

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

Course Number:	SW 313	Instructor:	Diana DiNitto
Unique Number:	64620	Office Number:	SSW 3.130B
Semester:	Spring 2008	Office Phone:	512-471-9227
		Email:	ddinitto@mail.utexas.edu
Meeting Time/Place:	T/TH, 11:00 a.m.- 12:30 p.m. SSW 2.112	Office Hours:	T 10:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m., TH 12:30 p.m.-2:30 p.m., and by appointment
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TA:	Michael Balliro	Phone:	512-897-4840
Office Number:	SSW 3.130B	Email:	mballiro@earthlink.net
Office Hours:	TH 8:00 a.m. -11:00 a.m., and by appointment		

SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH METHODS

Course Description

This is one of two research courses in the BSW curriculum. Usually taken in the student's sophomore year, the course introduces students to the use of the scientific method in social work, research ethics and the social work values base, the research process, problem formulation and conceptualization, measurement, research designs and inference, single subject designs and practice evaluation, sampling, alternative data gathering techniques and analyses, and uses of research in social work. SW 313 is a prerequisite to entry into the social work major.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of the course, the student should be able to:

1. Describe the basic steps of scientific inquiry and how they parallel the basic steps of social work practice;
2. Demonstrate an understanding of basic social work research skills pertinent to the profession of social work: a) formulation of research problems, b) formulation of research questions and hypotheses, c) use of various research methods (e.g., survey research, single subject design, experimental and quasi-experimental designs, field research, and use of secondary data), d) collection and analysis of research data, and e) interpretation of research results;
3. Critically analyze research findings and be effective consumers of, and contributors to, social work research;
4. Illustrate how gender bias or insensitivity to diverse populations can impede effective research and inference;
5. Identify research methods, sampling designs, and measurement techniques which are sensitive to diverse groups, including women, people of color, persons with disabilities, and gays and lesbians;
6. Discuss the usefulness of social science theory and research methods in social work practice;
7. Explain ethical issues in conducting and using research and the role of the social work values base in research and evaluation.

Teaching Methods

The primary means of instruction are interactive lectures (i.e., students are encouraged to ask questions and make comments), in-class exercises, class discussions, guest speakers who will discuss their research, tests, and experiential assignments.

Required Text and Additional Required Readings

The text for this course is Rubin, A., & Babbie, E. R. (2008). *Research methods for social work (6th ed.)*. Belmont, CA: Thomson Brooks/Cole.

Additional readings are listed on the course schedule below and can be accessed on the UT Library Web site unless otherwise indicated.

Student Evaluation

Your grade for the course will be based on four tests and two additional assignments.

Tests

Tests 1, 2, and 3 will each count as 15% of the final grade, and test 4 will count as 20%. The tests will contain a combination of some or all of the following types of questions: matching; true/false; and multiple choice. Test 1 is scheduled for Tuesday, February 12; Test 2 for Thursday, March 6; Test 3 for Tuesday, April 8; and Test 4 will be given at the scheduled final exam time on Saturday, May 10, from 2 to 5 pm.

Assignment 1

This assignment will acquaint you with the process of attending academic presentations and allows you to expand your knowledge beyond what you learn in class. Social workers engage in life-long learning. Attending presentations as a student sets the stage for attending during your professional career so that you can stay abreast of the latest developments in the field.

To complete this assignment, attend an on-campus **research** lecture, symposium, colloquium, or “brown bag” talk offered by the School of Social Work, Women’s Studies, African American Studies, Population Research Center, LBJ School of Public Affairs, psychology department, sociology department, or other department on campus. The lecture can be about any subject as long as the speaker presents original, empirical research he or she conducted and an academic department sponsors the presentation. The instructor and teaching assistant will help you identify presentations to attend. Write a 750-word, double-spaced, and typewritten description and analysis of the presentation. Include the subject matter, research questions or hypotheses, research methods, and conclusions the speakers presented, your critique of the work, and other information, such as issues the audience raised. **Be sure to relate your discussion to the material that has been covered in class by directly referring to research concepts and citing the text and referring to lectures.** For example, if you are discussing the presenter’s hypothesis, you should consider discussing whether it meets the criteria for a good hypothesis. Or, if you are discussing sampling, identify the type of sampling used, the sample’s representativeness, and other important qualities of the sample. You will not be able to cover everything about the presentation in 750 words, so after summarizing the basic idea of the presenter’s research, focus on a few points. Your paper will be graded on the quality of writing (organization, clarity, grammar) and the quality of the ideas (expression of thought, depth of thought, analytic perspective) presented. When you submit your paper, include a copy of any handouts provided during the lecture. This paper is worth 10% of the final course grade. It is **due**

on Thursday, March 20. You are strongly encouraged to in a draft of your paper at least two weeks in advance (**no later than March 6**) so you can receive feedback before you submit the final copy. Getting started early on this assignment is generally a good idea. **To receive a grade for this assignment, you must also complete all 3 sections of the TILT tutorial.** TILT is sponsored by the UT Digital Library and is designed “to prepare you to explore and research in the online world.” It will help you become familiar with the UT library system and how to use it, understand the seriousness of plagiarism and how to avoid it, learn how to choose reliable and appropriate sources for scholarly work, and learn how to use appropriate APA or other citation styles. The TILT Web site is: <http://tilt.lib.utsystem.edu/>. Once you have completed TILT and received a score of 100% on all 3 online quizzes, e-mail our TA your quiz results by typing his e-mail address (mballiro@earthlink.net) when prompted after getting the quiz results.

Assignment 2

The profession of social work needs more members equipped to conduct research and utilize research in their practice. The purpose of assignment 2 is to your increase your involvement in social work research by giving you an opportunity to participate in a research project, design a research study, or apply research to a practice issue. There are three options for completing assignment 2. In addition, everyone must take the human subjects protection course at <http://www.utexas.edu/research/rsc/training/index.php>. **If you are doing Option 1, you must submit a copy of your training completion certificate to the course instructor AND principal investigator or project director before beginning work on the project. If you select option 2 or 3, submit the certificate with your paper.** You are strongly encouraged to submit a draft of your paper before submitting the final copy.

Option One: Research Participation

Work on a UT-sponsored research project for at least 20 hours. Faculty and staff at the School of Social Work are conducting many research projects. The Center for Social Work Research is one place that offers opportunities for you to become involved in research. The instructor and teaching assistant will help you identify suitable opportunities. This assignment should be confined to tasks that can be done on campus and that **would not jeopardize your safety.** Examples of appropriate tasks are working with a team to code qualitative data, assisting with analysis of quantitative or qualitative data, helping to design a survey instrument, or conducting telephone surveys at a supervised phone bank. Simple data entry alone is not sufficient for this assignment. **If you choose this option, turn in a sign-up sheet by Tuesday, February 5, and get the instructor’s approval before proceeding.** Familiarize yourself with the project by reading available grant proposals, human subjects review material, and discussing the study with the principal investigator or project director and other staff before you engage in project tasks. After completing participation, write a 1,500-word paper describing the project and your work; devote at least 500 words to providing insights (e.g., what you learned, what you felt was most relevant about your research experience). **Be sure to relate the description of your work to the research concepts and principles such as hypothesis testing, sampling, ethical issues, etc., discussed during the semester by citing the text or referring to lectures.** The paper will be graded on the quality of writing (organization, clarity, grammar) and the quality of the ideas (expression of thought, depth of thought, analytic perspective) presented. **The paper is due on Thursday, April 24.** You may submit a draft at least two weeks earlier (**no later than April 10**) if you wish to obtain feedback before submitting the final copy. **When you turn in your paper, you must include a form provided by the course instructor that has been signed by the research project’s principal investigator, project director, or other responsible staff**

member, indicating that you have satisfactorily completed the required hours. A passing grade cannot be assigned without this verification.

Option 2: Research Design (Undergraduate Research Fellowship)

Selecting this option will allow you to design a research study, and if your proposal is selected by a university committee, you will be able obtain up to \$1,000 to carry it out. Briefly:

The Undergraduate Research Fellowship program provides support for specific scholarly research projects conducted by full-time UT undergraduate students enrolled in any department. These fellowships are intended to cover costs associated with academic research projects proposed and written by student applicants and undertaken with the supervision of a university tenured or tenure-track faculty member, lecturer, senior lecturer or full-time research scientist/engineer.

Some restrictions apply. See current application for more information.

To determine if you wish to choose this option and qualify to submit, go to the following Web page: <http://www.utexas.edu/research/vp/awards/>, scroll down, and click on “Undergraduate Research Fellowships.” The required text is no more than 2 pages. If you select this option, you must submit the proposal, and, if selected, carry it out. **The proposal is due to the University on Tuesday, February 4, 2008**, giving you only a short time to develop it this semester. If you submit by this due date **and** receive funding, 10 additional points will be added to your fourth test grade. You can also choose this assignment and complete it by **Thursday, April 24**, if you agree to submit it in the fall competition (assuming there will be a fall competition) and complete the research if selected. You may submit a draft two weeks earlier (**no later than April 10**) if you wish to obtain feedback before submitting the final copy to the course instructor. If you are awarded the funding in the fall term, I will take you to lunch at the UT Club to celebrate. The instructor will make every effort to help you identify a faculty member willing to sponsor your research project.

Option Three: Evidence-based Practice Paper

To complete this assignment, read at least four articles from scholarly journals and/or scholarly research reports that report on **original research studies** on a micro, mezzo, or macro practice approach, technique, intervention, or method social workers may use in their work. The works you select can be evaluations or clinical trials using any of the research methods (quantitative and/or qualitative) addressed in this course. See the instructor or TA if you need assistance with conducting a literature review that will help you identify appropriate articles or reports. Based on your study of these works, write a 1,500-word, double-spaced, and typewritten paper. The first 500 to 750 words can be devoted to describing the studies. The remaining 750 to 1,000 words should compare and contrast the results of the studies. Pay close attention to aspects of research design such as internal and external validity. Your paper should end with a conclusion about the evidence or lack of evidence to support the use of the approach, technique, etc. Comment not only on evidence about the general effectiveness (or lack of effectiveness) of the approach but on issues such as whether the approach may be more effective for some individuals or groups than others. As in Assignment 1, make sure you refer to research concepts studied in class. **The paper is due on Thursday, April 24.** It will be graded using the same criteria as for Assignment 1. You may submit a draft at least two weeks earlier (**no later than April 10**) if you wish to obtain feedback before submitting the final copy.

Grading

Each test, the two additional assignments, and the final

The final grade will be calculated as follows:

grade will be based on the following scale:

90–100% = A	Test 1=	15%
80–89% = B	Test 2=	15%
70–79% = C	Test 3=	15%
60–69% = D	Test 4=	20%
59% AND BELOW = F	Assignment 1	10%
	<u>Assignment 2</u>	<u>25%</u>
	TOTAL=	100%

In-Class Exercises

Five in-class exercises will be used to give students an opportunity to learn experientially how to design social work research. Students will work in small groups and simulate participation on a research team. The exercises are arranged according to the stages of research design. Each student is expected to contribute to these group exercises. Groups will report on their exercises to the class. A different group member will report each time. **Students who do not participate in these exercises and report for their group will lose one letter grade at the end of the course.** At the end of each group session, give the TA a list of all members who participated and indicate the name of the student who reported for your group. The five exercises are as follows:

Exercise 1: Groups brainstorm possible research questions. The objective of this exercise is to settle on a particular research question and a hypothesis (if applicable). Groups should discuss whether their questions and hypotheses express the relationship between at least two variables, have nature and direction, and address an important social science issue.

Exercise 2: Groups identify concepts included in their questions and hypotheses and develop both conceptual and operational definitions of those concepts.

Exercise 3: Groups will select the type of research design to be used in their hypothetical studies (e.g., experimental, quasi-experimental, survey, qualitative, etc.) and explicate their design. They will also discuss the threats to internal validity posed by their design and attempt to minimize them.

Exercise 4: Groups will determine the type of sampling method and a sampling strategy to be used in their studies and their rationale for this selection. They will also consider generalizability (external validity) of study results.

Exercise 5: Groups will review and discuss the ethical issues or dilemmas raised as they went through the process of designing their study and any additional ethical issues that come to mind.

Class Policies

1. Students are expected to attend all classes, be prepared for each session by reading the materials assigned for that date **before** coming to class, and participate in class discussions, exercises, etc. Learning is also facilitated by respectful communications among all parties.
2. While scholastic dishonesty is not anticipated, students should be familiar with The University of Texas at Austin's policies on this subject found at the Dean of Students' Web site

(<http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/scholdis.php>) and in *General Information, 2007-2008* (<http://registrar.utexas.edu/catalogs/gi07-08/app/appc03.html>). There will be two versions of each test. All non-test materials must be placed under desks during exams. When writing papers, direct quotes of 5 to 40 words must be enclosed in quotation marks and the work cited. Longer direct quotes must be indented and the work cited. Paraphrased work should be cited appropriately. If you do not know how to cite work correctly, now is the time to learn.

Scholastic dishonesty (cheating, plagiarism) in this class will result in a grade of F for the course with reporting to the Undergraduate Program Director, Dean of the School of Social Work, and the Dean of Students.

3. Only in the case of illness or other **unforeseen** emergencies will make-up tests be given. Please notify the instructor of the situation as soon as it is reasonably possible. The format of makeup tests is at the discretion of the instructor and may be limited to essay questions.
4. Barring emergencies, assignments are to be submitted on time. Five points per day (including weekends) will be deducted from the grade for each day the assignment is late, starting with assignments not turned in by the start of class at 11:00 a.m.
5. Only in emergency situations will a grade of X (incomplete) be assigned for the course. If an incomplete grade should be assigned, there will be a written agreement with the instructor about when and how the work will be completed.
6. The referencing style of the American Psychological Association (APA) is to be used for all written assignments. If you are not familiar with this style, a handout is available at the Student Services desk.
7. The Blackboard site available for this class will be used for e-mail, announcements, and other functions. Class e-mail rosters are a component of these sites. Students who do not want their names included in these electronic rosters must restrict their directory information in the Office of the Registrar, Main Building, Room 1. For information on restricting directory information see: <http://www.utexas.edu/student/registrar/catalogs/gi00-01/app/appc09.html>.
8. Any student with a documented disability (physical or cognitive) who requires academic accommodations should contact the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Office of the Dean of Students at 471-6259 (voice) or 471-4641 (TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing) as soon as possible to request an official letter outlining authorized accommodations.
6. As part of professional social work education, students may have assignments that involve working in agency settings and/or the community. As such, these assignments may present some risks. Sound choices and caution may lower risks inherent to the profession. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of and adhere to policies and practices related to agency and/or community safety. Students should also notify instructors regarding any safety concerns.

Course and Instructor Evaluation


Students will have opportunities to evaluate the instructor at mid-term and at the end of the semester. You do not have to complete these evaluations, but they are helpful to the instructor. I

am also available during office hours and at other mutually agreeable times to discuss the course with you.

I look forward to a productive term.

Course Schedule

Date	Description	Text/Readings
T, Jan. 15	INTRODUCTIONS WHAT IS SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH AND HOW SCIENTIFIC IS IT? EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE: MYTH OR NECESSITY?	Syllabus
TH, Jan. 17	REVIEW SYLLABUS	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 1, Why study research, pp. 1-22; Chap. 2, Evidence-based practice, pp. 22-38
T, Jan. 22	THE STRUCTURE OF RESEARCH REPORTS RESEARCH IN THE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK (GUEST SPEAKERS)	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 23, Writing research proposals and reports, pp. 545-569 Bent-Goodley, T. B., & Fowler, D. N. (2006). Spiritual and religious abuse: Expanding what is known about domestic violence. <i>Affilia: Journal of Women and Social Work</i> , 21(3), 282-295.
TH, Jan. 24	IS THERE ANYTHING MORE PRACTICAL THAN A GOOD THEORY? IT ALWAYS STARTS WITH A PROBLEM: RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 3, Philosophy and theory in science and research, pp. 39-66; Chap. 6, Problem formulation, pp. 123-149
T, Jan. 29	IN-CLASS EXERCISE ON RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 6, Problem formulation (con't), Appendix A, Using the library, pp. 571-576
TH, Jan. 31	IN-CLASS EXERCISE ON RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES (con't) GETTING SPECIFIC: CONCEPTS, CONSTRUCTS, AND OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 7, Conceptualization and operationalization, pp. 150-172 Floyd, R. L., Sobell, M., Velasquez, M. M. et al. (2007). Preventing alcohol-exposed pregnancies: A randomized controlled trial. <i>American Journal of Preventive Medicine</i> , 32(1), 1-10. Review the Bent-Goodley & Fowler article assigned for Jan. 24.
T, Feb. 5	IN-CLASS EXERCISE ON DEFINING CONCEPTS ASSIGNMENT 2, OPTION 1, RESEARCH PROJECT SIGN- UP SHEET DUE	Rubin and Babbie, Chap. 7, Conceptualization and operationalization (con't)
TH, Feb. 7	REVIEW FOR TEST 1	
T, Feb. 12	TEST 1!	

TH, Feb. 14	REVIEW TEST 1 SELECTING A GOOD YARDSTICK: THE VALIDITY OF MEASURES	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 8, Measurement, pp. 173-199 Crisp. C. (2006). The Gay Affirmative Practice Scale (GAP): A new measure for assessing cultural competence with gay and lesbian clients. <i>Social Work, 51</i> (2), 115-126.
T, Feb. 19	SELECTING A GOOD YARDSTICK: THE RELIABILITY OF MEASURES	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 8, Measurement (con't)
TH, Feb. 21	MEASUREMENT (con't): TYPES OF SCALES; WRITING GOOD ITEMS; EXAMPLES OF INSTRUMENTS MIDTERM EVALUATION OF COURSE	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 9, Constructing measurement instruments, pp. 200-228
T, Feb. 26	LOOKING FOR MINES: THREATS TO INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL VALIDITY	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 10, Causal inference and correlational designs, pp. 227-249.
TH, Feb. 28	SO MANY CHOICES: EXPERIMENTAL DESIGNS	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 11, Experimental designs, pp. 250-279 Review the Floyd et al. article assigned for Jan. 31. Visit the Cochrane Collaboration (www.cochrane.org) and the Campbell Collaboration (www.campbellcollaboration.org) and read some reviews of interest to you
T, Mar. 4	SO MANY CHOICES: QUASI- EXPERIMENTAL DESIGNS REVIEW FOR TEST 2	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 11, Experimental designs (con't), Franklin, C., Streeter, C. L., Kim, J. S., & Tripodi, S. J. (2007). The effectiveness of a solution-focused, public alternative school for dropout prevention and retrieval. <i>Children & Schools, 29</i> (3), 133-144.
TH, Mar. 6	TEST 2! DRAFT OF ASSIGNMENT 1 DUE IF YOU WANT FEEDBACK	
T, Mar. 11 & TH, Mar. 13	SPRING BREAK	HAVE FUN! 
T, Mar. 18	REVIEW TEST 2 SO MANY CHOICES: SINGLE SUBJECT DESIGN	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 12, Single-case evaluation designs, pp. 280-304 Brophy, G. (2000). Social work treatment of sleep disturbance in a 5-year-old boy: A single-case evaluation. <i>Research on Social Work Practice, 10</i> (6), 748-758.

TH, Mar. 20	SO MANY CHOICES: SURVEY RESEARCH AND UNOBTRUSIVE RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT 1 DUE	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 15, Survey research, pp. 365-389; Chap. 16, Analyzing existing data: Quantitative and qualitative methods, pp. 390-414 DiNitto, D. M., Busch-Armendariz, N. B., Bender, K. et al. (In press). Testing telephone and Web surveys for studying men's sexual assault perpetration behaviors. <i>Journal of Interpersonal Violence</i> . Posted under "Documents" at the course Bb site.
T, Mar. 25	QUALITATIVE RESEARCH IN CLASS EXERCISE ON RESEARCH DESIGNS	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 17, Qualitative research: General principles, pp. 415- 435; Chap. 18, Qualitative research: Specific methods, pp. 436-454; Chap. 19, Qualitative data Analysis, pp. 455-476 Review the Bent-Goodley & Fowler article assigned for Jan. 24.
TH, Mar. 27	IN-CLASS EXERCISE ON RESEARCH DESIGNS (con't) CHOOSE ME: PROBABILITY SAMPLING IN THE CONDUCT OF SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 14, Sampling, pp. 335-364 Review the Crisp article assigned for Feb. 14 and the DiNitto et al. article assigned for Mar. 20.
T, Apr. 1	PROBABILITY SAMPLING (con't) NONPROBABILITY SAMPLING IN-CLASS EXERCISE ON SAMPLING	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 14, Sampling (con't) Review the Bent-Goodley & Fowler article assigned for Jan. 24, the Floyd et al. article assigned for Jan. 31, and the Franklin et al. article assigned for Mar. 4.
TH, Apr. 3	IN-CLASS EXERCISE ON SAMPLING (con't) REVIEW FOR TEST 3	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 14, Sampling (con't)
T, Apr. 8	TEST 3!	
TH, Apr. 10	REVIEW TEST 3 MEASURING OUR SUCCESS: PROGRAM EVALUATION DRAFT OF ASSIGNMENT 2 DUE IF YOU WANT FEEDBACK	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 13, Program evaluation, pp. 305-334 Review the Franklin et al. article assigned for Mar. 4.
T, Apr.15	ETHICS AND POLITICS IN SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH: CAN RESEARCH ACHIEVE SOCIAL JUSTICE? IN-CLASS EXERCISE ON ETHICAL ISSUES IN CONDUCTING RESEARCH	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 4, The ethics and politics of social work research, pp. 67-96
TH, Apr. 17	RESEARCH REPORT DAY (We will discuss your Option 2 experiences and work on Option 2 paper s.)	The instructor and TA are also available for individual consultation.
T, Apr. 22	ISSUES OF DIVERSITY: ETHNICITY AND CULTURE IN SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH	Rubin & Babbie, Chap. 5, Culturally competent research, pp. 97-121 Widely used alcohol screening instruments confusing to deaf persons. (2005). <i>CESAR Fax, 14(26)</i> . Available at the course Bb site.
TH, Apr. 24	ISSUES OF DIVERSITY: GENDER AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION IN SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT 2 DUE	Review the Bent-Goodley & Fowler article assigned for Jan. 24 and the Crisp article assigned for Feb. 14.

T, Apr. 29	CRITIQUING RESEARCH STUDIES	Review all previously assigned articles for study limitations.
TH, May 1	PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER TOWARD THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH REVIEW FOR TEST 4 FINAL COURSE EVALUATION	Review all course readings.
Sat., May 10, 2:00-5:00 p.m.	Test 4! (ROOM TBA)	

Bibliography (Recommended Readings)

- Babbie, E. (2005). *The practice of social research* (11th ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Campbell, D. T., & Stanley, J. C. (1973). *Experimental and quasi-experimental designs for research*. Chicago: Rand McNally.
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- Gubrium, J. F., & Holstein, J. A. (1997). *The new language of qualitative method*. New York: Oxford University Press.
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- Miller, D. C., & Salkind, N. (2002). *Handbook of research design and social measurement* (6th ed.). Newbury Park, NJ: Sage.
- Neuman, W. L. (2006). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (6th ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
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- Task Force on Social Work Research. (1991). *Building social work knowledge for effective services and policies*. Austin, TX: School of Social Work, University of Texas at Austin.
- Tutty, L. M., Rothery, M. A., & Grinnell, R. M., Jr. (1996). *Qualitative research for social workers: Phases, steps, and tasks*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Tyson, K. (1995). *New foundations for scientific social and behavioral research: The heuristic paradigm*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Yegidis, B. L., & Weinbach, R. W. (2005). *Research methods for social workers* (5th ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.