

**YESHIVA UNIVERSITY
WURZWEILER SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK
DOCTORAL PROGRAM IN SOCIAL WELFARE**

STRATEGIES OF INQUIRY (SWK 8421)

Fall, 2010

Instructor: Dr. Susan Mason

Social work research draws substantially from the research methodologies developed in the social and behavioral sciences. Students who have mastered conceptual and analytic research skills are likely to contribute to the generation of new knowledge and engage in systematic analyses of social problems, social interventions, and social policies. A key part of becoming a scholar is learning to select and ask those questions that hold the greatest practical and theoretical importance for social work practice and public policy. Application of analytic skills to practice-related problems.

Beyond the selection of research questions, per se, this course provides a thorough grounding for students in the design of inquiries, systematic data collection, and analysis of information related to a research issue. There are a diverse set of knowledge building methodologies; this first semester is focused on qualitative methods, beginning with the underlying philosophical connections between theory and method and the principles that govern ethical research. Such methods include analysis of historical documents, field observations, survey research, ethnography, and participant observation. The major focus is on the application of modern theories and research methods to understanding and interpreting the social world and the role of social work in improving the lives of people.

The second semester will follow a similar format, but focus on quantitative research.

OBJECTIVES:

- To develop a critical understanding of the scientific method and its application in social sciences and social work;
- To become familiar with debates in the field of social work regarding epistemology and methodology;
- To understand the relationship between theory and research; the role of conceptualization, operationalization, and measurement;
- To gain a comprehensive knowledge of various study designs, methods of data collection, and types of data;
- To gain a beginning mastery of theoretical and conceptual foundations of research methodologies;
- To understand the strengths and limitations of various research designs;
- To analyze the approaches to and merits of social work research studies;
- To obtain practical experience in the different steps of research by designing research projects.

At the end of this course, students will be able:

- To systematically review, critique, and synthesis a given body of literature;
- To formulate professionally relevant and theoretically productive research questions and hypotheses;
- To demonstrate ability to test hypotheses and answer specific research questions;
- To design a research study, using qualitative methods of data collection and analysis;
- To understand how sampling choices and project implementation impacts on study outcome;
- To be knowledgeable about when to choose qualitative research methods to achieve project study goals;
- To understand the value and limitations of the several qualitative methods;
- To present findings in spoken and written form.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Creswell, J.W. (2006). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, 2nd. Edition, CA: Sage. ISBN 1-4129-1607-0, \$60.71,

Berg, B.L. (2006). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences*. 6th. Edition. Boston: Allyn & Bacon. ISBN 978-0-205-62807-0, \$64.31

Locke, L.F., Silverman, S.J., & Spirduso, W.W. (2010). *Reading and understanding research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. ISBN 978-1-4129-7574-2, \$49.85

Hesse-Biber, S.N., & Leavy, P. (2004). *Approaches to qualitative research*. New York: Oxford. ISBN 0-19-515775-3, \$49.95

RECOMMENDED TEXTS (you may read any edition)

Miles, M.B., & Huberman (1994). *Qualitative data analysis, an expanded sourcebook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. ISBN 0-8039-5540-5, \$69.48

Royse, D.,Thyer, B.A., & Padgett, D.K. (2009). *Program evaluation, an introduction* (3rd ed.). Belmont, CA: Brooks Cole. ISBN-10: 0495601667, \$89.61

Rubin, A., & Babbie, E. (2010). *Research methods for social work* (5th ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole. ISBN 978-0495811718, \$110.95

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

All course assignments must rigorously adhere to the instructions for page lengths. Papers longer or shorter than the noted requirements will not be read. All assignments must be double-spaced unless otherwise noted and be typed in 12- point font. The style of the American Psychological Association 5th edition must be used for all citations and references. The manual for the APA 5th edition style is available on-line at the American Psychological Association web site or at other

popular on-line and in-store sellers. Papers not handed in on the date due will be subject to grade reductions, the extent to which will be determined at the discretion of the instructor.

A. Assignment # 1: Evaluating Research Articles

Choose two research articles that have utilized a qualitative methodological approach. Evaluate these articles using the 5 basic questions to be handed out in class (also outlined in Locke, Silverman, & Spirduso 2004, Chapter 7, p. 175). For each article, answer each question. This assignment should not be more than 6 pages in length, excluding the title page and reference page. Please include copies of the articles. Please hand this in on the **5th class session**.

B. Research Designs

There will be two research design projects. The first will involve the critique and substitution of a research design of a published qualitative study. The second assignment will be creating a qualitative research design to assess clients' needs for additional services.

Published Study Research Design: Chose 1 qualitative study from a journal article and 1) briefly describe the study design; 2) critique the design based on your readings and class discussions; and 3) propose an alternative qualitative design for the study. You should include a title page, and a reference page APA 5th edition style. The assignment should be between 3-4 pages in length excluding the title and reference pages. Please include a copy of the article when submitting the assignment. This will be handed on the **7th class session**.

Needs Assessment for Additional Client Services: You have been hired as a consultant for an agency that is struggling to maintain a large enough census. Your primary task is to ascertain if additional services are needed and/or the services provided are useful to clients. You must first identify the agency for which you have been hired, the services they provide, and then write a plan for conducting your needs assessment research. Your research plan should utilize a qualitative research design. You should be careful to take into account the diversity of your client population, their willingness to utilize new and possibly additional services, and the priorities that should be placed on these proposed services. This written needs assessment plan should be 4-6 pages plus a summary and a reference page. Keep in mind that if this plan is ill conceived, the agency as well as your consulting company will suffer major financial losses. This assignment will be handed in on the **14th class session**.

COURSE GRADES

Grades will be determined by the following criteria:

First assignment	30%
Second assignment	30%
Third assignment	35%
Class participation and attendance.	05%

The grade of "Incomplete" will be given at the discretion of the instructor. Incomplete grades are to be removed according the rules of the Wurzweiler School of Social Work and Yeshiva University.

COURSE WORK AND READINGS

I. Research Design (Sessions 1-2)

Research design is discussed with emphasis on constructing research questions, setting up a logical plan and implementing the plan. Special attention is given to process of identifying and operationalizing the independent and dependent variables. Qualitative methods of data analysis will be reviewed as an integral aspect of the research design.

Required Readings

Berg, Ch. 2 -5
Creswell, Ch. 2
Hesse-Biber, & Leavy, Ch. 1-2, 4.
Locke, et al., Ch.,1-2

Suggested Readings

Rubin, & Babbie, Ch., 13
Miles & Huberman, Ch. 1

Readings assigned in Hesse-Biber & Leavy

Guba, & Lincoln. Competing paradigms in qualitative research: Theories and issues, pp. 17-38.
Sprague & Zimmerman. Overcoming dualisms: A feminist agenda for sociological methodology, 39-61.
Rank. The blending of qualitative and quantitative methods in understanding childbearing among welfare recipients., pp- 81-96.

II Ethical Issues (Session 3)

Ethical research practice must be adhered to at all times. Social workers engaged in research must always be certain that the profession's ethics are seriously considered when research designs are planned.

Required Readings:

NASW Code of Ethics (to be handed out in class if not included in orientation packets).
Berg, Ch. 3
Hesse-Biba & Leavy, Ch. 7, 10.
Locke, et al., Ch. 3

Readings in Hesse-Biba & Leavy

Gallager. "White Like Me?" Methods, meanings, and manipulation in the field of White studies, pp. 203-223.

Thorne. "You still takin' notes?" Fieldwork and problems of informed consent, pp. 159-176.

Suggested Readings

Rubin & Babbie, ch. 3 or the chapter on Ethics.

III Traditions of Qualitative Research (Sessions 4,5,6,7, 8)

Traditions of qualitative research include the biography, the phenomenological study, the grounded theory study, the ethnography and the case study. Within these traditions, methods of collecting data include face-to-face interviews, focus groups, participation-observation, naturalistic research, secondary source utilization, historiography, and content analysis. These traditions and methods are explored with emphasis on operationalization, implementation, sampling techniques, and generalization.

(Session 4)

A. An Overview of the Traditions of Inquiry. The 5 traditions of inquiry are discussed and compared from both a practical and theoretical perspective. How theory is integrated with method is a subject receiving special emphasis.

Required Readings

Berg, Ch. 1, 4, 6

Creswell, Ch. 4-5

Hesse-Biber & Leavy, Ch. 6, 9-11,

Locke, et al., Ch. 4- 7.

In Hesse-Biber & Leavy

Hooks. Culture to culture: Ethnography and cultural studies as critical intervention, pp. 149-158

Miller & Crabtree. Depth interviewing, pp. 185-202.

Weston. Fieldwork in lesbian and gay communities, pp. 177-184.

(Sessions 5-6)

B. Methods and Access to Data: The methods of data collection are discussed along with issues related to getting data. Sampling, operationalizing, implementing and generalizing are also topics for discussion. Validity and reliability are reviewed as well.

Required Readings

Creswell, Ch. 6-7.

Hesse-Biba & Leavy, Ch. 17-18

Readings in Hesse-Biba & Leavy

Rose, Analysis of moving images, pp. 350-366.

Mann & Stewart, Introducing online methods, pp. 367-401.

Suggested Reading

Rubin & Babbie, Ch. 12

(Sessions 7-8)

C. **Analyzing and Presenting Data:** Qualitative methods are reviewed for their unique research inquiry and presentation formats. Computer assisted content analysis is discussed and illustrated.

Required Readings

Berg, Ch 12

Creswell, Ch. 8-9

Hesse-Biba & Leavy, Ch. 14, 21-24.

Readings in Hesse-Biba & Leavy

McDermott & Rothenberg. Why urban parents resist involvement in their children's elementary education,
pp. 286-302.

Denzin. The art and politics of interpretation, pp. 447-472.

Richardson. Writing: A method of inquiry, pp. 473-495.

Charmaz. Grounded theory, 496-521.

Suggested Readings

Rubin, & Babbie, Ch. 13

Miles & Huberman, Ch. 2-4

IV. Verifying Data (Session 9)

Here the all-important questions of how do we know that our data is measuring what we say it is, and can it be trusted? These are issues of validity and reliability that are applied to the various traditions of qualitative research.

Required Readings

Creswell, Ch. 10

Hesse-Biba & Leavy, Ch. 24.

Reading in Hesse-Biba & Leavy

Borland. "That's not what I said": Interpretive conflict in oral narrative research, pp. 522-534.

V. Coding Data, Grounding and Interpreting (Sessions 10 – 11)

Methods of coding, grounding and interpreting data are discussed and illustrated.

Required Readings

Berg, Ch 11
Creswell, Ch. 8

Suggested Reading

Miles & Huberman, Ch. 5-10

VI. Applying Qualitative Methods to Project and Clinical Case Evaluation (Sessions 12-13)

Project evaluation methods are explored using the micro, meso and macro constructs in the evaluation process. Clinical case evaluation issues scrutinized include sample, generalizability, ethics, service alternatives, implementation, costs and benefits, as well as other pertinent research concerns.

(Session 12)

A. Project Evaluation: Project evaluation design, policy, and implementation issues are emphasized.

Required Readings

Royce et al., chapters 1, 3-5.
Rubin, & Babbie, chapter 18

(Session 13)

B. Focus Groups and Action Research: The use of focus groups and action research as methods are discussed with examples from the readings.

Required Readings

Berg, Ch. 5, 7
Hesse-Biba & Leavy, Ch. 13

Reading in Hesse-Biba & Leavy

Morgan. Focus groups, pp. 263-302.

VII. Integration of Qualitative and Quantitative Methods (Session 14)

The usefulness and inevitability of integrating these two methods is discussed.

Readings

Hesse-Biba & Leavy, Ch. 4-5.

Reading in Hesse-Biba & Leavy

Rank. The blending of quantitative and qualitative methods in understanding childbearing in welfare recipients, pp. 81-96.

Tolman & Szalacha. Dimensions of desire: Bridging qualitative and quantitative methods in a study of female adolescent sexuality, pp. 97-130.