

FMSC 780 – Qualitative Methods in Family and Health Research

Department of Family Science
University of Maryland, College Park School of Public Health
Spring 2010
Thursday, 2:00-4:45 pm

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Course Description

This course provides students with an overview of theoretical perspectives and methodological tools for qualitative inquiry into family life and health research. Students will conduct and evaluate qualitative family research through the use of observation, interviews, and basic data analysis.

FMSC Competency

Design and implement a theory-based research project that addresses a significant family or family health issue and write an empirical manuscript for publication.

Course Objectives

Over the course of the semester, students will

- explain the range of assumptions, characteristics, and unique contributions of qualitative research in our understanding of families and health;
- construct qualitative research questions, appropriate research design, data analysis, and presentation;
- devise and tailor each element of a fieldwork project, which involves implementation of research designs, data collection, and management of personal responsibilities in the field and in relationships with participants in fieldwork;
- integrate emergent theoretical perspectives in recent qualitative research with established theoretical frameworks in family and health research;
- design “beginning projects” and research proposals using qualitative methods that will prove useful for emerging thesis/dissertation interests;
- critique course material with an emphasis on reflexivity, intersubjectivity, and balance of description, analysis, and interpretation in quality research.

Required Texts

Daly, K. (2007). *Qualitative methods for family studies and human development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. ISBN: 978-104129-1403-1

Reich, J. (2005). *Fixing families: Parents, power, and the child welfare system*. New York: Routledge. ISBN: 0415947278

Booth, W., Colomb, G., & Williams, J. (2003). *The craft of research*. 2nd edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (optional)

Lewins, A., & Silver, C. (2007). *Using software in qualitative research: A step-by-step guide*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. (optional)

Additional course readings will be made available to students, as will reports on the web.

Course Structure, Assignments, and Evaluation

Evaluation

Discussion Leader	20% of final grade
Weekly research development	50% of final grade
Final project proposal	30% of final grade

Course timeline

3-4 weeks	preparation for field work	Jan 28-Feb 11
4-6 weeks	field work & data collection	Feb 18-Apr 1
3 weeks	data analyses	Apr 8-Apr 22
2 weeks	write draft proposal	Apr 22-May 6
1 week	write final proposal	May 6-May 13

Overview

This course is designed to take you through each stage of field work, both interview-based and ethnography-based, from design to conducting fieldwork and interviews, to coding and analyzing data. Your end result will be a written pilot study, complete with preliminary findings and suggested avenues for future research. You should come to class prepared to work on an ongoing field-based or interview-based project. Come to class prepared to discuss ideas for a research question that will require participant observation or indepth interviewing as its primary mode of inquiry.

Field work

Students will establish a site placement for participant observation and interviews, based on their research interests. Fieldwork will be conducted from Weeks 5-10. Students are expected to spend at least 3-5 hours per week in their site placement, engaged in qualitative inquiry.

Class structure

During the first half of each class, we will discuss readings and topics in qualitative research. During the second half of each class, we will break into smaller groups to work on your projects as they evolve. Our course readings, then, will include epistemological introductions to specific research paradigms, “nuts and bolts” pieces that stress technique and conduct, and empirical examples.

Discussion

Each week, the first half of class will consist of discussion of assigned readings. One or two students will lead discussion of readings each week. One week prior to their discussion, students will distribute a hard copy of reading questions as guidelines to class participants. Handouts and pedagogical tools are encouraged.

Workshop

During the second half of class each week, students will discuss and “workshop” aspects of their ongoing research projects. We will split into two or four small groups to address specific details of site placements and field work assignments. In particular, each student will have 2 informal presentations of their findings/experiences in the sites. These presentations will involve a short 10-15 minute summary of progress, followed by questions and feedback from classmates. Students will also download sample versions of Atlas ti software for use in management, coding, and analyses of their data.

It is important in any research, but especially in qualitative research, for you to have people to talk to about your work. You will learn things and discover insights about your emerging research topic as you talk about it aloud. Your fellow graduate students will ask you valuable questions as well. This feedback is critical in the research process. Since you're not testing hypotheses, it is permissible to make adjustments in your questions and focus as the research proceeds. You want to keep a core set of questions, as you will need to probe issues in your study. Talking and intellectual exchange is helpful in this process.

Weekly research development

Additional assignments for students' research projects will also be required. Assignments build on each other throughout the semester, so late submission of assignments will impact the overall evaluation for the course. You will submit assignments to the course Blackboard site. The assignments include:

Write out your topic. Draft a research question (1-2 paragraphs). Why is this important theoretically?

Field notes from group observation. Use template for field notes, including memos.

Field notes from paired observation. Use template for field notes, including memos.

IRB packet

Write a memo about your research question. Criticize the literature. 2-3 pages.

Field notes from observation at field placement. Develop 1st interview protocol.

Field notes from observation at field placement.

Field notes from interview at field placement. Develop 2nd interview protocol.

Write a memo discussing competing explanations for your research question. Provide examples in your memo. Highlight issues that you need to look more closely at in the field. Emphasize emerging themes. Which new questions are developing? 3-4 pages.

Field notes from interview at field placement.

Write 2 page reflective memo on what kind of fieldworker you are. What are your strengths and weaknesses as a researcher?

Develop open codes, initial coding system, and 1 page memo on emerging concepts; Atlas ti.

Develop axial and selective codes, refine coding system, and 1 page memo "writing around a quote"; Atlas ti

Final Research Proposal

Students will write a 20 page research proposal based on their "pilot fieldwork" (guidelines to be handed out in class). The proposal will include literature citations. Proposals are due on May 13, during finals week.

Course Calendar

Jan 28 *To discover to the world something which deeply concerns it, and of which it was previously ignorant; to prove to it that it had been mistaken on some vital point of temporal or spiritual interest: is as important a service as a human being can render to his fellow creatures. J.S. Mill*

Discussion: Introduction

- Gilgun, J. (1999). Methodological pluralism and qualitative family research. In M. Sussman, S. Steinmetz, & G. Peterson (Eds.), *Handbook of marriage and the family* (2nd ed.)(pp. 219-261).
- Ragin, C. (1994). The goals of social research. In *Constructing social research: The unity and diversity of method*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press. Pp. 31-53
- Ragin, C. (1994). Using qualitative methods to study commonalities. In *Constructing social research: The unity and diversity of method*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press. Pp. 81-103
- Tilly, C. (2006). *Why?* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University press. Why give reasons?, pp 1-31

Workshop

Discussion

Assignments

Find site placement

Feb 4 *You have been told to go grubbing in the library, thereby accumulating a mass of notes and a liberal coating of grime. You have been told to choose problems wherever you can find musty stacks of routines records based on trivial schedules prepared by tired bureaucrats and filled out by reluctant applicants for aid or fussy do-gooders or indifferent clerks. This is called "getting your hands dirty in real research." Those who thus counsel you are wise and honorable; the reasons they offer are of great value. But one thing is more needful: first hand observation. Go and sit in the lounges of the luxury hotels and on the doorsteps of the flophouses; sit on the Gold Coast settees and on the slum shakedowns; sit in Orchestra Hall and in the Star and in the Garter Burlesk. In short, gentlemen, go get the seats of your pants dirty in REAL research. Robert E. Park*

Discussion: Science, Art, and Learning to See

Daly, Chapter 1

- Ambert, A., Adler, P., Adler, P., & Detzner, D. (1995). Understanding and evaluating qualitative research. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 57 (4), 879-893.
- Emerson, R. (1983). Ethnography and understanding members' worlds: Introduction. In *Contemporary field research: A Collection of readings*. Prospect heights, IL: Waveland Press.
- Matthews, S. (2005). Crafting qualitative research articles for marriage and families. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 67, 799-808.
- Safer, S. (1999). Qualitative methods: What are they and why use them? *Health Services Research*, 34, 1101-1118.

Workshop: Data Collection & Participant Observation

Class field work project

Assignments

First draft of topic and research question
Find site placement

Feb 11 *To particularize something is the lone distinction of merit. For art and science cannot exist, but in minutely organized particulars. William Blake*
Stare. It is the way to educate your eye, and more. Stare. Pry, listen, eavesdrop. Die knowing something. You are not here long. Walker Evans

Discussion: Epistemology

Daly, Chapter 2

*Broughton, C. (2003). Reforming poor women: The cultural politics and practices of welfare reform. *Qualitative Sociology* 26 (1), 35-51.

Emerson, R., Fretz, R., & Shaw, L. (1997). In the field: Participating, observing, and jotting notes. In *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes* (pp. 17-38). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Emerson, R., Fretz, R., & Shaw, L. (1997). Writing up fieldnotes 1: From field to desk. In *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes* (pp. 39-65). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Workshop: Data Collection & Field Notes

Assignments

Field notes 1 (group project)

Find site placement

Feb 18 *My immediate object in doing fieldwork at St. Elizabeth's was to try to learn about the social world of the hospital inmate, as this world was subjectively experienced by him...a good way to learn about any of these worlds is to submit oneself in the company of the members to the daily round of petty contingencies to which they are subject. Erving Goffman*

Discussion: Paths to Inquiry

Daly, Chapter 3

Booth, W., Colomb, G., & Williams, J. (2003). Asking questions, finding answers. In *The craft of research*. (2nd edition) (pp. 29-84). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Creswell, J. (1999). Research questions and hypotheses. In *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Pp. 105-114

May, R., & Pattillo-McCoy, M. (2000). Do you see what I see? Examining a collaborative ethnography. *Qualitative Inquiry* 6 (1), 65-87.

*Roy, K. (2004). Three-block fathers: Spatial perceptions and kin-work in low-income neighborhoods. *Social Problems*, 51, 528-548.

Workshop: Data Collection & Participant Observation

Assignments

Field notes 2 (paired observation)

IRB packet

Feb 25 *Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance that he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law, but an interpretive one in search of meaning. Clifford Geertz*

Discussion: Ontology

Daly, Chapter 4

Baca Zinn, M. (1979). Field research in minority communities: Ethical, methodological, and political observations by an insider. *Social Problems, 27*, 209-219.

*Dodson, L., & Schmalzbauer, L. (2005). Poor mothers and habits of hiding: Participatory methods in poverty research. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 67*, 949-959.

Lofland, J., & Lofland, L. (1984). Getting along. In *Analyzing social settings: A guide to qualitative observation and analysis* (pp. 30-45). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing.

Workshop: Data Collection & Field Relations

Assignments

Memo on research question and literature review

Mar 4 *"So – do you have any pets?" Novice researcher*

Discussion: Range of Methodologies

Daly, Chapter 5

Biklen, S. (2004). Trouble on memory lane: Adults and self-retrospection in researching youth. *Qualitative Inquiry, 10*, 715-730.

*Fravel, D., & Boss, P. (1992). An in-depth interview with the parents of missing children. In J. Gilgun, K. Daly, & G. Handel, *Qualitative methods in family research* (pp.126-145). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Morgan, D. (2001). Focus group interviewing. In J. Gubrium & J. Holstein (Eds.), *Handbook of interview research: Context and method* (pp. 141-159). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Workshop: Data Collection & Interviews

Assignments

Field Notes 3 (Site observation 1)

Interview protocol 1

Mar 11 *The clearest way to see through a culture is to attend to its tools for conversation. Neil Postman*

Discussion: Design

Daly, Chapter 7

Riessman, C. (2002). Narrative analysis. In A. Huberman and M. Miles, (Eds.), *The qualitative researcher's companion*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Stanley, C., & Slattery, P. (2003). Who reveals what to whom? Critical reflections on conducting qualitative inquiry as an interdisciplinary, biracial, male/female research team. *Qualitative Inquiry* 9 (5), 705-728.

*Empirical free choice A

Workshop: Data Collection & Interviews

Assignments

Field Notes 4 (Site observation 2)

Mar 25 *If you have to make notes on how a thing has struck you, it probably hasn't struck you. Henry James*

Discussion: Design

Reich, J. (2005). *Fixing families*. First part.

Burton, L. (2004). Welfare, children and families: A Three City Study. In National Science Foundation. *Workshop on scientific foundations of qualitative research*.

Charmaz, K. (2006). Memo-writing & Reconstructing theory in grounded theory studies. In *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis* (pp 72-95, 123-150). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. ,

Ragin, C. (1999). The distinctiveness of case-oriented research. *Health Services Research*, 34, 1137-1152.

Workshop: Design

Assignments

Field notes 5 (Site interview 1)

Longitudinal interview protocol

Apr 1 *Field workers do not observe subjects behaving; they interpret human actions. To recognize that field work consists of inferring the meaning of human activity is to acknowledge the role that the observers play in their own analyses. Karp and Kendall*

Discussion: Analyses

Daly, Chapter 9

Reich, J. (2005). *Fixing families*. Second part.

Lareau, A. (1996). Common problems in field work: A personal essay. In A. Lareau & J. Schultz (Eds.), *Journeys through ethnography: Realistic accounts of field work*. New York: Westview Press.

Ryan, G., & Bernard, H. (2003). Techniques to identify themes. *Field Methods*, 1, 85-109,

Workshop: Analyses

Lewins, A., & Silver, C. (2007). Practical tasks, Chapter 3. In *Using software in qualitative research: A step-by-step guide*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Assignments

Memo on competing explanations and emerging themes

Apr 8 *Life does not tell stories. Life is chaotic, fluid, random; it leaves myriads of ends untied, untidily. Writers can extract a story from life only by strict, close selection, and this must mean falsification. Telling stories is really telling lies. B.S. Johnson*

Discussion: Reflexivity

Daly, Chapter 8

Becker, H. (1967). Which side are we on? *Social Problems*, 14, 239-247.

Becker, H. (1998). Concepts. In *Tricks of the trade: How to think about your research while you're doing it*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Ryan, G., & Bernard, R. (2003). Techniques to identify themes. *Field Methods*, 15, 85-109.

Workshop: Analyses

Lewins, A., & Silver, C. (2007). Exploration and text-level work, Chapter 4. In *Using software in qualitative research: A step-by-step guide*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Assignments

Field notes 6 (interview 2)

Apr 15 *The trick is not to get yourself into some inner correspondence of spirit with your informants. Preferring, like the rest of us, to keep their souls their own, they are not going to be altogether keen about such an effort anyhow. The trick is to figure out what the devil they think they are up to.* Clifford Geertz

Discussion: Interpretation

- Denzin, N. (2002). The interpretive process. In A. Huberman and M. Miles, (Eds.), *The qualitative researcher's companion*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- LaRossa, R. (2005). Grounded theory methods and qualitative family research. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 67, 837-857.
- Van den Hoonaard, W. (1997). Talking distance from the data and Constructing sensitizing concepts. In *Working with sensitizing concepts: Analytical field research*. Qualitative Research Methods Series 41. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Wolcott, H. (1994). Description, analysis, and interpretation in qualitative inquiry. In *Transforming qualitative data: Description, analysis, and interpretation* (pp. 9-54). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Workshop: Analyses

- Lewins, A., & Silver, C. (2007). Coding tasks in software, Chapter 7 and Basic retrieval of coded data, Chapter 8. In *Using software in qualitative research: A step-by-step guide*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Assignments

Memo on reflexivity and strengths/weaknesses as field worker

Apr 22 *The Lifes, Loves, and Tragedies that fieldwork informants share with a researcher are ultimately data – grist for the ethnographic mill, a mill that has a truly grinding power.* Judith Stacey

Discussion: Data Quality

- * Burton, L., Cherlin, A., Winn, D., Estacion, A., Holder-Taylor, C. (2009). The role of trust in low-income mothers' intimate unions. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 71, 1107-1124.
- Emerson, R., Fretz, R., & Shaw, L. (1997). Coding and memoing. In *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes* (pp. 142-168). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Krefting, L. (1999). Rigor in qualitative research: The assessment of trustworthiness. In A. Miliniki, *Cases in qualitative research: Research reports for discussion and evaluation* (pp. 173-181). Los Angeles: Puscale Publications.
- Maxwell, J. (2002). Understanding and validity in qualitative research. In A. Huberman & M. Miles (Eds.), *The qualitative researcher's companion*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Workshop: Analyses

- Lewins, A., & Silver, C. (2007). Managing processes and interpretations by writing, Chapter 9. In *Using software in qualitative research: A step-by-step guide*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Assignments

Open coding and concepts

Apr 29 *Statistics are people with the tears wiped off.* Bradford Hill

Discussion: Ethics

Daly, Chapter 10

Emerson, R. (1983). Ethical and political issues in field research: Introduction. In *Contemporary field research: A Collection of readings*. Prospect heights, IL: Waveland Press.

Haggerty, K. (2004). Ethics creep: Governing social science research in the name of ethics. *Qualitative Sociology* 27 (4), 391-414.

*Empirical free choice B

Workshop: Analyses

Lewins, A., & Silver, C. (2007). Mapping ideas and linking concepts, Chapter 10. In *Using software in qualitative research: A step-by-step guide*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Assignments

Axial coding, selective coding and memo “writing around quote”

May 6 *Rather than asking, “what is a case?”, ask, “what is this a case of?”* Howard Becker

Discussion: Mixing methods

Creswell, J. (1999). A framework for design & Mixed methods procedures. In *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Greene, J., Caracelli, V., & Graham, V. (1989). Toward a conceptual framework for mixed method evaluation designs. *Education Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 3, 255-274.

Heath, C., & Heath, D. (2007). *Made to stick: Why some ideas survive and others die*. New York: Random House. (exerpts).

Taylor, S., & Bogdan, R. (1998). Writing and publishing qualitative studies. In *Introduction to qualitative research methods: A guidebook and resource* (3rd ed.)(pp. 167-182). New York: Wiley and Sons.

*Empirical free choice C

Workshop: Write up

Assignments

Work on final proposal

May 13 *It is a vice of the scientific method when applied to human affairs that it fosters hemming and hawing and a scrupulousness that easily degenerates into obscurity and meaninglessness.* Eric Hoffner

Final proposals due

Empirical choice examples

- *Daly, K. (2001). Deconstructing family time: From ideology to lived experience. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 63, 283-294.
- *Holbrook, T. (1996). Document analysis: The contrast between official case records and the journal of a woman on welfare. In M. Sussman & J. Gilgun (Eds.), *The methods and methodologies of qualitative family research* (pp. 41-56). New York: Haworth Press.
- *Trujillo, N. (2004). The family historian and When Naunty became a Mexican. From *In search of Naunty's grave: Age, class, gender, and ethnicity in an American family*. New York: Alta Mira.
- *Goffman, A. (2009). On the run: Wanted men in a Philadelphia ghetto. *American Sociological Review*, 74, 339-357.
- *Nelson, M. (2006). Single mothers "do" parenting. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 68, 781-795.
- *Bock, J. (2000). Doing the right thing? Single mothers by choice and the struggle for legitimacy. *Gender and Society* 14 (1), 62-86.
- *Bright, M. (1992). Making place: The first birth in an intergenerational family context. *Qualitative Health Research*, 2, 75-98.
- *Roe, K., Minkler, M., & Barnwell, R. (1994). The assumption of caregiving: Grandmothers raising the children of the crack cocaine epidemic. *Qualitative Health Research*, 4, 281-303.