Setting Yourself Up for Success: The Value of a Pre-Dissertation Pilot Study

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http://tinyurl.com/pilotstudies
Presentation Overview

1. What is a pilot study?
2. Myths and Realities
3. Why should researchers conduct pilot studies?
What is a pilot study?
Pilot Studies Defined

In his book on case study research, Robert K. Yin (2014) advocated for the value of conducting a pilot study, explaining that the approach is “formative, assisting you to develop relevant lines of questions—possibly even providing some conceptual clarification for the research design as well” (p. 96).
## Pilot Studies: Myths and Realities

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<tr>
<th>MYTH</th>
<th>REALITY</th>
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<tr>
<td>“Tons of work!”</td>
<td>Ok. It’s true. “Tons of work!” - but valuable, productive work</td>
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<td>IRB-approval will be time-consuming and difficult.</td>
<td>Allot a few weeks to complete ethics training, prepare, and “shepherd” an IRB application.</td>
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<td>I won’t be able to use these findings in my dissertation or another research project (i.e., presentation, article).</td>
<td>There are different perspectives among research methodologists about the role of a pilot study. Yin (2014) sees a pilot study as an exploratory first step for a future study. But others Merriam &amp; Tisdell (2016) and Glaser (1963) permit secondary analysis of pilot study data in a later, more refined study (so long as there is consistency in the data collection methods and the goals of the study).</td>
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<td>My ideas are too green to conduct research.</td>
<td>All research projects (even those conducted by seasoned researchers) gain shape and clarity throughout the research project (Maxwell, 2013).</td>
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<td>Who needs a pilot study? I’m going to save it all for the dissertation.</td>
<td>Don’t miss this chance to refine your interview protocols/surveys, ensure alignment between your research questions and method, and gain practical skills to facilitate your planned research.</td>
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Why should researchers conduct pilot studies?
Tangible & Practical Research Skills

Generate Findings for Scholarly Dissemination

Realign protocol with research questions

Inform the Methodology & Critical Framework

Build relationships with participants

Benefits of Pilot Studies
Advanced Qualitative Methods
Exploratory (no framework)
10-participants (in class)
IRB Approved
Presented initial findings at conferences

Intro. to Qual. Research/Research Apprenticeship
Retroactive IRB-approval (not recommended) - will amend for dissertation
13-participants
Presented initial findings at conference

Independent Research
Case Study
Acquire time sensitive data
4 interviews; 7 observations; 25 documents
IRB Approved (amend for diss!)
Preparing to conduct your own pilot study
Pilot Study: Prospective Timeline (15 wk/semester)

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*Some research methodologies allow you to conduct these stages at the same time.
What’s an idea you’d like to test out in a pilot study? (A new skill? A population you want to learn more about? A theoretical framework or methodology that excites you?)

Who is one person you can talk to continue developing this idea? (A friend, mentor, academic advisor?)

What is holding you back from conducting a pilot study?
References and Resources


Or… Contact us!

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