

RIG Symposium B5: Family/Community Based Participatory Research RIG: State of the Science in Research of Families and Communities: Innovative Approaches to Study Methods and Data Analyses

Secondary Triangulation with Quality Data for a Theory of Family Bereavement

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Aim: A community-based organization provides unique services called “tradition fulfillment” to maternally bereaved children and families with only anecdotal evidence and quality program data to support efficacy. These data can contribute to knowledge about the intervention and population served, however, it is important to compensate for the inconsistencies in data collection with cautious analysis. The aim was to adapt analytic strategies for multiple sources of secondary qualitative data to describe child and family perceptions of their tradition fulfillment in the context of bereavement.

Methods: This “secondary triangulation” resembled constant comparison methods from grounded theory with seven data sources including 156 family surveys collected over ten years from 64 families, interviews, letters, and media reports. Two child and family researchers methodically organized and coded the data back and forth until consistent themes emerged. Families and staff confirmed findings.

Results: There were more details in these data for describing the extremes of family distress and resilience and this may be a limitation of the data. The concepts of worldviews about mother’s death, parent-child communication, preparation for the death, talking about Mother and her death in the rhythm of daily life, comprise a theory of family bereavement. Resilient families demonstrated patterns of greater agreement and openness while distressed families indicated confusion, blocked communication, and poor preparation for the death.

Conclusions: This study provides tentative support for a theory of family bereavement. Further, it demonstrates novel methods of data analysis, a secondary triangulation, to enhance external validity of quality program data for descriptive research.