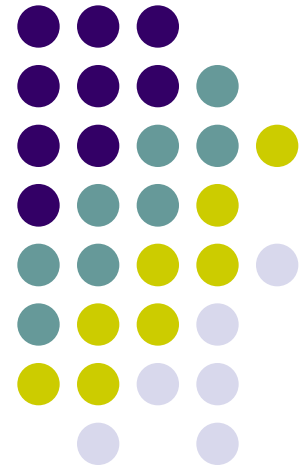


Developing a Research Question

January 11, 2012



Research Topic Vs. Question



- The starting point
- Focused on concepts or ideas
 - HIV & Housing
- Broad
- Neutral ideas
- Sometimes called 'research problem'
- Something that can be answered and/or measured
- Give us an initial sense of the nature of relationship between concepts

Characteristics of Good Research Questions



- Specific and defined parameters: population, location, time-frame, etc
- Operationalizable
- Broad enough to warrant study, narrow enough to be feasible
- The 'so-what' test
- Is it ethically sound?
- Will it lead to good sub-questions?

Good Research Questions Are Not...



- Questions that we already know the answer to and simply want to prove it to others
- Questions that can be answered with a simple yes or no, or with a single data point
- Ones that can be answered simply by reviewing the literature

Types of Research Questions



- Exploratory
- Descriptive
- Explanatory
- *Evaluation-based
- *Questions aimed at designing a new measurement instrument
- *Theoretical
- *Experimental

Exploratory Research Questions



- To investigate something that is not well understood
- E.g., how do high-school aged positive youth in Prince George experience the public school system

Descriptive Research Questions



- To describe a problem, population or phenomena
- E.g., what forms of discrimination do positive youth attending Prince George high schools face? Or, what are the socio-demographic characteristics of positive youth attending Prince George high schools?

Explanatory Research Questions



- To explain patterns related to a given phenomenon or issue
- E.g., why do positive youth attending public high schools in Prince George face higher levels of discrimination and bullying than positive youth attending private schools in the same city?

A Few More Points to Consider



- Research questions lead to logical sub-questions
- Methodology will influence your research question (and vice versa)
- Don't over-define your research question
- Be careful with moral statements and value judgments
- Coming up with a good research question is a deliberative process!



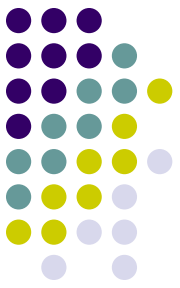
What Can ASOs bring to the development of a research question?

Step 1



- Understanding WHY your organization is interested in participating in research
- Such as:
 - To learn where to target prevention programs
 - Build a case in funding proposals
 - Evaluate change or impact of a situation or program

Three pieces to bring to the table



1. What do we know about this research area from our work or experience? What knowledge can we bring from the grassroots?
2. What don't we know? What do we need to know? How did you come to realize what information was needed?
3. Why do you want to know this? What is the ultimate application or use of the research?

One additional point...



- Be realistic! It's important to consider whether the research team will be able to access and or collect the information needed to answer the question!

Workshop Time!



DISCLOSURE

Question #1



What are some sub-topics that interest you?

Question #2



Where did your ideas come from?

Sample Research Questions



- “What can narratives of gay men in San Francisco tell us about disclosure practices and the calculation of risks and attitudes about HIV sero-conversion?”
- “What are the roles, barriers and outcomes of HIV sero-status disclosure among women in developing countries?”

Sheon & Crosby (2004) 'Ambivalent tales of HIV disclosure in San Francisco'



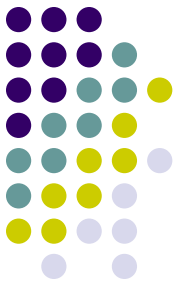
- 'How did the shift from community-centred norms to emphasis on individual risk calculus & decision-making influence these narratives?'
- 'How do these men experience specific incidents of unsafe sex?'
- 'Why do some men continue to practice unsafe sex after disclosing their status to serodiscordant partners?'
- "How have new treatments impacted gay men's risk calculus and HIV testing practices?'

Medley et al (2004) 'Rates, barriers and outcomes of HIV serostatus disclosure among women in developing countries'



- What are the rates of disclosure?
- What are the barriers to disclosure?
- What are the outcomes of disclosure and how do they compare to the barriers?
- What are the impacts disclosure on prevention of mother-to-child-transmission?
- What is the impact of disclosure on intimate partner violence?
- What is the impact of disclosure on mental health and social support?

Question # 3



It's your turn to come up with a good research question under the topic of disclosure.

- Bonus points for sub-questions!



Question # 4

- Does your question
 - have specified parameters?
 - pass the 'so-what' test?
- Is your question
 - operationalizable?
 - ethically sound?
 - sufficiently focused?
- Will it lead to good sub-questions?