

*The University of Texas at Austin  
School of Social Work*

**SW 388R3 RESEARCH METHODS III  
QUALITATIVE METHODS IN SOCIAL WORK.  
SPRING 1996**

INSTRUCTOR

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**QUALITATIVE METHODS IN SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH**

**COURSE INTRODUCTION:**

This doctoral level seminar serves as an introductory course in qualitative research methodologies. Students are introduced to qualitative research paradigms, their epistemologies, theories, and methods. The major focus of the course will be to survey qualitative methods of inquiry including research designs, specific data collection methods, and analytic and interpretive procedures. Several different approaches to qualitative data collection and analysis are discussed.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

1. Students will become familiar with qualitative research paradigms, their epistemologies and theories, and will be able to discuss and critique the underlying assumptions of qualitative research.
2. Students will understand different research designs and procedures for collecting data in qualitative research.
3. Students will understand a variety of qualitative data collection methods, including interviewing, participant observation, and document analysis.
4. Students will become cognizant of the unique contributions of qualitative research and the appropriate applications of the different qualitative methods to the study of practice. Including the depth and flexibility of qualitative methods, and the significance of context in understanding human meaning.
5. Students will demonstrate that they can appropriately critique qualitative research methodologies and provide appropriate feedback to their colleagues.
6. Students will learn methods for increasing validity and reliability in qualitative research designs.
7. Students will learn methods for analyzing, interpreting, and writing up qualitative research.
8. Students will be able to conceptualize, design, and implement a qualitative research study.

**PREREQUISITES:** Graduate Student Standing & Consent of Instructor

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

Berg, B. L. (1995). Qualitative research for the social sciences (2nd. edition). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Gilgun, J. F., Daly, K., & Handel, G. (Eds.). (1992). Qualitative methods in family research. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Reissman, C. K. (Ed.) (1994). Qualitative studies in social work research. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Miles, M., & Huberman, A.M. (1994). Qualitative data analysis. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

**RECOMMENDED TEXTS:**

Weitzman, E., & Miles, M. B. (1995). Computer programs for qualitative data analysis. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

This is a fun but challenging class. Students are expected to attend class sessions regularly and to participate in an interactive learning framework between students and professor. Students are expected to make a serious attempt to complete the suggested readings and should be well prepared to participate in discussions and experiential learning assignments. Failure to regularly attend the class and demonstrate through discussions that one has comprehended the readings will be strongly considered in assigning the final grade.

Students are expected to turn in all required assignments on the agreed upon due date. If the due date is a problem for you, see the professor and negotiate another due date.

Students are expected to both learn and apply methods of qualitative research. This requires a search of the literature in a defined area, conceptualizing research design and methods, practice at data collection, interpretive methods, and writing up the findings of a study.

Students are expected to cooperate with their colleagues and give constructive feedback to help them improve their knowledge of research designs and methods. This means students must be invested in the learning process (both theirs and others) and be willing to work with others in an egalitarian manner as members of a team to help improve research understanding.

Students are expected to uphold the highest standards of ethical research as they conduct their research studies.

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

1) Outline and Human Subject Materials. In order to conduct a miniature qualitative study in this class it is necessary to have that assignment approved by the instructor and fill out the department forms for human subject review. You can do only projects that are exempt in this class because all other projects involving human subjects must go through a full University review and there is not enough time to accomplish this review in the time allotted for the class. An exempt project cannot involve research on anyone but professionals, and no sensitive subjects such as emotional or psychological issues will be approved for social work clients or other humans. It takes considerable time to get your project approved through the human subjects review. We will set a date in the class to turn in the forms, and it is necessary to abide by this date. Keep in mind that the research assignment is meant to give you some experience with collecting and analyzing qualitative data and it is not your life's work. Therefore choose a topic that is manageable and doable in the course of the semester. If you are having difficulty choosing a topic, the instructor has some data that you may use for the assignment. But it will be necessary for you to add to this data to meet the requirements for the class. You are encouraged, however, to choose your own topic and collect your own data.

2. Qualitative Research Study. Qualitative research like clinical practice is mastered by the doing and practice of its methods and procedures. Each student is required to conceptualize, design, and implement a small, manageable qualitative research study that can realistically be completed in one semester. Students will conduct the study, and analyze and write up the findings. Students may work individually or in teams to complete this assignment. Teamwork is an important set of skills and is encouraged. Individually conducted research studies, however, will be given the same consideration as group ones. Research must be on a subject relevant to practice but may be selected according to the student's expertise, interests or life experiences. Students must follow the University ethics concerning conducting research studies. All permissions and waivers must be obtained in written form. This will be discussed further in the class. The final product will be a well-written manuscript of journal length (approximately 15-25 pages). The sections outlined below are provided as guidelines for how to write-up the study.

Qualitative Research Study Manuscript

I. Abstract.

- II. Literature review that has been well conceptualized and cogently written. A reflexive section that describes core assumptions, biases, and values guiding the study.
- III. Research questions and/or analytic frameworks guiding the study, and how they were derived from other research, theory, practice experiences, or personal interests.
- IV. Description of research design and data collection methods, and rationale for why they are being used in the study. Processes and steps taken in the design implementation and data collection should be highlighted, including the researcher's role and reflexive understanding of one's impact on the participants and setting.
- V. Description of data analysis and interpretive procedures used to examine the data, and why methods were chosen.
- VI. Results and analytic section that describes the major findings from the study.
- VII. Implications for practice section that interprets the findings into a framework that compares or contrasts the results with previous research, and also discusses the pragmatic/clinical utility of the study.

**COURSE GRADING CRITERIA:**

Outline and human subjects materials	20%		90 - 100 points = A
<u>Qualitative Research Study</u>	80%		80 - 89 points = B
			70 - 79 points = C
Total	100		60 - 69 points = D
			Below 60 points = F

Grading Scale: (Grades are rounded up to the next number at .5). Grading of all written assignments will take into account the quality of the writing as well as the content. The APA format should be followed. Written material should be carefully proofread and corrected for errors in punctuation, typographical errors, and spelling errors. Good writing requires a reiterative process that must be followed if quality is to improve. It is a good idea to read your paper several times and if possible have someone else read it.

**ASSIGNMENT DUE DATES:**

Outline and Human Subjects Materials	March 5
Research Manuscript due	April 30

**COURSE OUTLINE**

\*indicates readings to focus on first

**Date                      Topics/Readings**

**QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PARADIGMS, EPISTEMOLOGIES AND THEORIES**

**January 16**    CLASS OVERVIEW: AN INTRODUCTION TO QUALITATIVE RESEARCH  
 SUGGESTED READINGS: Berg, Chapter 1  
 \*Gilgun, Daly, & Handel, Chapters 1 & 2.  
 \*Jacob, E. (1987). Qualitative research traditions: A review. Review of Educational Research, 57(1), 1-50.  
 Jacob, E. (1988). Clarifying qualitative research: A focus on traditions. Educational Researcher, 17(1), 16-24.  
 \*Jacob, E. (1989). Qualitative research: A defense of traditions. Review of Educational Research, 59(2), 229-235.  
 \*Moon, S. M., Dillon, D. R., & Sprenkle, D. H. (1990). Family therapy and qualitative research. Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 16(4), 357-373.  
 Sells, S. P., Smith, T. E., & Sprenkle, D. H. (1995). Integrating qualitative and quantitative research: A research model. Family Process, 34, 199-218.  
 \*Witkin, S. L. (1989). Towards a scientific social work. Journal of Social Service Research, 12(3/4), 83-98.

**January 23**

**EPISTEMOLOGIES GUIDING QUALITATIVE RESEARCH: DEBATES AND MORE DEBATES: LECTURE AND DISCUSSION**

- \*Atherton, C. R. (1993). Empiricists versus social constructionists: A time for a cease fire. Families in Society, 74(10), 617-624.
- \*Atkinson, B., Heath, A. & Chenail, R. (1991). Qualitative research and the legitimization of knowledge, Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 17(2), 161-166.
- Berlin, S. B. (1990). Dichotomous and complex thinking. Social Service Review, 64(1), 46-59.
- Cavell, T. A., & Snyder, D. (1991). Iconoclasm versus innovation: Building a science of family therapy. Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 17(2), 167-172.
- \*Franklin, C. (1995). Expanding the vision of the social constructionist debates: Creating relevance for practitioners. Families in Society, 76(7), 395-407.
- \*Harrison, D. F., Hudson, W. W., & Thyer, B. A. (1992). On a critical analysis of empirical clinical practice: A response to Witkin's revised views. Social Work, 37(5), 461-464.
- \*Heineman, M. B. (1981). The obsolete scientific imperative in social work research. Social Service Review, 55(3), 371-397.
- Liddle, H. A., (1991). Empirical values and the culture of family therapy. Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 17(4), 327-348.
- \*Moon, S. M., Dillon, D. R., & Sprenkle, D. H. (1991). On balance and synergy: Family therapy and qualitative research revisited. Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 17(2), 173-178.
- Patton, M. J., & Jackson, A. P. (1991). Theory and meaning in counseling research: Comment on Strong (1991). Journal of Counseling Psychology, 38(2), 214-216.
- \*Pieper, M. H. (1987). Comments on "Scientific imperatives in social work research": Pluralism is not skepticism. Social Service Review, 61(2), 368-370.
- \*Polkinghorne, D. E. (1984). Further extensions of methodological diversity for counseling psychology. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 31(4), 416-429.
- \*Polkinghorne, D. E. (1991). Two conflicting calls for methodological reform. The Counseling Psychologist, 19(1), 103-114.
- Schuerman, J. R. (1982). Debate with authors: The obsolete scientific imperative in social work research. Social Service Review, 56(1), 144-146. Also read Heineman, Author's reply.
- Smith, J. K. (1989). The origins of the current discussion. The nature of social and educational inquiry: Empiricism versus interpretation (pp. 37-62). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Strong, S. R. (1991). Theory-driven science and naive empiricism in counseling psychology. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 38(2), 204-210.
- \*Witkin, S. L. (1991). Empirical clinical practice: A critical analysis. Social Work, 36(2), 158-163.
- Witkin, S. L. (1992). Empirical clinical practice or Witkin's revised views: Which is the issue? Social Work, 37(5), 465-468.

**QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGNS/METHODS OF INQUIRY**

**January 30**

**GROUNDING THEORY: LECTURE AND DISCUSSION.**

**SUGGESTED READINGS:** Riessman, Part 1, Grounded Theory and Health, Chapters 1, 2 & 3.

Gilgun, Daly & Handel, Chapter 3.

Neuman, L. (1994). Qualitative research design. Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches (pp. 316-329). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Spitzer, A., Webster-Stratton, C., & Hollinsworth, T. (1991). Coping with conduct-problem Children: Parents gaining knowledge and control. Journal of Clinical Child Psychology, 20(4), 413-427.

- February 6** ETHNOGRAPHY/ETHNOMETHODOLOGY: LECTURE AND DISCUSSION.  
SUGGESTED READINGS:  
Berg, Chapter 5  
Fetterman, D. M. ( 1989). Chapter 1, The first step, An overview. Chapter 2, Walking in rhythm: Anthropological concepts. Ethnography: Step by step. Newbury Park CA: Sage.  
Gilchrist, V. J. ( 1992). Key informant interviews. In B. F. Crabtree & W. L. Miller (Eds.), Doing qualitative research. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.  
Kenemore, T. K. (1987). Negotiating with clients: A study of clinical practice experience. Social Service Review, 61(1), 132-143.  
Newfield, N. A., Kuel, B. P., Joanning, H. P., & Quinn, W. H. (1990). A mini ethnography of the family therapy of adolescent drug abuse: The ambiguous experience. Alcoholism Treatment Quarterly, 7(2), 57-79.  
Newfield, N. A., Joanning, H. P., Kuel, B. P., & Quinn, W. H. (1991). We can tell you about "psychos" and "shrinks": An ethnography of the family therapy of adolescent drug abuse. In T. C. Todd & M. D. Selekman (Eds.), Family therapy approaches with adolescent substance abuse (pp. 277-310). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.  
Sells, S. P., Smith, T. E., Coe, M. J., Yoshioka, M., & Robbins, J. (1994). An ethnography of couple and therapist experiences in reflecting team practice. Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 20, 247-266.  
Smith, T. E., Sells, S. P., & Clevenger, T. (1994). Ethnographic content analysis of couple and therapist perceptions in a reflecting team setting. Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 20, 267-286.
- February 13** Individual library research
- February 20** CASE STUDIES  
SUGGESTED READINGS: Gilgun, Handel, & Daly, Chapters 5 & 10.  
Orum, A. M., Feagin, J. R., & Sjoberg, G. (1991). Introduction, The nature of the case study. In J. R. Feagin, A. M. Orum, & G. Sjoberg. A case for the case study (pp. 1-26). Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press.  
Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). Establishing trustworthiness. Naturalistic inquiry (pp. 289-331). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.  
Handel, G. (1991). Case study in family research. In J. R. Feagin, A. M. Orum, & G. Sjoberg, A case for the case study (pp. 244-268). Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press.  
Trepper, T. S. ( 1990). In celebration of the case study. Journal of Family Psychotherapy, 1(1). 5-13.
- February 27** HEURISTICS AND HERMENEUTICS  
SUGGESTED READINGS: Heineman-Pieper, M. ( 1989). The heuristic paradigm: A unifying and comprehensive approach to social work research. Smith College Studies in Social Work, 60(1), 8-34.  
Diesing P. ( 1991). Hermeneutics: The interpretation of texts. How does social science work? Reflections on practice. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.  
Polkinghorne, D. ( 1983). Existential-phenomenological and hermeneutic systems. Methodology for the human sciences: Systems of inquiry. Albany New York: State University of New York Press.  
Robinson, J. A., & Hawpe, L. (1986). Narrative thinking as a heuristic process. In T. R. Sarbin (Ed.), Narrative psychology: The storied nature of conduct (pp. 111-125). Westport, CN: Praeger.  
Scott, D. (1989). Meaning construction in social work practice. Social Services Review, 63(1), 39-51.  
Tyson K. B. ( 1992). A new approach to relevant scientific research for practitioners: The heuristic paradigm. Social Work, 37(6), 541-555.

**March 5**

**DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGIES**

INTERVIEWING: LECTURE AND DISCUSSION

SUGGESTED READINGS: Berg, Chapters 3 & 4; Gilgun, Handel, & Daly, Chapters 4, 7, 8, 9, & 11.

Riessman, Chapter 7.

Yorke, M. (1989). The intolerable wrestle: Words, numbers and meanings. International Journal of Personal Construct Psychology, 2, 65-76.

**March 12**

SPRING BREAK!!!

**March 19**

OBSERVATIONS: LECTURE AND DISCUSSION

SUGGESTED READINGS: Gilgun, Daly & Handel, Chapters 12 & 13.

Jorgensen, D. L. (1989). The methodology of participant observation. Participant observation: A methodology for human studies. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Riessman, Chapter 8.

**March 26**

DOCUMENTS, PERSONAL ACCOUNTS AND NARRATIVES: LECTURE AND DISCUSSION

SUGGESTED READINGS: Berg, Chapters 7, 8, & 9;

DeChillo N., Matorin, S., & Hallahan, C. (1987). Children of psychiatric patients: Rarely seen or heard. Health and Social Work, 12(4), 296-302.

Gilgun, Daly, & Handel, Chapter 14.

Larossa R., & Wolf, J. H. (1985). On qualitative family research. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 47(3), 531-541.

Riessman, Chapters 4 & 5.

**April 2**

DATA ANALYSIS: ANALYTIC AND INTERPRETIVE PROCEDURES

DEVELOPING CODES AND CATEGORIES: LECTURE AND DISCUSSION

SUGGESTED READINGS: Crabtree, B. F., & Miller, W. L. (1992). A template approach to text analysis: Developing and using codebooks. In B. F. Crabtree & W. L. Miller (Eds.) Doing qualitative research (pp. 93-109).

Gale, J. E. (1991). Methodology and procedures. Conversation analysis of therapeutic discourse: A pursuit of a therapeutic agenda (pp. 26-39). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Jorgensen, D. L. Analyzing and theorizing. Participant observation: A methodology for human studies (pp. 107-116). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). Part II: Coding procedures and Chapter 5, Open coding. Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Yin, R. K. (1989). Analyzing case study evidence. Case study research: Design and methods. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Recommended Reading: Weitzman & Miles, Chapters 1-3

**April 9**

DEVELOPING CODES AND CATEGORIES: DISCUSSION AND PRACTICE.

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Gale, J. E. (1991). Analysis. Conversation analysis of therapeutic discourse: A pursuit of a therapeutic agenda (pp. 40-95). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Mishler, E. G. (1986). The analysis of interview narratives. In T. R. Sarbin (Ed.) Narrative psychology: The storied nature of human conduct (pp. 233-255).

Riessman, Chapter 6

Recommended Reading: Weitzman & Miles, Chapters 4-7

*Fieldnotes on Data Collection due*

- April 16** CONSTRUCTING AND LINKING CATEGORIES AND DEVELOPING ANALYTIC THEMES: LECTURE AND DISCUSSION.  
SUGGESTED READINGS: Straus, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). Chapter 6, Techniques for enhancing theoretical sensitivity, Chapter 7, Axial coding. Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.  
Recommended Readings: Weitzman & Miles, Chapters 8-10
- April 23** WRITING-UP YOUR STUDY: SUGGESTIONS AND DISCUSSION.  
SUGGESTED READINGS: Finish readings previously suggested in Gilgun, et al. and Riessman. They serve as examples.
- April 30** Class Evaluation and Wrap Up.  
*Research Manuscript due*