing a project without sufficient resources to implement it leads to frustration; it, too, may never be completed. Also, the politics or ethical issues you confront may put up barriers. Although you cannot predict all the messy politics or subtle ethical dilemmas that may arise, thinking and talking about them while designing a project can help surface potential thorny issues.

Do-Ability

Research projects are implemented in the real world of organizational gatekeepers, participants’ schedules, available time (yours and theirs), sufficient resources to buy things such as tape recorders and photocopying, and your
knowledge and skills. Considering all these in designing a study reaps important benefits. Ruth knows children with disabilities from her work at summer camp, but they all attend the School for the Deaf. She will need to find children with physical disabilities who are willing to talk with her. Access is not an issue for Marla, although she will have to think about the officials in the health clinic and their procedures for approving a study, even a small-scale one. Agencies that provide health services often have complex procedures for approving research projects. One of our students spent the better part of a semester working through the various committees in a hospital before she could proceed with her project.

Anthony’s evaluation project is funded by an outside agency, so his worries about do-ability should focus on gaining access to the community members who participate in the arts program and to the artists. All three characters have yet to think about details of the costs (time and money) of
their projects. Access and resources are often linked, especially if the site you want to study is far away. A student from Kenya wanted to study the challenges facing children in her village who had become heads of household when their parents died of AIDS. Despite the support of village elders for the study, she could not find the time or funding to travel to Africa. A less dramatic example is the student whose limited resources (time and money) forced him to reduce the number of sites he could visit to understand how welfare policies were implemented across different urban cities.

As beginners, Ruth, Marla, and Anthony have concerns about whether they have the knowledge and skills necessary to conduct the research. As they read the methodological literature, practice new skills, and learn as they go along, however, their competence grows. This competence will serve as a foundation for future projects.

Finally, our characters will have to think carefully about the design for implementing their projects. Elaborate designs (with extensive data-gathering efforts) demand heavy allocations of time and, sometimes, money. Their most pressing resource concern will focus on their own time commitments to the projects. As they learn about the time involved in gaining access, scheduling observations and interviews, writing field notes, and analyzing data, they can build realistic designs for projects that are manageable and doable.

Want-to-Do-Ability

You need to have a sustaining interest in the topic. Period. All research goes through phases of intense effort and exhilaration coupled with periods of tedium and frustration. Getting through the difficult times requires discipline and commitment. That commitment comes from a deep desire to learn more about the topic and to answer the questions you have posed. Picking a topic just because it seems easy likely will lead to uninspired work. As Murray and Overton (2003) note, “The student should choose a topic that rings bells and sets off fireworks in the mind. Being very interested in the matter you are going to invest a significant part of your life in is a bare minimum” (p. 24).

Your interest, often derived from personal experience, is what sustains the work. In essence, you are making a claim or putting forth an argument about the topic you are interested in. Our characters already show how they care about their projects: their experiences and concerns are reflected in their choices. Ruth is fascinated with how children with physical handicaps
deal with sports; she believes that participation can build self-confidence. Marla’s lifework focuses on women’s health issues; she has long felt that poor women have limited access. Anthony believes that the lives of poor people can be enhanced through participation in the creative and expressive arts. He is interested in policies that support community involvement but concerned that only a few segments of any community take part in the activities and decision making.

Inquiry is shaped by our personal interests and interpreted through our values and politics. When does interest become bias? What about objectivity? All three characters face the challenge of acknowledging their interests and sorting through where their passions for their topics become bias. Ethical and trustworthy researchers (see Chapter 3) address this issue explicitly. They build in strategies to put their perspectives and assumptions up front and for surfacing potential bias by closely and diligently examining alternative interpretations. They interrogate emerging findings, asking: What else might explain this? They try to hold no truths too closely, respecting the notion that all knowledge is conditional and approximate. Also, they are humble in their claims.

**Should-Do-Ability**

Given a feasible design and sufficient interest, ask yourself if the study *should* be conducted. Does it have the potential to contribute? Is the topic significant? To whom? Could the participants (or you) come to harm? What about the politics in the setting, as well as your own personal politics? Ethics, politics, and importance should be considered at three levels: the personal, the setting and the participants, and social policy.

Marla knows that access to continuous health care is a pressing social problem, especially for women living in poverty. Therefore, it is a significant social policy issue. Her personal political beliefs, moreover, demand that she conduct a study that focuses on women and that is participatory and involving rather than detached. Her ethical concerns may well focus on the subtle undercurrents of power and prejudice that shape the culture of health care for women. Anthony will have to think about the potential backlash of conducting a mandated evaluation. The politics of the funding agency will have to be balanced against participants’ interests. At a personal level, he will have to ask himself if he feels he ought to conduct this project and can do so in an ethical manner. Ruth has a commitment to children with special needs. She is acutely aware of the prejudice and suspicion surrounding physical disabilities. The political and economic issues of access and equity in schools sit high on public policy agendas.
These are the kinds of considerations that need to be addressed in thinking about a research project. One difficulty is that potential “should” issues cannot be forecast with perfect clarity, nor can all the costs associated with a project be predicted. Think about them and talk about them with your community of practice. Consider alternatives. Holding these considerations in mind as you conceptualize and design a study is crucial.

WHAT IS A RESEARCH PROPOSAL?

Think of a proposal as an initial plan to guide your actions as you conduct the project. The conceptual portion keeps you grounded in specific questions; the design and methods focus your actions in the field. Keep in mind, however, that qualitative research is uniquely suited to discovery and exploration. If you think of inquiry as a journey, the proposal is your itinerary. You know the general destination, but the precise route you take may change. Retaining flexibility in the proposal, and as you implement the study, fosters the responsiveness that is fundamental to qualitative research.

A research proposal consists of two major sections: what the researcher wants to learn more about (the study’s conceptual framework) and how the researcher will learn about this issue or question (its design and methods). (Many people call this section “methodology”; however, the strict definition of methodology is “the study of methods.” For the purposes of this chapter, we prefer to use the term methods.) These sections need to be well integrated and congruent in their epistemological assumptions (see Chapter 2). Imagine the conceptual framework as a funnel; the large end describes the general phenomenon—the topic—and articulates the theoretical perspective; the smaller end describes the specific project proposed. The design and methods section, then, stipulates how the study will be implemented: where and what you will do, and how you will do it. Proposals for qualitative research typically have the sections listed in Figure 5.2. Keep in mind that your study may follow a different order, but all elements must be there.

The conceptual portion describes the topic and how it is framed, the research problem or issue to be investigated, the relevant related literature, the general and specific questions, and the potential significance of the study. In this section, you place boundaries around the study (delimitations). Here you also describe relevant aspects of your personal biography and your stance toward research (your epistemologic assumptions) and the topic. Throughout, you define important concepts and terms, relying on relevant literature to support points, show gaps in that literature, and establish the importance of the topic. The particular literatures establish the framework that grounds the study.
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The proposal’s design and methods section stipulates how you will gather data to address the research questions. This section details the overall approach to the study (also called the design); processes for site and population selection, and sampling people, events, and processes; gaining access; gathering and analyzing data; ensuring trustworthiness; and involving participants, if relevant, along the way. As you should throughout the proposal, here you also retain flexibility because you may alter the specifics of data gathering once the project is under way. Making sound field decisions is integral to learning how to do qualitative research; therefore, the proposal stipulates solid, albeit tentative, plans for implementing the study.

Note that a proposal represents decisions—or choices—that a particular theoretical framework and design and methods will help generate data appropriate for responding to your research questions. These decisions are based on complex reasoning and consideration of a variety of research questions, possible frameworks, alternative designs and methodologies, as well as the do-ability.

Figure 5.2 Research Proposal Outline

<table>
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<th>Introduction</th>
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<tr>
<td>Overview of conceptual framework and design and methods</td>
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<th>Conceptual Framework (the what)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Topic and statement of the problem</td>
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<td>Purpose and significance</td>
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<td>Background for the study (literature review)</td>
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<td>Overview questions and subquestions</td>
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<td>Personal biography of the researcher</td>
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<td>Limitations</td>
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<tr>
<th>Design and Methods (the how)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Overall approach and rationale</td>
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<tr>
<td>Site or population selection and sampling strategies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data-gathering procedures</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analytic framework and preliminary data-analysis procedures</td>
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<td>Trustworthiness and methodological limitations</td>
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<td>Ethical considerations</td>
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<th>Appendixes</th>
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<td>Informed consent forms</td>
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<td>Draft interview guide</td>
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<td>Draft observation protocol</td>
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Becoming a good qualitative researcher means becoming a good decision maker.
want-to-do-ability, and should-do-ability. Considering all these captures the complex, iterative process of designing a qualitative study: weaving back and forth between possible research questions, frameworks, approaches, methods, and related considerations. As you consider alternative designs and methods (e.g., in-depth interviews or participant observation), the research questions shift. As you refine the research questions, fruitful and appropriate designs become more obvious. All this should be bounded by thinking through issues of feasibility, resources, interest, ethics, and politics. Your job is to decide what will work well, given the unfolding questions to be pursued and the potential constraints.

Building the proposal requires that you hold possible choices for all elements in your mind at the same time. This early conceptualization and design work is by far the most challenging and rigorous of the entire process of proposal development. It is nonlinear and difficult. It is hard work and will stretch you in important ways. As you consider alternatives, you may find guidance in some of the qualitative research traditions you learned about in Chapter 4. These approaches and designs have been used by qualitative researchers over the years.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The first major chunk of a research proposal is the conceptual framework. Here, you establish the what of the study.

- What do you want to learn about?
- Why are you interested?
- What are your feelings about this topic?
- What is already known about this topic?
- What questions remain unanswered?
- What assumptions are you making when you ask these questions?

The conceptual framework is your working understanding of the topic, setting, and situation you are interested in. You are choosing this study for a reason, and the reason needs to be fully explicated. Through your conceptual framework you connect your own individual experience and views with a larger concept or research or theory, and you do this with critical scrutiny, with fresh openness to ideas that are not congruent with your own.

Throughout, relevant literature is woven into the discussion to recognize what is already known, suggest theoretical frameworks, provide substantiation for points, clarify logic, define concepts, and justify decisions. We believe
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that conceptualizing your study is the most important step in your research process. It directs the kind of data you will collect and where and how, and it guides your analysis. Without a clear and detailed conceptual framework, you—and the audience for your study—will have trouble making sense of the data you gather. The conceptual framework explains the way you are thinking about your topic; through it, you reveal your perspective (recall the discussion of subjectivity in Chapter 2), the angle at which you will approach the topic. In essence, the conceptual framework presents your theory of the world you will be studying. And finally, your conceptual framework conveys “how and why your ideas matter relative to some larger body of ideas embodied in the research, writings, and experiences of others” (Schram, 2006, p. 58) and it establishes the significance of your study.

A conceptual framework is a structure that organizes the currents of thought that provide focus and direction to an inquiry project. It is the organization of ideas—the central concepts from theory, key findings from research, policy statements, professional wisdom—that will guide the project. Framework = organization or structure. Conceptual = concerning thoughts, ideas, perceptions, or theories.

The conceptual framework is grounded in your own experience, existing research, and, often, an existing theoretical base. These three foundations of the conceptual framework underscore the interaction between the inductive and deductive processes of research described in Chapter 1. We recognize that “theory is implicit in any human action” (Schratz & Walker, 1995, p. 105). Theories inform our experiences; they guide what we look at and listen for and how we make sense of what we see and hear. In turn, what we see and hear reinforces our theories. We modify and possibly reject theories when they contradict or do not apply to what we have seen or heard in the field. Thus, practice, research, and theory all contribute to this worldview you form.

Thus, the conceptual framework provides the basis for a coherent study. It connects the what with the bow of the inquiry. In short, you conceptualize the what by embedding your ideas and questions in a larger pool of ideas and questions: What experiences have you had with the question or problem? What are related concepts? What have others already learned about the issues? What research has already been conducted? What Theories (with a capital T—more on this in a moment) might inform the ideas? You are making an argument and positioning it on the terrain of your journey. The framework also links to the design for the study, ensuring that the approach and methods are coherent and flow logically from the framework, and it provides a preliminary map for analyzing the data (as depicted in Figure 5.3).
First, your own experience in practice informs your conceptualization. What do you know about the topic from your own experience? Because you, as the learner, are integral to the conceptual framework, the aspects of your personal biography that are relevant to the topic and help explain your perspective are important. For example, Ruth would want to describe herself as an athlete and note that she has worked with children who have disabilities. Similarly, Marla would reveal her training and work as a health care professional. She also might relate an experience working with immigrant women who did not feel empowered to use a neighborhood clinic where she worked. Anthony might tell of his work among policymakers and in community building. In each case, the personal experiences of our characters shape their interest and their perspectives. Establishing this subjectivity is imperative so that the audiences for the research understand their choices.

Second, what other people have discovered about the topic is foundational. You do not need to rediscover knowledge that already applies to your
Finally, the conceptual framework has a theoretical base. At this point, we want to differentiate between Theories and theories. Theories (with a capital T) are propositions that are grounded in extensive research; they have been tested and are accepted as explanations for particular phenomena. For example, Piaget’s Theory explains human development and Howard Gardner’s Theory explains multiple intelligences. The other use of the word theory (with a lowercase t) refers to personal theories-in-use that guide our work (see Argyris & Schön, 1974). We have, we hope, clarified how theories inform conceptual frameworks. The researcher cannot, however, ignore Theories. You need to ask what assumptions underlie your questions. What theories help to explain your assumptions? For example, Ruth is assuming that wheelchair athletes see their skills as special; she might use Gardner’s multiple intelligence Theory to understand their experiences with sports. Anthony assumes that an arts center in a community can support the creation and use of other resources in the community, so he draws on various Theories of community development to identify criteria by which to judge the success of the community arts program. Because Marla is interested in individual empowerment, she might find Paolo Freire’s Theories on literacy helpful as she tries to make sense of how the women use the neighborhood clinic.

In summary, the conceptual framework of a study is a traditional part of the theoretical machinery of the inquirer. This crucial section

- Aids in describing and explaining the phenomenon diagnosing the situation, and proposing plans of action;
- Provides categories for analysis; sharpens the focus;
- Provides insight into the basic character of the phenomenon;
- Serves as a source of hypothesis generation; and
- Links the inquirer’s questions to larger theoretical constructs and policy discussions.

The conceptual framework serves yet another crucial function: as the keystone of a study’s trustworthiness. As we described earlier, qualitative research is systematic inquiry, that is, a process of making explicit decisions about data (their gathering, their analysis, and their reporting). Systematic inquiry requires clarity of documentation and explication of the process so that others may see and understand the research decisions and assess their
adequacy and trustworthiness. All your decisions are grounded in the conceptual framework, so it must be clear. If your framework is clear and the design decisions flow logically, the audience for your study will understand the process and see how you reached conclusions. Your audience may disagree with your choice of conceptual framework, but readers cannot disagree that what you discovered emerges from the data, given your perspective and process.

Conceptualizing a research study entails reading, reflecting, engaging in dialogue with a community of practice when possible, and finally writing. What follows are guidelines for writing sections of the conceptual framework of the prospectus or proposal. Keep in mind that you need not label each section; some may be integrated into others; some may be short, with only a paragraph or two. Different requests for proposals (RFPs) and academic committees have their own specified subsections, so you should alter the sections presented below to meet particular proposal requirements. We list the sections separately to be sure that you consider each topic, and we call on our characters to provide examples where useful. First, however, we comment on the various uses of related literature in a proposal.

Use of the Literature

Previous research and theoretical writings ground your study in an ongoing conversation about the topic. Here you enter into a community of discourse. This discourse also contributes to the particular framework that guides your understanding of the topic. In discussing the literature, you share with the reader the results of previous studies that are related to yours. You identify and discuss major theoretical and empirical literatures and use them to place important boundaries around the study. (The term empirical has come to be associated with quantitative research when, in fact, it means “based on, guided by, or employing observation and derived from or verifiable by experience” [“Empirical,” 1993]). Also, you show gaps in that literature to which your study can contribute. Where do you discuss all this? It depends.

Traditionally, reviews of the literature are presented in a separate section of the proposal. Sadly, these reviews are often lifeless and read as dull intellectual exercises. A more lively presentation weaves the literature throughout a proposal, drawing on previous research or theoretical concepts to establish what your study is about and how it is likely to contribute to the ongoing discourse. Weave this discussion into the sections of the proposal that present the topic and the research problem or issue, and establish the study’s significance. Through this discussion, you build a framework that guides your work.
Some qualitative researchers argue that the literature should not be extensively reviewed at the proposal stage; it might contaminate the inductive, open-ended nature of qualitative inquiry. We hold a different view. Discussing the literature helps to articulate your perspective and to establish your credibility as a researcher, indicating that you are familiar with the conversation in your topic area. Although extensive reviews are not necessary, some discussion is crucial for framing the study. Try for creative, inductive use of previous research and theory to build a case for your study. Use that literature throughout the conceptual portion of the proposal.

Introduction

The introduction to a qualitative research proposal does just that: introduces the study to the reader and the reader to the study. This section discusses the larger topic to which the study relates and the problem or issue that it will attempt to address. It sets the context or domain of the study. It describes the focus of the proposed research and briefly forecasts the design and methods. This section also identifies an audience for the document by articulating who might find the study of interest or value. Finally, the introduction provides a transition to the more detailed discussions that follow. This section may be no more than a few paragraphs.

But why are introductions important? Quite simply, if you don’t engage your readers’ attention right away, you lose them. If a reader is obligated to read your work (your professor, for example), this may not be as important as when you write a policy brief, a scholarly journal article, a grant proposal, or even a short piece for a newspaper. Engaging your reader right away means that this person may actually continue on and read your entire piece. If the reader is not engaged, the introduction may be all that he or she reads. Given our commitment to use, this seems like a waste of your—and your reader’s—time.

The introduction establishes the credibility of the project and should evoke the reader’s interest. Write it with hooks that capture the reader’s attention. Begin with a sentence that stimulates interest and conveys an issue that is intriguing. For example, Ruth might write: “Children in wheelchairs can jump.” Marla could begin with, “Women living in poverty have limited access to sustained health care.” Anthony might begin his introduction with, “A community can bring the arts to everyone.” Beginning this way provides a succinct statement of the larger topic or issue that the study will address and engages a broad readership.

Some find it easier to write this section last. Sometimes, it is difficult to know just where the document will wind up (because writing, itself, is a
process of inquiry). Beginning at the very beginning can be daunting. If you choose to write it early on, be prepared to revise it substantially once the other sections are written.

This is also where you establish your *voice*, or authorial point of view. Different disciplines (audiences) have different norms governing what voice is appropriate for scholarly writing. The choice of voice depends on the focus of action. The first person (*I* and *we*) places agency directly with the author(s). Although we cannot document this empirically, it is our impression that disciplines amenable to qualitative studies encourage the more literary style of the first person. In this case, the writer takes the stand, tells the story, and has a direct relationship with the action. One danger of writing in the first person is that the author’s story may dominate the text. Using the second person (*you*) engages the reader directly with the text. The third-person voice (*he, she, and they*) is a general construction and shifts attention to the topic of inquiry. The third person also can be distancing, as when the term *the researcher* or *the investigator* is used. When talking about yourself and your actions, we suggest using *I*. Aim for the active rather than passive voice. Use verbs to connote agency and action. We use all three voices throughout this text for specific purposes. When writing about ourselves (our work and our position), we use *we*. When directly addressing the reader, we use *you*, either implied or expressed. When discussing researchers more generally or our characters, we use the third person.

Having offered the reader an overview of the study and established voice, you are ready to move into the body of the conceptual framework. Recall that a discussion of the general topic, issue or problem of the study, research questions, and significance are all interrelated. Although we discuss these in separate sections, you will need to establish the organization in ways that suit your writing style and the development of the overall logic of the study.

**The Topic**

Topics are what interest us. In the case of our characters, these are women’s access to health care, children with disabilities, and community arts programs. Topics may come from personal interests or from theory, research, social and political circumstances, and situations of practice. In the beginning, it can be useful simply to name your topic. Ask yourself to describe your interest by filling in the blank in the following sentence (adapted from Booth, Colomb, & Williams, 2008, pp. 40–48):

*I want to learn about ____________________.*
Next, narrow down the topic by questioning it. Ask the following:

- What are the component parts of the topic?
- How do these parts relate to one another?
- How does the topic relate to a larger domain?

Anthony asks about the organizational elements of the arts program, how these interact with one another, how the program operates, and how it fits into the larger community structures.

You might also interrogate the topic by viewing it as dynamic and changing.

- What is the history here?
- What were its beginnings, and where is it now?

Marla could ask about the history of access to health care in satellite clinics in poor areas: When and where were they first established? Who was involved? What were the early political obstacles?

Further refine the topic by asking about its categories and characteristics.

- How does it vary? Along what dimensions?
- How are cases of it different from and similar to one another?

Anthony could ask how typical this arts program is, what defines it as unique, and how it is like other community-oriented programs.

With a more complex and elaborated understanding of the topic, you can review the literature to establish what is known, what the unanswered questions are, and what the recurring issues are that research could address. By questioning the topic, you have generated a raft of leads to pursue. Your own interests will narrow these as a guide for reading the literature. This reading establishes a research problem or issue, one that you can address through a qualitative study.

**Statement of the Research Problem or Issue**

Beginning researchers often confuse a general topic in which they are interested with a research problem or issue. Research problems derive from general topics but focus on questions in the literature or recurring issues of practice. This section of the conceptual framework identifies and describes some problem situation or issue that a study can address. Problem or issue
statements often focus on what is not yet known or understood well. Embed the problem in the ongoing dialogue in the literature, as we have suggested. This sets your study within a tradition of inquiry and a context of related studies and serves five purposes. This discussion

- Establishes the theoretical framework that guides your study;
- Demonstrates that you are knowledgeable about the topic and the intellectual traditions that surround and support the study;
- Reveals gaps in that literature that your study can begin to address;
- Leads toward the general research questions that your study will pursue; and
- Articulates a sound rationale or need to conduct the study.

At this point, you might move to a more precise description of the problem or issue by elaborating the topic question with an indirect question (adapted from Booth et al., 2008, pp. 40–48):

I want to learn about women’s health care to find out who/what/when/where/whether/why/how ________________.

Marla might write several of these statements, giving her a range of questions to pursue. She would read the related literature with these questions in mind to decide which have potential for study and which really interest her.

Next, try to put forward a rationale for your study (adapted from Booth et al., 2008, pp. 40–48):

I want to learn about women’s health care to find out what the perspectives of poor women are in order to understand/contribute to how/why/what ________________.

By disciplining yourself to describe what you want to understand more fully and how you want the study to contribute, you are establishing a rationale for its conduct.

Our Characters’ Choices

Marla’s sentence reads:

I want to learn about women’s health care to find out what the perspectives of poor women are in order to improve their access to sustained care.
Anthony’s reads:

*I want to judge the effectiveness of a community arts program in increasing the participation of community members in the arts in order to inform decision making by program staff and the funding agent.*

Ruth’s statement is:

*I want to learn about the lived experiences of children with physical disabilities, particularly the essence of their understanding of their bodies in relation to sports, in order to enhance society's understanding and appreciation.*

**Purpose**

A statement of purpose captures, in a sentence or paragraph, the essence of the study. It should describe the intent of the study, ground it in a specific qualitative genre, discuss the central concept or idea, provide a general definition of that concept, and stipulate the unit of analysis (Creswell, 1994). Traditionally, methodologists have noted four possible purposes for research: to explore, explain, describe, or predict. In Chapter 1, we synthesized these into describing, comparing and contrasting, and forecasting. To these three, we would add some synonyms such as to understand, to develop, or to discover. Notable in its absence, however, is a reference to empowerment or emancipation—those purposes consistent with critical assumptions. To stipulate empowerment as the purpose of a study, however, creates some tricky cognitive dissonance. A researcher cannot mandate or stipulate empowerment per se; he can, however, discuss the purpose of a study as creating an environment or set of circumstances in which participants may become empowered. The difference in language is subtle but important. An ethical critical paradigm researcher knows the boundaries of empowerment. Although empowerment may be a goal and the ultimate use of the project, its achievement is serendipitous.

A discussion of the study’s purpose should convey the emergent nature of qualitative inquiry, thereby preserving the right to make field decisions. The purpose also should capture participants’ experiences as the central focus of the study. This strategy reminds the reader that the study is quintessentially qualitative and seeks to describe (explore, explain, and understand) the emic perspective. Here, too, mention what is called the *unit of analysis*—this is the level of action on which you have decided to focus. Ask yourself what you want
to be able to talk about at the end of the study, for example, individuals, a group, a process, or an organization. This focus stipulates where the data-gathering efforts will go.

Creswell (2009) offers a useful script to help you develop a purpose statement (we have adapted his original script):

- The purpose of this study is to _____ (describe? compare and contrast? forecast?) the _____ (central concept being studied) for ______ (the unit of analysis: person? group? discursive practices?) using a _____ (method of inquiry: ethnographic design? phenomenological design? sociocommunications design? case study design?).
- The result will be in a _____ (descriptive portrait? discussion of themes and patterns? illumination of sign systems?).
- At this stage in the research, the _____ (central concept being studied) will be defined generally as _____ (provide a general definition of the central concept).

Although we might critique these long and unwieldy sentences on literary grounds, practice using the script to get clear about the purpose of your study, its central concept, and overall approach.

**Our Characters’ Choices**

**Anthony**’s statement follows:

*The purpose of this study is to describe and evaluate the effectiveness of bringing arts to community members, using a mini-ethnographic design. The study will result in an evaluation report to inform decision makers and funders. Bringing arts to the community means providing actual, usable opportunities for people who live in the neighborhood to both appreciate and create various forms of art.*

**Ruth**’s purpose statement becomes:

*The purpose of this study is to uncover the deep inner meaning of bodied-ness for children in wheelchairs using a phenomenological design. The study will result in portraits and stories of these children’s relationships with sports. The central concept of bodied-ness will be explicated through the children’s words.*
Marla develops this purpose statement:

The purpose of this study is to describe the experiences of poor women in accessing health care, using an action research case study design. The study will result in proposed actions to improve health care in the community. At this stage in the research, health care is defined as preventive health maintenance; access is defined as the tone and climate in a clinic that signal welcome or dismissal.

Significance

In discussing the topic, research problem or issue, and the purpose of the study, you are implicitly or explicitly stating why doing this particular study is important and how it may contribute. The topic discussion establishes that this is a worthy area for investigation, as does the problem statement. Formal proposals, however, typically include a section in which the potential significance of the study is more fully detailed. When space is limited, however, this section is often incorporated into another.

Reasoning that the study is significant and should be conducted entails building an argument that your work will contribute to one or more of the following domains: scholarly research and literature, recurring social policy issues, concerns of practice, and interests of the participants. Your challenge is to situate your study as addressing a particular, important problem. How you define the research topic and problem shape the study’s significance.

The conceptual discussion emphasizes the contributions to the relevant domains. For example, a study of the integration of children with disabilities into the regular classroom could be significant for both policy and practice. Framing the study as a policy study requires that the problem be situated in national and state education policy on special education. Alternatively, framing the study as most significant for practice would necessitate a problem definition focused on restructuring schools to be more inclusive or on classroom practice to support more diverse students. Either frame is legitimate and defensible; the researcher identifies where the study is likely to contribute the most.

If you are preparing a proposal for a funding agency, you should be sure that statements about the project’s significance match the agency’s needs and priorities. The foundation that takes pride in funding action projects will want to see how the proposed research will directly help people or change a problematic situation. If you are seeking funds from an agency with goals of expanding knowledge and theory (e.g., the National Science Foundation),
however, you would want to emphasize undeveloped or unsolved theoretical puzzles to demonstrate the significance of the research.

In summary, the significance section responds to the following questions:

- Who has an interest in this domain of inquiry?
- How will this new research add to theory, policy, and practice in this area?
- How might it be of benefit to the participants and therefore of significance to them?

Overview Questions and Subquestions

Research questions are critically important for guiding your work. Recall that the entire conceptual framework keeps you grounded as you gather data. Stipulating general overview (grand tour) questions and related subquestions is especially useful for delimiting the study. The process of doing qualitative research often raises more questions than it answers; the road you take has many intersections, each more intriguing with possibility than the last. Pursuing the inviting back road (exploring the unknown) is what qualitative research is all about, but taking each and every turn can paralyze the project. Reminding yourself of the questions driving the study helps keep you on track.

Frame the study as responding to one or two general questions with a reasonable number (e.g., three to five) of subquestions to refine the general ones. Avoid wording your questions in ways that solicit yes or no answers. Questions should be nondirectional. They should not imply cause and effect or suggest measurement. Often, when first posing research questions, beginners ask quantitative questions masquerading as qualitative ones. Beware the question that asks about influence, impact, or amount (for example, how, or how much, does whole language instruction influence student reading achievement?). Be sure that your questions remind the reader (and yourself) that you are focusing on perceptions. For example, ask, “What benefits do teachers perceive in the use of instructional technology?” instead of, “What are the benefits of instructional technology?” Also expect that your questions will evolve as the project unfolds. Because qualitative research refines and redefines as it emerges, you should expect change. Keep the questions open-ended to foster exploration and discovery. Table 5.1 provides some preliminary questions to stimulate your thinking.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation or Policy Study</th>
<th>Ethnography</th>
<th>Phenomenological Study</th>
<th>Sociocommunication Study</th>
<th>Case Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is the culture of the program? How do participants or stakeholders define success or effectiveness? Are these definitions congruent with effective or exemplary programs?</td>
<td>What meaning do participants in the program make of their experiences? How do these contribute to the functioning of the program?</td>
<td>How has the discourse of policymakers shifted in recent years? What does this reflect about national values? How does the discourse contribute to its effectiveness?</td>
<td>What are the different components of the program? How do they contribute to its effectiveness? What is this program an instance of?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive Study</td>
<td>What do participants believe? What are their values? What is tacit in the setting? How do these beliefs and values shape their understandings and actions?</td>
<td>What is the lived experience of the individual or group? What is the essence of that experience?</td>
<td>What words, actions, and signs do people use to communicate meaning? How do they differ across groups and settings? How are the meanings transmitted?</td>
<td>What are the different meaning-perspectives of participants in the program? How do these interact with one another? What values and beliefs are apparent in actions and interactions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action Research</td>
<td>What deeply held values and belief’s guide actions, interactions, and activities? What difference does changing actions, activities, or interactions make to the group or the individual?</td>
<td>What is the meaning of actions, activities, or interactions for the group or the individual? What does changing actions and activities mean?</td>
<td>What is the meaning of discourse in the setting? What effect does changing the discourse have? How does this shift power dynamics?</td>
<td>What are the recurring cycles of action and reflection in this case? How do these cycles bring about change?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Our Characters’ Choices

As Marla and the women in her study work on the conceptual framework, their general questions and refining subquestions become:

Why do women from the local community use this clinic?
How does it meet their needs? How not?
What alternative sources do they use?
What are the dynamics of the clinic?
How do the women perceive that they are treated?
How do the women interact with the physician’s assistants?
What are conversations like between the women and the health care personnel?
What happens in the waiting room?

Anthony’s questions are:

How effective is this program in bringing arts to people living in the neighborhood?
Who attends events at the arts center?
How do they respond to the various activities?
Who participates in the creative workshops?
What are outcomes of the workshops?
What is the artist’s role?

Ruth’s general question is:

What deep meaning do children in wheelchairs make of their bodiedness and athleticism?

Because Ruth’s study is so closely linked to what she learns, she is reluctant to specify subquestions before talking with the children. Her reliance on the grand tour question is greater than that of her colleagues.
Limitations

Limitations set some conditions that acknowledge the partial and tentative nature of any research. You have delimited the study throughout the conceptual discussion by describing what the study is and how it is framed; *delimitations imply what the study is not*. Limitations, however, derive from the design and methods and help contextualize the study. Limitations stipulate the weaknesses of this study, thereby encouraging the reader to judge it with these limitations in mind. Limitations arise from, among others, small sample size, reliance on one technique for gathering data, and selection procedures. We urge you not to elaborate these in too much detail. Rather, this discussion serves to remind you, as well as the reader, that no studies are perfect; that findings are tentative and conditional; that knowledge is elusive and approximate; and that our claims should be humble, given the extraordinary complexity of the social world we want to learn more about.

**DESIGN AND METHODS**

The design and methods section of the proposal serves three major purposes. First, it presents a *plan*—the road map—for conducting the study. Second, it demonstrates to the reader that you are *capable* of conducting the study. Third, it preserves the design *flexibility* that is a hallmark of qualitative methods. Achieving this latter purpose is often the most challenging.

Typically, six topics comprise this section:

- Overall Genre and Rationale
- Site and Population Selection
- Data Collection Procedures, Including Sampling People, Events, Processes, Interactions
- Preliminary Data Analysis Strategy
- Trustworthiness, Including Limitations
- Ethical Considerations

Woven into discussion of these topics are the twin challenges of presenting a clear, doable plan balanced by the necessity of maintaining flexibility (see Figure 5.4). Several of these topics we have discussed already: personal biography of the researcher (reflexivity) in Chapter 2 and trustworthiness and ethical considerations in Chapter 3. Other topics are detailed in subsequent chapters: Data collection is described in detail in Chapters 6, 7, 8, and 9, and data analysis in Chapters 10 and 11. In the remainder of this chapter,
we discuss overall genre and site or population selection. We also briefly discuss data management and analysis.

**Overall Genre and Rationale**

Although general acceptance of qualitative inquiry is currently widespread, we recommend that you provide a rationale for the specific genre guiding your study. The most compelling argument is to stress the unique strengths of interpretive research in general and the specific genre to which your study links. Readers who are unfamiliar with qualitative research need explications of the purposes and assumptions of this paradigm. This is especially important for studies that are exploratory or descriptive, that assume the value of context and setting, that search for a deeper understanding of the participants’ lived experiences, or that do all three. Explicating the logical and compelling connections (the epistemological integrity) between the research questions, the genre, and the methods can be quite convincing. Although the range of possible qualitative genres is quite large, we have focused on three. As our characters depict, linking your study to one of these approaches depends on the focus for the research, the problem or issue to be addressed, the research questions, the locus of interest, and considerations of do-ability. Remember to explicitly reserve the right to modify aspects of the research design as the study unfolds. If you are framing your research as a case study,
you will need to explain what this means and why it is an appropriate decision given your purposes.

**Site or Population Selection and Sampling Strategies**

Once the overall genre and a supporting rationale have been presented, the proposal outlines the setting or population of interest and plans for selection of people, places, and events. There are two waves of decision: the first identifies the setting or population of interest; the second details how you will sample within the setting or population, for example, those individuals you intend to interview or those events you intend to observe. Here, you provide the reader with a sense of the scope of your study and whether the intensity and amount of data you can generate will help you fully respond to the research questions. And remember: since qualitative research relies on detail and thick descriptions, you are aiming for depth over breadth in your choices.

You cannot gather data intensively and in depth about all possible participants, events, or places. You make choices. The first and most global decision—choosing the setting, population, or phenomenon of interest—is fundamental to the entire study. This early, significant decision shapes all your subsequent ones and should be described and justified clearly.

Some research is site specific. Anthony’s decision to focus on a specific setting (e.g., the community-based arts program in Portland, Oregon) is a fairly constrained choice; the study is defined by and intimately linked to that place. If he chose to study a particular population (participants in community-based arts programs), the study would be somewhat less constrained. It could be conducted in several locations. A decision to study the phenomenon of community involvement in the arts is even less constrained by either place or population. If your study is of a specific program, organization, place, or region, your reader needs some detail regarding the setting. Also, you should provide a rationale that outlines why this specific setting is more appropriate than others.

The ideal site is one where:

- Entry is possible.
- There is a rich mix of the processes, people, programs, interactions, structures of interest, or all of these.
- You likely can build strong relations with the participants.
- Ethical and political considerations are not overwhelming, at least initially.

Although this ideal is seldom attained, your proposal should describe what makes the selection of this particular site especially sound. A site may
be well suited for its representativeness, interest, and the range of examples of the phenomenon under study, but if you cannot get beyond the front desk, your study will be thin. Similarly, if you feel very uncomfortable or endangered in a site, or if you believe the participants may be particularly uncomfortable or come to harm, reconsider doing the study.

The second decision wave identifies the specific participants. When studying a specific site or program, as Anthony does, you must stipulate how many individuals and why those individuals, what and how many events and why, and which examples of material culture and why you intend to include them in data gathering. When the focus of the study is on a particular population, as in Marla’s case with poor women and the health care system and Ruth’s on children with disabilities, you should present a strategy for selecting individuals from that population as well. You also need to provide assurances that your selection process is likely to be successful and indicate why these particular individuals are of interest. For example, in a dissertation study of forced terminations of psychotherapy, Kahn’s (1992) strategy was to post notices in local communities asking for participants. Her dissertation committee had lively discussions at her proposal hearing about the feasibility of this strategy. When we were given assurances that this had worked in the past as a way of soliciting participants, we agreed; the strategy was ultimately successful.

In qualitative research, these sampling strategies are called *purposeful*. This is in contrast to random sampling in quantitative studies. As its name suggests, you have reasons (purposes) for selecting specific participants, events, or processes. Typical strategies for purposeful selection of cases and individuals, events, or processes include the following (adapted from Patton, 2002, pp. 230–242):

- Typical Case Sampling
- Critical Case Sampling
- Snowball or Chain Sampling
- Criterion Sampling
- Extreme or Deviant Case Sampling
- Maximum Variation Sampling
- Stratified Purposeful Sampling
- Homogeneous Sampling
- Theory-Based Sampling
- Politically Important Cases Sampling
- Convenience Sampling

Within these broad sampling strategies, you must make decisions about how many. We are often asked *how many is enough?* And we always respond, *it depends*. It depends on the conceptual framework, research questions, genre, data-gathering methods, and time and resources. For example, given
feasibility constraints, if you are doing a phenomenologic study with three very long interviews with each participant, you would be unwise to have a sample of more than three to five people. Let us take you through the arithmetic. If each interview is 1½ hours long, each is likely to yield more than 30 pages of typewritten transcription. Multiply this times three iterative sessions and you have close to 100 pages for each participant. This is a lot of data. In addition, the rough time estimate for transcribing tape-recorded interviews is 5–6:1—that is, 5 to 6 hours transcribing for each hour of interviewing. If you have 4½ hours (three interview sessions lasting 1½ hours each) of taped interview, you could spend more than 25 hours transcribing. Remember, this is just one participant. But this genre yields rich, in-depth details about lived experience. Also, the purpose of this genre is to honor the individual’s life experience—something difficult to do in a brief, one-time interview.

On the other hand, as with Anthony, you may want some data from a range of participants and events. This suggests a sampling strategy that is more broad than that above. Your interviews may be shorter and more numerous; you probably will use informal conversations collected during observations as well. This strategy generates information about a wide range of perceptions and experiences.

Data-Gathering Procedures

Once you have made the initial decision to focus on a specific site, population, or phenomenon, waves of subsequent decisions cascade. The proposal describes the plan that will guide decisions in the field. As mentioned above, decisions about selecting people (to interview) or events (to observe) develop concurrently with decisions about the specific data collection methods you will use. You should think these through in advance. These plans, however, are often changed given the realities of field research, but at the proposal stage, they demonstrate that you have thought through some of the complexities of the setting and have made some initial judgments about how to deploy your time. Such plans also indicate that you have considered the resource demands of specific decisions, as well as the ethical and political considerations in the setting.

As Chapters 7 and 8 detail, the primary ways of gathering qualitative data are through interviewing, observing, and reviewing material culture (documents, artifacts, records, decorations, and so on). Ethnographies and case studies rely on multiple ways of gathering data, whereas phenomenological studies typically use a series of in-depth interviews. Sociocommunication studies rely on recordings of communicative acts or events. Your decisions about what techniques to use and with how many people, from what role groups, for how long,
and how many times are crucial design and resource decisions.

Consider Anthony’s study. The elements of a community-based program are many and complex. Because Anthony interrogated his topic and problem, as described previously, he decides to focus on specific elements of the program: participation at center events, staff and participant attitudes toward the activities, and views of nonparticipating community members about the program. He will document participation through observation and logs kept by staff members. Attitudes toward the program will be obtained through two techniques: in-depth interviews and a brief survey. Anthony now needs to decide how many participants and nonparticipants to interview and survey. He decides, given the resources available, to survey participants as they attend activities and to invite active participants to be interviewed. He further decides that short and focused interviews with between 8 and 10 “actives” will give him an in-depth portrait of their involvement and views about the program.

Interviewing and surveying nonparticipating community members will be more difficult. He decides to survey households within five blocks of the arts center. To do so, he will walk the neighborhood on Saturday mornings, leaving surveys and, when possible, inviting household members to sit for a brief interview. He is not sure how many of these nonparticipating member interviews he can do, but he will stop after he has completed approximately 10 interviews.

Data Management and Preliminary Analysis Procedures

Analyzing qualitative data is time-consuming. It can be tedious but also exhilarating. The specific analysis strategy you adopt depends on the genre of your qualitative study and is guided by the theoretical bases of your conceptual framework. At the proposal stage, you will need to provide some preliminary guidelines for managing data, and you will be expected to outline your analytic framework. These points are elaborated in Chapter 10.

For now, consider that the interpretive act remains mysterious in both qualitative and quantitative data analysis. It is a process of making sense of your data that is necessary whether you speak of means and standard deviations or offer rich descriptions of everyday events. The interpretive act brings meaning to what you have learned (your data) and presents that meaning to the reader through the report. We discuss the processes of analysis and interpretation in Chapter 10, while Chapter 11 provides examples from our characters. Chapter 12 discusses writing the report or presenting the findings through alternative media.
The remaining sections of the proposal—trustworthiness and ethical considerations—draw on the ideas presented in Chapter 3. Here, your task is to outline how you will try to ensure the strength and sensitivity of your study.

**DISPOSITIONS AND SKILLS**

Our characters have encountered the multiple decisions involved in designing a qualitative research project. The central tension here is to be planful while being flexible and open to change. They have focused their research questions and placed boundaries around what they will explore in detail. They begin to realize that there are no prescriptions for how to proceed, no templates they can implement magically. As they actively design their studies, the concept of ambiguity becomes more real. As they see the possibilities for multiple avenues to truths, they have to consider alternatives and make decisions. They must be able to explain and justify these decisions. Again, they employ their developing understanding of the principles of good practice. As Anthony realizes, plans are necessary, but his plans may well have to change once he is in the field. He is building the skills he will need to conduct a thoughtful small-scale study.

This chapter has discussed the complex thinking and decision making that goes into developing a research proposal. Our characters are not required to elaborate their work in such detail; they do, however, have to consider each element as they move from design to implementation, the topic of the next chapters.

**ACTIVITIES FOR YOUR COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE**

### Study Questions

- What is a research proposal? What are its major elements?
- What is the purpose of your study? How does it fit into the qualitative research genres?
- What literatures inform your topic?
- What research strategy will help you answer your questions fully? How might a different strategy change the questions?
- How will you select your site or population?
- What data-gathering procedures will be most useful?

### Small-Group and Dyad Activities

**Scripting Your Study**

Complete a purpose statement script that describes the purpose you see for your study. In dyads, share your scripts and generate alternative ideas for the script.
**Concept Mapping**

In this activity, you will develop a picture that depicts possible relationships between the ideas that come to mind as you think about your research. In dyads, discuss briefly the phenomenon in which you are interested. Individually, brainstorm a list of terms that you associate with this phenomenon. Now take the available art materials (crepe paper, Magic Markers, glue sticks, Post-it notes, yarn, and so on) and build a collage that reflects how you see the key terms relating to one another.

When everyone is finished, group members share orally what they have depicted, explaining their assumptions and the linkages they see. Others ask the *why* questions and suggest gaps or additional directions, helping the presenter to develop a deeper understanding of the phenomenon.

As a final activity, write a brief narrative explaining what your collage says about the phenomenon and your perspective on the phenomenon. What unanswered questions remain? What leads does this give you about further conceptualizing your study?

**Developing a Proposal**

Following the proposal outline in the chapter and starting with your purpose statement script, write a sentence or two for as many of the sections as you can. Meet with your dyad partner and explain and justify what you are planning.

**FURTHER READING**

**Proposal Development and Research Design**


