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Introduction to Qualitative Approaches

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There is a natural fit between the work of interdisciplinary, community-based inquiry and qualitative methods. In the chapters on qualitative methods that follow in this section, readers will find a myriad of not only useful but also exciting approaches to community research and action. Community-based inquiry is often designed to question dominant, laboratory-based, so-called "scientific" findings and paradigms; to privilege external validity and local knowledge; to work with participants and communities; to value culture and context; and to lead to action and change. Qualitative methods provide the appropriate tools to do all this and more (Brodsky, Mannarini, Buckingham, & Scheibler, in press).

Many community-based research traditions and qualitative methods also share a modern history of having arisen in opposition to dominant social and scientific worldviews. Community psychology is one such example, as it developed alongside and was inspired by other movements of the 1960s to question the dominant paradigms of wellness promotion and illness prevention at multiple levels (Levine, Perkins, & Perkins, 2005). Thus, the connection between community-based research and qualitative methods is not merely incidental. Guba and Lincoln (1994) also elucidated how the methods we use are dependent on the paradigms and worldviews we hold. Qualitative methods are a natural partner of community-based research (Brodsky et al., in press).

Qualitative methods are adept at answering many of the questions that arise in community-based research in an ecologically valid way, given their premise on the belief that the control demanded by quantitative methods strips away the context that is central to life; their explicit attention to the disjunction between grand and local theory; and their focus on context, culture, and setting. Qualitative methods can be central to the effort to reframe dominant narratives, which seek causal pathways to and from individual-level problems, to a view that also takes into account individual- and community-level strengths and resources, which are active in responding to, and changing, systemic, broad-based issues. An important goal of qualitative methods is discovery, that is, developing holistic, comprehensive descriptions of systems, theories, and processes, as well as identifying factors and working hypotheses that warrant further research. In this way, qualitative methods are not solely focused on the type I and type II errors discussed in quantitative inquiry but also have concern for what Crabtree and Miller (1999) called type III (solving the wrong problem) and type IV (solving a problem not worth solving) errors. Moreover, qualitative researchers are willing to question prevailing notions of "scientific objectivity" and to be seen as "involved", as they are aware of the roles that researcher standpoint and the interaction between researcher and participant play in the production of data and findings (Glesne, 2011). Many qualitative traditions and researchers are also explicit in their aim for social justice, working alongside their community participants in the creation of knowledge and using research to inform and spur action (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

The natural partnership between qualitative methods and community research has resulted in an exciting and longstanding history of work that has explored community needs and strengths in order to ultimately influence community action and change across a wide range of issues and settings. These include studies such as Berg, Coman,

and Schensul's (2009) youth action research in Hartford, Connecticut, which used community ethnography and social action research to change individual and collective efficacy and prevent risky behaviors. Other qualitative researchers, Yoshikawa and Olazagasti (2011), used focus groups to study effective outreach and behavior change in preventing HIV transition in Asian/Pacific Islanders in New York City, which led to the development of culturally appropriate methods for addressing the influence of social oppression, immigration status, and cultural norms on HIV transmission. Other community researchers employ qualitative methods to examine and document community change efforts. For example, Speer and Christens (2012) partnered with citizens and utilized organizational and public documents, media coverage, and semistructured interviews to study local community action in holding organizations accountable for community development and housing improvements in Kansas City, Missouri. Yet another illustration is Kroeker's (1996) study of community functioning in agricultural cooperatives in Nicaragua. Her use of participant observation allowed her to discover the importance of mentoring and support for emerging leadership, which was then shared with and built into structures of these communities. In the remainder of the chapter, we first present an overview of qualitative methods and their salient aspects and then describe a case study that illustrates the use of such methods.

INTRODUCTION TO QUALITATIVE METHODS

The large umbrella of qualitative methods covers a vast array of research typologies, a number of which are described in the chapters that follow. These methods are shaped by various, and sometimes differing, theoretical and philosophical stances. However, the unifying features that bond the methods are their (a) use of nonnumerical data (e.g., words, pictures, observations) to explore, discover, and describe the experiences, meanings, processes, and purposes of the phenomenon under consideration from the perspective of those who are experiencing it and (b) value of the uniqueness, natural variation, diversity, and ambiguity in the findings. Qualitative methods also give attention to the iterative nature of processes and knowledge, as well as the standpoint of both the researcher and participants in the production and discovery of such knowledge. When designing community-based research and considering the use of qualitative methods, researchers must consider their worldview and that of their population of interest, their data collection methods and subsequent analysis, the trustworthiness of their research designs, and the multiple ethical issues that may arise during research. These considerations also play an important role in readers' and consumers' evaluation of community-based qualitative work.

Worldviews

The founders of community psychology and modern proponents of qualitative research have argued for the importance of articulating our worldviews. Malterud (2001, pp. 483–484) stated that researchers' backgrounds and positions "will affect what they choose to investigate, the angle of investigation, the methods judged most adequate for this purpose, the findings considered most appropriate, and the framing and communication of conclusions." Similarly, Sarason (1984, p. 477) noted that "we can never unimprison ourselves, except in small measure, from our world view." Our worldview is shaped by ontology (i.e., assumptions about the nature of reality), epistemology (i.e., beliefs about knowledge and knowing), and axiology (i.e., beliefs about values in the research process; Creswell, Hanson, Plano Clark, & Morales, 2007).

A researcher's ontological and epistemological views shape the work's paradigm and axiology, which can be broadly organized into four categories. *Positivists* believe in one "true" reality that can be perfectly apprehended. *Postpositivists* believe that, reality, while objective, is only imperfectly apprehendable, expressed only as a statistical probability. Neither positivists nor postpositivists believe that worldviews, often called "values" or "biases", should or do play a role in research. They work to eliminate or control the influence of worldviews, which more qualitatively aligned paradigms argue merely obscures our worldview and any possibility of apprehending "reality." *Constructivist-interpretivists* believe that reality is constructed in the interactions and minds of individuals; thus, there are multiple, equally valid realities. Constructivists believe that worldviews cannot be removed from research, and therefore researchers must acknowledge, describe, and fully consider their roles. Finally, *critical-ideologists*, or *criticalists*, believe that reality is constructed and

cannot be separated from its socio-historical context and power imbalances. Criticalists believe that values should influence research and its outcomes, empowering participants to liberate themselves from oppression caused by these power structures (Ponterotto, 2005). Because paradigms dictate appropriate methods (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), most qualitative researchers ascribe to constructivist and/or critical paradigms and explore their biases, rather than control for them. Qualitative researchers reflect upon their worldview, lived experiences, values and beliefs, assumptions, theoretical predispositions, and roles as they pertain to the topic and setting. They then make these known to the reader in what is termed a statement of reflexivity (Crabtree & Miller, 1999; Glesne, 2011).

Participants and Communities of Interest

Aligned with the aims and understandings of community-based research, qualitative methods value the uniqueness of peoples and settings and do not aim for, nor claim, generalizability, nor are they bound by statistical necessities of random sampling strategies. Thus, their population of interest is usually localized. As such, sampling in qualitative research focuses on gaining rich, local information, as opposed to gleaning generalized, global summaries. The research question and paradigm dictate the sampling method, which might aim to increase or decrease variation, or explore extreme, typical, or particular cases of importance (Kuzel, 1999). Methods to access the population of interest include naturalistic, purposive, and snowball sampling strategies (Patton, 1990). In naturalistic sampling, researchers speak with a variety of participants whom they encounter within a setting. In purposive sampling, researchers aim to reach a specific population in terms of a specific characteristic (e.g., experience, demographic). In snowball sampling, participants and key informants suggest others who could participate in the research based on similar or different characteristics and/or experiences. Such sampling techniques are well suited for community-based research.

Data Collection

Qualitative methods in community-based research typically involve observing, listening, and engaging with people in their natural settings (Crabtree & Miller, 1999) in order to learn about particular phenomena in their lives. Data collection is usually accomplished through observations and interviews but could also involve photographs, video, personal or public historical records and other extant data, or data created with participants (see, for example, Chapter 9 on participatory action research).

Observational methods range along a continuum. One end of the continuum comprises structured approaches, such as preset surveys, rating forms, or logs to note predetermined structures, features, and activities in the setting (see, for example, Chapter 10 on geographic information systems); the other end comprises unstructured methods, such as many ethnographic field notes (see, for example, Chapter 8 on ethnographic approaches), descriptions of the setting's physical characteristics, individuals' overt and covert behavior, cultural artifacts, and more. Also included in observational data are the field and interpretative notes of the researchers, who are actively observing their own research processes via the recording of thoughts, feelings, experiences, working hypotheses, and/or reflexive statements throughout the entire research process (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011; Glesne, 2011).

Interviews can be conducted with individuals, groups (e.g., focus groups), families, and other case sets, or within one case, such as an organization (see, for example, Chapter 5 on community narrative evaluation). The instruments used to gather interview data also fall along a continuum from structured, in which all questions are preselected and asked in a particular order to all participants, to unstructured, in which the researcher might use a single "grand tour" question (Fetterman, 1989) to start the interview, such as "tell me about [the subject of interest]," and then follow the natural course of the conversation. Many interview methods are semistructured, falling in the middle of the continuum; all participants are asked some form of preselected questions designed to touch on particular topics, but the questions are reordered, adapted, and interspersed with other questions based on the participant's responses. Interviews vary with respect to their techniques (i.e., objective, subjective, and even projective methods) and focus, which can be chronological, descriptive, action-oriented, or about the participant's process or essence (Creswell et al., 2007). They can differ in range, varying from one person's or community's entire history to a particular critical event experienced by many people or communities, and vary to

privilege either depth or breadth. It cannot be overstated that, regardless of data collection method or focus, the most important "instruments" in qualitative methods are the researchers and their relationships with the participants (Glesne, 2011).

In addition to more traditional sources and types of data, researchers have begun to use photographs and art, and their related verbal and written descriptions, as primary data; much of this data is created in concert with participants (e.g., photovoice; see Chapter 9) and other visually based initiatives; Wang & Burris, 1997). Other methods of data collection include using extant data, such as newspaper articles, organizational and governmental records and notes, and old photographs and letters, as well as material traces (Hodder, 1992), such as accretion (e.g., grime to assess use of kitchen appliances) and erosion (e.g., dirt paths worn on grassy fields to determine where a new pathway should be created).

Data collection methods also range in terms of the level of participation in the setting. Some researchers fully participate in the setting (i.e., participant observation) and are insiders or become insiders through the course of their research. Other researchers are relatively disconnected from the community and phenomena they are studying, maintaining as much distance as possible while conducting the study. The researchers may choose to actively collaborate with the community, allowing the community to shape the research questions asked and the design and implementation of the data collection and analysis, or they may remain more distanced, conducting all of the research themselves. There are certainly benefits and drawbacks to each approach. Although participatory methods can provide a wealth of information and nuanced understanding about an issue, they are also time consuming, demanding of resources from settings and participants, and unpredictable, as researchers relinquish much of the control of the research process. On the other hand, although researcher-led studies can provide a useful outside perspective, may uncover knowledge that might not be gleaned by those immersed and involved in the issues and setting, and allow for control of the research design and method by a (hopefully) properly trained and experienced researcher, research without participants' active involvement might be impracticable in some settings, as well as miss the more subtle distinctions and deep understandings that only insider perspectives provide (Crabtree & Miller, 1999). Many qualitative researchers would argue for a balance of the two.

Data Analysis

Methods of analysis can vary considerably across types of community-based qualitative work and data types; however, they share an aim to organize, interpret, and present the collected data in order to shed light on the phenomena and settings of interest and to remain contextually grounded. Unlike in quantitative methods, data analysis is not entirely separate from data collection. Instead, an iterative process, in which the researcher begins informal analyses while collecting data, is commonplace. These initial thoughts and interpretations may impact the subsequent data collection process, as working hypotheses are explored through changes in the questions asked and inclusion of further participants and types of data collected. Such additional data may then impact the ongoing analytic process. At some more advanced point in the data collection process the researcher will begin a more in-depth analysis (detailed later), which is useful in identifying the point at which data collection should be stopped. Two processes that are often used for identifying this stopping point are *saturation*, the moment at which additional data collection yields little return because all additional data are only confirming the understanding that arose from the previous data collection, and *extension*, the point where additional data are starting to lead to tangential understandings and discoveries (Crabtree & Miller, 1999).

There are multiple perspectives and many classification systems relating to qualitative data analysis. Tesch (1991), for example, distinguished three basic orientations: "language-oriented" approaches (focused on the meaning of words and the ways in which people communicate); "descriptive/interpretative" approaches (aimed at providing descriptions and interpretations of social phenomena); and "theory-building" approaches. Regardless of orientation, the formal stage of data analysis typically begins with transcribing spoken data (which are usually audio or video recorded) and logging and organizing pictorial data, observations, and researcher field notes. Qualitative researchers then typically use some type of coding—marking certain content and processes that are linked to the research questions—to organize their data

and highlight the most pertinent content, themes, processes, theoretical concepts, and so on. As coding is based on the specific method and research questions used, it varies greatly. At one end of the spectrum, codes are determined a priori, based on a theory, hypothesis, and/or extant literature (Crabtree & Miller, 1999). At the other end of the spectrum, codes are determined after many careful readings of the data and are based on the specific data content (e.g., grounded theory; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Many methods lie between these two extremes. For example, researchers often combine the two, using *sensitizing concepts* (i.e., guiding constructs from the researcher's chosen discipline; Blumer, 1969) to inform coding but do not restrict coding to these concepts alone. Coding can focus on the meaning of the data as interpreted by the researchers, the exact content of the data as stated or "objectively" seen, or the way in which the content is communicated (e.g., the way something is said or a photograph is taken). Research teams may code data together or have multiple researchers code the same data separately, later coming together to determine the extent of agreement in their codes. Many teams maintain a qualitative mindset in this process, privileging the unique contributions of each research team member to the construction of understanding and thus striving to reach consensus, with all members presenting their reasoning for particular codes and the team coming to a mutual understanding and agreement (Brodsky et al., 2004). Other teams take a more quantitative approach, training all researchers to find a singular "truth" (which is often that of the principal investigator) and then recording the amount of agreement between codes, calculating reliability coefficients for their coding and striving for statistically shared understandings. Some researchers (e.g., Hill, 2012) recommend an approach that is somewhere in between.

Coding is nearly always an iterative process in which the codes and their application change as the data are analyzed, with the ultimate goal of creating contextually grounded working hypotheses and theories. All codes and working hypotheses are compared within and across "data points" (e.g., participants, interviews, observations, photographs, instances). During this process, researchers actively seek to identify outliers, or negatives cases that could refute their working hypotheses, leading to what Agar (1986, p. 25) called "breakdown". Unlike in quantitative work, these outliers are neither controlled nor rejected from the data set. Rather, they are treated as real and important examples of alternative perspectives and experiences whose contribution to understanding of the phenomenon in question need to be included. Breakdown leads to "resolution", in which further analyses reveal a better explanation of the data (Agar, 1986, p. 27). If it does not lead to a better explanation, researchers make it known that their working hypotheses and theories do not fit all of the data, and draw attention to these negative cases. Usually multiple researchers, participants, and community members are involved to "audit" or review the analyses and interpretations in order to ensure that they accurately represent multiple truths, experiences, and perspectives (Glesne, 2011).

Charmaz (2006) provided the analogy of a skeleton for explaining the analytic process in one particular qualitative method (constructivist grounded theory), but this analogy holds true across many types of analytic approaches. Analysis begins by setting the stage for the bones to be discovered or generated (i.e., prepping materials, such as compiling data and their related interpretations and initial thoughts). Next, the bones are discovered or generated as codes are assigned to segments of the data. Following this, the bones are assembled through additional analysis and connection, and built by comparing all of the bone segments and their connections to one another, corroborating multiple perspectives. Finally, the body is placed back into its context, as resulting theory is woven into a rich, descriptive narrative, so that the theory remains contextually grounded in the data. In this way, the data are analyzed, interpreted, and presented.

Rigor

The rigor of qualitative research, as with all research, is based on its design, enactment, and researcher competence, as well as the paradigms and associated beliefs (e.g., multiple "truths", respect for context over data control and manipulation). Although external validity is perhaps the most applicable and central to qualitative methods, a more appropriate way to think about rigor in qualitative methods is to replace quantitative standards of validity, reliability, and generalizability with standards to judge the *trustworthiness* of qualitative work. These include (a) *authenticity*,

the fairness, sophistication, mutual understanding, and empowerment of participants and consumers of the knowledge to take action; (b) *credibility*, the accurate representation of multiple realities; (c) *transferability*, the applicability of the findings to other settings; (d) *dependability*, the consistency of findings; and (e) *confirmability*, objectivity in data collection, analysis, and presentation (Glesne, 2011; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Trust in the rigor of qualitative methods is built and maintained through multiple decisions researchers make in the data design, collection, analysis, and presentation process, including researcher reflexivity. It is also strengthened by methodological consistency and transparency (i.e., making the path to conclusions clear to readers; Moisander & Valtonen, 2006), as well as triangulation, the use of multiple types of (a) data (e.g., observations and interviews), (b) collection time points (e.g., multiple interviews, several questions and follow-up prompts to ascertain the participants' viewpoints), (c) data sources, and (d) ways of analysis to be more certain that multiple realities are accurately captured and represented (Denzin, 1970). Analytic rigor is strengthened by involving participants, key informants, and other researchers in member checks, audits, and peer debriefing. Long-term and persistent involvement and observation during data collection and analysis are further believed to strengthen the study's trustworthiness. Finally, thick, rich, detailed description in data collection, including in field notes and in the writing process, all enhance the reader's ability to trust the accuracy and completeness of the findings presented and the interpretation made (Glesne, 2011; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Ethics

When embarking on community work, researchers must consider a myriad of ethical issues that may arise over the course of their involvement in the community. The American Psychological Association (2010) provided guidance for ensuring ethical research, including gaining informed consent from participants, providing adequate debriefing, reporting research results accurately, and sharing data for verification. However, these guidelines are often more clear cut when used in a laboratory or when conducting individual-level research. Thus, O'Neill (1989) aptly summed up two additional issues that community-based researchers must consider, namely, *to whom* they are responsible and *for what* they are responsible.

Regardless of discipline, it is crucial that qualitative researchers follow all applicable professional and personal ethical guidelines in order to protect the well-being, confidentiality, and dignity of those who choose to participate in studies, those who elect not to participate, and those who will receive the research products. First and foremost, researchers must be sure to have sufficient knowledge and skills to apply their chosen data collection and analysis methods. They especially must consider their role in relation to their participants, to the community, and to the topic of interest. Because qualitative researchers can occupy multiple roles vis à vis the research setting and participants (often in the same study) ranging from outside evaluators to inside community members, friends, advocates, and/or collaborators, these issues can be more complicated than in more traditional research relationships (Brodsky et al., 2004).

Issues of power, reciprocity, integrity, and expectations are also important to consider in qualitative research. Researchers must be aware of their power, that of the community, what imbalances exist, and what will be done to share power effectively. They must consider reciprocity and what the community gains in return for sharing its time, resources, and knowledge. Researchers must reflect upon their responsibility to the community and consider how they will enter the community, work with it, leave it, and represent it. They must also ascertain the expectations of the community, being open to hearing the needs, concerns, and perspectives of the participants and communities. At the same time, they must openly, skillfully, and honestly communicate their own roles and expectations, as well as their personal and professional guidelines so that misunderstandings can be better averted. In considering how they will provide feedback to and about the community, researchers must finally consider issues of honesty, applicability, harm reduction, and confidentiality. Davis, Olson, Jason, Alvarez, and Ferrari (2006) provided an excellent guide for developing and maintaining community partnerships, and Glesne (2011) covered other specific ethical considerations for qualitative researchers.

Challenges and Benefits

As with any approach, qualitative methods cannot perfectly address every research question or purpose, and, given its disparate methods and theoretical approaches, some argue that qualitative research does not represent a unified field (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Thus, researchers should be attuned to nuances of the qualitative method they choose and to its strengths and shortcomings and be wary of using any qualitative method for purposes for which it is not designed. The selection of the method should always be secondary to the research question and the paradigm in which the question is conceptualized. Most notably, qualitative methods are inherently not suitable for statistical hypothesis testing nor controlled intervention studies, given that their focus is on discovery rather than rejection of a null hypothesis. Qualitative methods are used to capture what is taking place in natural settings, rather than in controlled experiments; as such, causal statements cannot be firmly made from them. Furthermore, qualitative methods are not meant to be fully generalizable to a larger population; rather, they are meant to be "transferable" to similar cases; it is left to research consumers to evaluate the utility of the findings for their own settings and situations (Crabtree & Miller, 1999).

Because the paradigms underlying qualitative methods recognize the unalterable subjectivity of reality, qualitative researchers are not bound to the restrictions that quantitative methods demand to ensure "objectivity" and internal validity. Instrumentation, data collection, and analysis are all designed and utilized in such a way as to recognize the unique contribution of the researcher and the in vivo participants and setting of the research endeavor. This can lead to critique by researchers more wedded to and comfortable with more traditional paradigms and quantitative methods. Qualitative methods and researchers have also been critiqued for their efforts to recognize and examine how the researcher's worldview and values are inherent in the research endeavor and play a role in the design, data collection, analysis, interpretation, and presentation of research findings, as well as for using their research to directly inform action. However, many community-based disciplines, such as community psychology, with their roots in action research and social justice, obviously have a natural affinity for change-oriented qualitative work (Banyard & Miller, 1998). The fact that qualitative methods differ from quantitative in their approach to these critical issues does not undermine the scientific standards by which qualitative methods are judged or the scientific nature of qualitative work and product.

The final challenge for qualitative methods that we will mention here is a challenge that stems not from the methods themselves but from a lack of rigorous training in qualitative methods across disciplines. Although quantitative methods are taught at all educational levels, from elementary school through postgraduate education, qualitative methods are often treated as something that someone can simply learn and do without formal instruction, mentoring, or critique (Brodsky et al., in press). Thus, there are many examples of poor qualitative studies in a number of disciplines, which diminish the reputation of this method and the state of the research. Readers are cautioned to fully investigate the specific qualitative method that they aim to use in their research and to gain training and supervision in that method, beyond the material offered in this text, prior to embarking on their study design and implementation.

Overall, however, we believe, and the qualitative chapters that follow also make clear, that there are countless benefits to be gained through qualitative methods. These include that community-based qualitative researchers can convey and instill respect for, and protect the integrity of, context, culture, and setting; protect and present the voices, narratives, and perceptual frames of participants and communities; recognize the disjunction between grand and local theory; act in authentic ways with research participants and settings; produce knowledge that is not beholden to dominant theories, instrumentation, or narrative; and ultimately discover new knowledge, which, as Kuhn (1996) eloquently stated, can spark a scientific revolution.

CASE STUDY

Background and Aims

This example of qualitative community-based research is focused on understanding resilience and community in a high-risk cross-cultural context. It not only illustrates several of the concepts presented in the overview herein but also exemplifies how qualitative methods are particularly well suited for work in settings whose contexts present

challenges to the use of standard methods and measures, theory, assumed cultural understandings, and processes. In such communities, there is an immediate assumption, or at least awareness of the possibility, that there exists a disconnect between the generalized understandings and approaches of Western social science and local theory. Although this example is extreme in many ways, it is important to note that it is possible that the challenges were just more obvious in this setting. It is likely that all settings contain vast amounts of unique understandings and processes that are too often glossed over by false assumption of familiarity and similarity.

This research was conducted with an underground women's humanitarian and political organization active in Afghanistan and Pakistan during and just after the 1996–2001 Taliban rule of Afghanistan. Their goal was to advocate for and promote women's rights and democratic society for men and women. The research goal was to explore resilience and resistance at the individual and organizational levels and the role of community in countering the risks Afghan women experienced across multiple decades of war and socio-religious-cultural repression. The ultimate action goal was to understand processes of "spontaneous resilience" (Brodsky & Faryal, 2006, p. 312) arising without outside intervention, which could improve internal and external policy and aid.

Method

The research was carried out over five 6- to 8-week-long trips to more than 10 locations, including refugee camps, orphanages, and boarding and day schools in Afghan and Pakistani cities and rural villages. Approximately 225 individual and group interviews with women, men, and children; participant observation; and archival and photographic review were conducted. The interviews utilized a semistructured, open-ended, and iterative framework to gain first-person narratives of participant experiences. These interviews were supplemented by formal and informal participant observations conducted during public and private activities ranging from group meals, meetings, and educational classes, to food distributions, protests, and community cultural gatherings. Records, publications, photographs, videos, and letters were reviewed to gain historical perspective on organizational activities.

The resulting 500-plus pages of interview and observation notes were coded using an open, recursive coding template built on extant research questions, researcher training, worldview, and reflexivity, as well as grounded theory. Findings and working hypotheses were discussed with research participants, key informants, and area experts. Multiple sets of analysis focused on various theoretical processes were conducted. Based on the research focus, some analyses were conducted by the primary researcher alone (e.g., Brodsky, 2003, 2014), some with area experts (e.g., Brodsky & Catteneo, 2013; Brodsky & Faryal, 2006), and some in a consensus-based research team approach (e.g., Brodsky, Welsh, Carrillo, Talwar, & Bulter, 2011).

Findings

Among the most noteworthy findings of this project were the in-depth, narrative description of the lives, experiences, and activities of this organization and its many Afghan members and supporters (Brodsky, 2003); articulation of a culturally sensitive, multilevel model of resilience (Brodsky et al., 2011); further conceptualization of the processes of multilevel psychological sense of community (Brodsky, 2009); exploration of the ways in which bridging diversity between inside and outside collaborators may be a false goal (Brodsky & Faryal, 2006); and description of the experiences of war, violence, and foreign intervention on women's lives (e.g., Brodsky, 2014). In addition to dissemination in scholarly and trade books and journal articles, the findings have been shared with participants and the public in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Europe, and the United States through newspaper and magazine interviews and articles; slideshows, talks, radio and TV interviews; and classroom lectures at the elementary through graduate school levels.

Discussion

Given the setting—a secretive, high-risk community organization situated in a cultural context that rarely produces or is represented in traditional social science research—a traditional quantitative approach would have been not only inappropriate but also practically impossible to carry out. Although trying to capture participants' experiences, beliefs, and values with established (mostly Western) psychology and social science measures might have resulted in "findings", their accuracy

and applicability to local meanings and concerns would have been questionable, at best. Qualitative methods fit the exploratory and descriptive nature of the research question, the underlying values and principles of the researcher, and of community psychology epistemology and ontology. In a setting where women's voices are routinely silenced, open-ended interviewing was crucial to a goal to privilege their narratives and understandings rather than replicate oppressions. Furthermore, because survival in this context demands great caution in what is said, the researcher's ability to elicit narratives and observe actions in multiple settings provided crucial data triangulation that was essential to research rigor. Careful researcher reflexivity was also necessary to produce knowledge responsibly in a setting dissimilar from her "usual" research settings. This is a situation in which the standard positivist and postpositivist attempts to control researcher bias would have buried important insights that came from explicitly facing significant differences in worldview and understanding (Brodsky & Faryal, 2006). Finally, qualitative methods were ideal to explore the multiple, local cultural contexts that impacted participant experiences and are not just the "ground" but also, in their own right, central "figures" in community-based research (e.g., Brodsky, 2009).

CONCLUSION

As this introductory chapter and those that follow illustrate, qualitative methods provide a rich and robust approach to enhancing community-based research and action. It is incumbent upon researchers to not only choose the methods that fit their research question and theoretical paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) but also to be well trained in the pros, cons, and appropriate application of the methods they choose. Appropriate ethical and cultural considerations are also key to producing research and action that provides the necessary protection and respect to participating and nonparticipating members of a community. With these caveats in mind, we believe that qualitative methods can contribute immensely to the creation of contextually based, culturally relevant understandings and knowledge, enhanced well-being, and positive community change that are the ultimate hallmarks and goals of community-based research and action.

AUTHOR NOTE

The case study presented in this chapter was previously utilized in "Kindred Spirits in Scientific Revolution: Qualitative Methods in Community Psychology," by A. E. Brodsky, T. Mannarini, S. L. Buckingham, and J. E. Scheibler, in press, in *APA Handbook of Community Psychology*.

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