

Department of Sociology
University of Calgary

SOCI 715.01
Issues in Interview Based Research
Fall 2007

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Office hours: Wednesdays and Fridays, 12:30-1:30 pm; and by appointment

Course hours: Thursday, 12:30 - 3:20 pm, September 10 - October 22.

Course Description:

This course is designed as an advanced, practical workshop in qualitative, interview-based research. We will consider issues of design, data generation, transcription, data management and data analysis, for both individual and focus group interviews, as well as strategies for writing with and about interview data. We will also, necessarily, consider epistemological and ethical issues particular to interview-based research. Although we will touch on a range of analytic projects employing interviews, emphasis will be on naturalistic, constructionist, and institutional ethnographic approaches.

The assumption is that most students taking the course will have experience conducting interviews and analyzing interview data, but prior experience is not a requirement. The objective is for students to deepen and broaden their working knowledge of interview research. Students are invited to use the assignment to address their individual interests and knowledge needs and help prepare for their thesis research.

Course Readings:

A collection of articles and book chapters. The articles are available online; hard copies of the book chapters will be made available for copying.

Assignment and Evaluation:

1. Paper. There are three options for the course paper. Option 1: Write an essay that explores some methodological or analytic issue related to interview research, either from a theoretical perspective or through an examination of selected empirical studies (or some combination thereof). Option 2: Working with existing interview data from a previous study, and relevant analytic or methodological sources, analyze the data in a new way and write a paper presenting that analysis. (This option requires that such use of the data be consistent with the uses outlined

in the consent form signed by research participants.) Option 3: Conduct 1-2 interviews and write a paper discussing your methods and offering a preliminary analysis of the data. This option requires a written proposal and a consent form (template provided).

Written proposals are not required for options 1 and 2, but it is strongly encouraged that you consult with me about your plans for the paper.

You will make a short presentation on the highlights of your research/paper/analysis during the last class (October 22). Presentations will not be graded. Papers should be approximately 15-20 pages in length (double spaced, with all usual features and formatting), and are due by 3:00 pm on Friday, October 23. Please submit hard copies only. As there is only one assignment, the final grade will in most circumstances be the same as the paper grade (but see below).

2. A seminar is a collaborative accomplishment that depends for its success on the participation and contributions of its members. My idea of a good seminar is one that generates intellectually stimulating discussion in an atmosphere of mutual respect and goodwill. Active seminar participation is therefore expected, but will not be graded. However, in those cases where the paper grade is close to the borderline between grades, the final grade for the course may be raised or lowered by one grade to reflect excellent or desultory participation in the seminar. Please note that ordinary reticence is not considered poor seminar participation, provided the student is prepared for class and contributes thoughtful comments when invited to do so.

Weekly Schedule & Assigned Readings (to be completed)

September 10 ***Introduction to course***

September 17

DeVault, Marjorie L. 1999. Talking and listening from women's standpoint: Feminist strategies for interviewing and analysis. Ch. 4 in M. DeVault, *Liberating method: Feminism and social research*, pp.59-83. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

DeVault, Marjorie L. 1991. Provisioning. Ch. 2 in *Feeding the Family: The social organization of caring as gendered work*, pp. 58-76. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Ritchie, Jane, Jane Lewis and Gillian Elam. 2003. Designing and selecting samples. Ch. 4 in *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*, ed. Jane Ritchie and Jane Lewis, pp. 77-108. London: Sage Publications.

Rubin, Herbert J and Irene S. Rubin. 2005. Excerpts from *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*. Second edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Ch. 7 Structuring the interview

Ch. 8 Designing main questions and probes

Optional:

Warren, Carol et al. 2003. "After the Interview." *Qualitative Sociology* 26 (1): 93-110.

September 24

Davidson, Rosemary, Jenny Kitzinger, and Kate Hunt. 2006. The wealthy get healthy, the poor get poorly? Lay perceptions of health inequalities. *Social Science & Medicine* 62: 2171-2182.

Kitzinger, Jenny. 1994. The methodology of focus groups: The importance of interaction between research participants. *Sociology of Health and Illness* 16 (1): 103-121.

Peek, Lori and Alice Fothergill. 2009. Using focus groups: Lessons from studying daycare centres, 9/11, and Hurricane Katrina. *Qualitative Research* 9 (1): 31-59.

Stephens, Christine, R. Claire Budge, and Jenny Carryer. 2002. What is this thing called hormone replacement therapy? Discursive constructions of medication in situated practice. *Qualitative Health Research* 12 (3): 347-359.

Optional:

Seale, Clive, Jonathan Charteris-Black, Carol Dumelow, Louise Locock, and Sue Ziebland. 2008. The effect of joint interviewing on the performance of gender. *Field Methods* 20 (2): 107-128.

October 1

Readings to be determined.

October 8

Readings to be determined.

October 15 ***No Class***

October 22 ***Student presentations***

No readings.

October 23 Papers due by 3:00 pm.

A small selection of recommended guide books

I own most of these, and am willing to lend my copies to students. The library also has copies.

Gubrium, Jaber F. and James A. Holstein. 1997. *The new language of qualitative method*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Gubrium, Jaber F. and James. A. Holstein, eds.. 2002. *Handbook of interview research: Context and Method*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Kitzinger, Jenny and Rosaline S. Barbour, eds. 1999. *Developing focus group research: politics, theory and practice*. London: Sage.

Mason, Jennifer. 2002. *Qualitative Researching*. 2nd edition. London: Sage.

Ritchie, Jane, and Jane Lewis, eds. 2003. *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers*. London: Sage.

Rubin, Herbert I. and Irene S. Rubin. 2005. *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data*. 2nd edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Smith, Dorothy E. 2005. *Institutional ethnography: A sociology for people*. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press.