

Center for Ethnographic Research Summer Workshop in Qualitative Research Methods

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Introduction: This 6-week curriculum in qualitative methods is designed as a workshop rather than a course – more along the lines of an advanced studio seminar in writing, arts, and design schools, rather than the traditional social science module. It is a practicum in which you will be learning by doing and by participating in the projects of your colleagues. By the end of the 6-week workshop it is our aim that you will each have an intellectual understanding of the key genres of ethnographic and interview methods and practical experience in qualitative fieldwork. The aim is not for you to leave here with a publishable research paper in hand, but rather the ability to discern and justify the application various methodological approaches to tackle social scientific questions and the basics of ‘doing’ qualitative fieldwork.

Workshop Mechanics: The workshop is comprised of three components: (a) collective fieldwork exercises (b) the development of an individual research proposal and (c) seminar meetings. It is our hope that each component mutually reinforces and informs the practice of the others.

Collective Fieldwork Exercises: Each week you will practice weekly field exercises in participant observation, interviews, or analysis outside of class. Although you may complete these assignments alone, in pairs, or small groups, they will all occur around a shared research site(s) to be decided in the first week of the workshop. Practicing observation, field-notation, interviewing techniques, and qualitative analysis at a single-site will allow us to compare and contrast our data and interpretations, discuss the pitfalls, challenges, and successes of the particular terrain of research, and perhaps most interestingly grasp how differences such as gender, age, fashion, personality, and backgrounds of the researchers effects the collection and interpretation of qualitative data that would be impossible were we to be each practicing these research exercises on our own questions and sites. Furthermore, the wealth of field-notes and transcripts collected through this pilot-collective ethnography will allow each of you to practice coding and analysis on a wider data-set than what would be feasible for a single individual in such a short-period. The weekly research exercises in observations, interviews, and analysis, will build on each other. For instance, the interview questions will be based off the discoveries and blind spots of the participant observation. You will learn how to “interview ethnographically” and recognize the unique data gained by both methods. Finally our analysis and coding exercises will be across both data sets and culminate in synthetic analytic memos.

Individual Research Proposal: Each workshop participant will develop her own individual research proposal in three phases over the 6-week period. Beginning with a research question at our first

meeting, you will build in sections on case selection and methods (participant observation and interview). The submission of each section will parallel the readings and exercises of each method in the workshop. Writing the proposal alongside the readings and exercises will give you the tools to choose the best methods for your question, justify those choices through examples in the scholarship, and make realistic and informed decisions about gathering data from your practice and the work of others. A literature review will not be required, but is invited. The proposal should be tailored to your own needs. For those preparing a senior thesis or research paper this might be a full 10-20 page Methods section. For those interested in an academic career, this may be 1-5 page proposal or fellowship application. Students will present and get feedback on their individual research project proposals from workshop members at least twice and will work closely with the graduate mentors on revising and refining these into polished proposals.

Seminar Meetings: Our bi-weekly seminar meetings will be divided into two parts – (1) instruction and group discussion of the assigned texts and (2) group discussions of the weekly research exercises and peer reviews of individual research proposals. You will read a handful of classic interview and ethnographic articles/chapters as well as some of the latest research in the field. We will also read articles on ‘doing’ each method and critical reflections on the backstage realities, challenges, and ethical issues of practicing qualitative methods. The second part of each seminar will be dedicated to in-class exercises and discussions based on the weekly research assignments.

Expectations: The design of our small workshop depends on the full participation of each member. To put it bluntly, this means *no absences, no late assignments, and careful readings*. For one, we have designed the workshop in sequence, where each piece of the research exercises and individual proposal are a building block essential for the next step. Second, we have very little time so you can’t afford to miss a seminar or assignment. The 6-week intensive is not simply designed to make sure those out-of-towners can afford the ridiculous rent in the area, but rather to immerse you in the basic literacy of qualitative methods, similar to the logic of an intensive language course. Ethnography and interviewing are difficult crafts, especially at first try: time-consuming, tedious, and frustrating at first as well as isolating if not done with mentors and more importantly frequent contact with others struggling along. Third, we designed the workshop as a collective endeavor. This, more importantly than the first two reasons, requires the dedicated participation of each of you as the collective research exercises *and* seminars centered on group discussions and in-class exercises relies on full-participation of our small group. If for any reason it seems that you will not be able to meet these expectations at some point during the course, you must be in contact with the instructors immediately and preferably well in advance.

As stated in the application materials, we expect for you to dedicate on average 20 hours to the workshop each week in seminar attendance, office hours, outside class research exercises, individual proposals and readings. For those of you currently working on individual research in the Bay Area, this is great and we hope to discuss this in the seminars and in office hours, but these activities should not interfere with the workshop requirements.

Office hours: This workshop is a great opportunity for you to get one-on-one advice from graduate mentors and we expect and hope that you will take advantage of our office hours. We encourage you to meet with each of us twice over the course (4 times total) for thirty-minute periods to discuss your individual research proposals, ongoing research, grad school ideas, personal statements, or professional development and careers.

Workshop Overview

Module 1: Research Design and Case Selection

Monday, June 23

Introductions.

Logics of Social Inquiry: Linking Method and Theory.

READINGS

- Robert Merton. 1987. "Three Fragments from a Sociologist's Notebooks". *Annual Review of Sociology*.
- James Mahoney and Gary Goetz. 2006. "A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting Qualitative and Quantitative Research." *Political Analysis*

Further

- Becker, Howard S. 1998. Chapter 2 "Imagery" in *Tricks of the Trade*.
- Geering, John. 2011. "Finding a Research Question" p. 42-57
- Abbott, Andrew. 2004. *Methods of Discovery*. Chapters 1-3.

Thursday, June 26

Case Selection and Comparisons

*Proposal Assignment: Research Question (Discuss)

READINGS

- Mario Small. 2009. "How Many Cases Do I Need?" *Ethnography*.
- Howard Becker. 1998. Chapter 3 "Sampling" in *Tricks of the Trade*.
- Ching Kwan Lee, 1995. "Engendering the Worlds of Labor: Women Workers, Labor Markets and Production Politics in the South China Economic Miracle." *American Sociological Review*

Further

- Charles Ragin. 1987. *The Comparative Method*. California. Pp.1-69.
- George Steinmetz. 2004. "Odious Comparisons: Incommensurability, the Case Study, and "Small N's" in Sociology" *Sociological Theory* 22:3 (September): 371-400

Module 2: Participant Observation

Monday, June 30

Varieties and Warrants of Participant Observation

In the Field: Participating, Observing, and Taking Notes

READINGS

- Michael Burawoy. 1998. "The Extended Case Method." *Sociological Theory*
- Clifford Geertz. 1972. "Deep Play: Notes on a Balinese Cockfight" *Daedalus*

- Alice Goffman. 2009. "On the Run: Wanted Men in a Philadelphia Ghetto." *American Sociological Review*.
- Emerson et. al, Chapters 1-2

Further

- Clifford Geertz, 'Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture'
- Jack Katz, "On the Rhetoric and Politics of Ethnographic Methodology," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*.

Thursday, July 3

Writing Up Fieldnotes: From Field to Desk

*Research Exercise: Rough Field notes from site visit

- In Class: Discuss class field notes. Decide on Collective Research Question. Discuss Participant Observation in Individual Projects.

READINGS

- Emerson et. al, Chapters 3-4

Further

- Stefan Timmermans and Iddo Tavory. 2009. "Two Cases of Ethnography." *Ethnography*.

Monday, July 7

Ethics, Power, and Reflexivity

*Research Exercise: Field Memos from site visits.

*Proposal Assignment: 2-page Research overview. Consider what ethical issues your proposal entails.

- In class: Small-group peer review Field Memos. Discuss ethical issues in individual projects.

READINGS

- Howard S. Becker. 1967. "Whose Side Are We On?" *Social Problems*.
- Alvin Gouldner. 1968. "The Sociologist as Partisan: Sociology and the Welfare State." *The American Sociologist*.
- Judith Stacey. 1989. "Can there be a feminist ethnography?" *Women's Study International Forum*.

Further

- Loïc Wacquant. 2002. "Scrutinizing the Street: Poverty, Morality, and the Pitfalls of Urban Ethnography." *American Journal of Sociology*
- Mitchell Duneier. 2011. "How Not to Lie with Ethnography." *Sociological Methodology* 41 (1): 1-11.

Module 3: Interviewing

Thursday, July 10

Varieties and Warrants of Interviewing

In the Field: Constructing an interview schedule, recording/noting, and strategies.

*Research Exercise: Submit two questions for group interview.

- In Class: Decide on Key Questions for interviewing. Visit from Philip Fucella (UCSF) on Interviewing.

READINGS

- Robert Weiss, *Learning From Strangers*, Chapter 1 & 4.
- Sandra Smith. 2007. *Lone Pursuit*. Chapter 2. Appendices B & C (In-Depth Interview Protocol and Survey Instrument).

Further

- Lofland and Lofland. 2006. "Asking Questions" in *Analyzing Social Settings*.
- Kristin Luker. 1984. *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood*. "Appendix I: Methodology"

Monday, July 14

Designing Interview Studies: Sampling and Recruiting

Issues in Interviewing

*Proposal Assignment: Submit short interview schedule draft

- In Class Exercise: Small Group Peer-Review Interview Schedules. Discuss Sampling and Recruiting issues in projects. Visit from Aaron Cicourel, Professor Emeritus UCSF and UC San Diego.

READINGS

- Weiss, *Learning from Strangers*, Chapter 2 and 3.
- Michelle Lamont, 2000. *The Dignity of Working Men*. Introduction, Chapter 1, Appendices.

Module 4: Analysis of Qualitative Data

Thursday, July 17

Making Sense of Interviews and Observations and Introducing Coding

*Research Exercise: Interview Transcripts

- In Class: Group Open-Coding Exercise. Peer Review of Transcripts.

READINGS

- Emerson, et al, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, chp. 5-6.
- Jerolmack, Colin, and Shamus Khan. 2014. "Talk Is Cheap Ethnography and the Attitudinal Fallacy." *Sociological Methods & Research*.

Further

- Howard Becker, "Concepts" Chp. 4
- Ewick and Sibley 1995. "Subversive Stories and Hegemonic Tales" *Law and Society Review*.

Monday, July 21

Coding Strategies and Atlas TI

*Research Exercise: Chose Coding System and Codes or Themes.

- In Class: Atlas TI Training in D-Lab.

READINGS

- Weiss, Chapter 6. “Analysis of Data,” in *Learning from Strangers*.

Further

- Elliot Mishler. 1991. “Research Interviews as Speech Events” and “The Joint Construction of Meaning” in *Research Interviewing*.

Thursday, July 24

Issues in Interpretation

*Research Exercise: Write a brief memo using at least 3 interviews or 3 sets of field-notes.

– In class: Small Group Peer Reviews of analytic conclusions and interpretations

READINGS

- Katherine Borland, 1991. “‘That's Not What I Said’: Interpretive Conflict in Oral Narrative Research” in Gluck and Patai (Eds.) *Women's words: The feminist practice of Oral History*.
- Talja Blokland, 2012. “Blaming neither the underserving poor nor the revanchist middle class: A relational approach to marginalization.” *Urban Geography*.

Further

- Emerson Chapter 7
- Weiss Chapter 7

*Discussions and Conclusions***Monday, July 28**

Peer-Review and Discussion of Proposals

*Proposal Assignment: Final Proposals

No Readings

Thursday, July 31

Presentation and feedback on Research Proposals

*Proposal Assignment: Completed Reviews of 2 Research Proposals

Wrap-up

No Readings