

PEABODY COLLEGE
DEPARTMENT OF LEADERSHIP, POLICY, and ORGANIZATIONS

LPO 3902
Qualitative Research Methodology

FALL 2005

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Purpose and Goals of the Course:

This course is designed to introduce Ed.D. students to qualitative methodologies and strategies in educational research. Through a combination of readings, lectures, discussions, and class exercises, students will be exposed to significant issues regarding qualitative research. The course requires students to apply these ideas to the *design and production* of their own research studies. By the end of the course, students will be able to: 1) identify research topics; 2) frame research questions; 3) plan and design research studies, and; 4) conduct research, including: data collection, data analysis, and data presentation.

The class projects will focus on a specific policy issues for real clients. The small group projects are designed to follow several of the same elements of the capstone project required in the LPO Ed.D. program.

The class projects will build from the readings and themes addressed in the Social Context of Education (LPO 3600) class last spring (with a few additional required readings in each topic area), with specific reference to: 1) access to higher education: the issue of HOPE merit scholarships; and 2) urban education/achievement gap: the issue of charter schools (see reading list below). We will conduct qualitative research studies for two "clients": Tennessee Higher Education Commission and KIPP Charter School/Metro Nashville School Board.

Format of Class Meetings:

Class meetings will consist of lectures, discussions, and exercises. A key component of each class will be small group work. Students will be clustered according to project areas. The small groups will focus on the application of course concepts to research projects. Whole class meetings will cover more theoretical and abstract concerns. My expectation is that small groups will function both as a support mechanism and as a setting for students to apply what they are learning to the particulars of each research project. Students will act as critics and advisors for each other, in addition to receiving advice on their own work.

Required texts:

- Patton, M.Q. (2002) Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Rubin, H. & I. Rubin (1995) Qualitative Interviewing. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

In addition, there will be handouts (book chapters, articles) distributed during class meetings.

Highly recommended texts (each one a great read!):

Bosk, C. (1979) Forgive and Remember, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Lareau, A. (2002) Home Advantage. Philadelphia: The Falmer Press.
McDonough, P. (2000). Choosing College. New York: Teachers College Press.

Schedule:

Weekend 1 (Sept. 9-10): Qualitative Research Design

The first weekend will address the first two elements of research design: identifying issues and framing questions.

Before Weekend 1, read:

- Patton: Chap. 1-2, 5
- Shulman, L. (1981). Disciplines of Inquiry in Education: An Overview, Educational Researcher, Vol. 11(2).
- Peshkin, A. (1993). The Goodness of Qualitative Research, Educational Researcher, Vol 5(3).

Written Assignments due following Weekend 1:

1. Description of Project Idea (1-2 pages)

The project description should include: 1) a brief description of the research topic; 2) a research question(s) and 3) statement regarding significance/importance of your proposed project, *due: September 19*

2. Literature Review (4-5 pages)

Review the pertinent research linked to your topic area (see reading lists below). What do we know about this topic? What key research findings inform your question? The literature review provides the conceptual/theoretical and empirical foundations for the study. *due: September 26*

Weekend 2 (Oct. 7-8) Qualitative Research Methodology

The second weekend will examine literature reviews and conceptual frameworks as a foundation for qualitative research studies and will involve students in designing research strategies, including document analysis, interviews and observations.

Before Weekend 2, read:

- Patton: Chap. 6
- Rubin & Rubin: Chap. 3-4, 6-7, 9
- Wells, A.S., Hirshberg, D., Lipton, M., & J. Oakes (1995). Bounding the Case Within Its Context: A Constructivist Approach to Studying Detracking Reform, Educational Researcher, Vol. 9(3).

Written Assignments due following Weekend 2:

3) Methodology (3-4 pages) & Interview Protocol (1-2 pages)

Part I: Describe the qualitative research design. Provide a rationale for using qualitative design. Describe the setting proposed (use pseudonym). Why does this setting make sense for this study? What methods (interviews, observations, document analyses) will you use in this study? Provide a rationale for these methods. Describe the types of subjects and other data sources to be used. Note any limitations to your approach. **Part II:** Organize the interview questions by topic/concept areas. *due: October 17*

4) Article Critique (3-4 pages)

Select *one* from among the following journal articles (distributed in class):

McDonough, P. (1994). Buying and Selling Higher Education, Journal of Higher Education, Vol. 65(4).

McLendon, M. (2003). Setting the Governmental Agenda for State Decentralization of Higher Education, Journal of Higher Education, Vol. 74(2).

Ogawa, R., Sandholtz, J.H., & S.P. Scribner (Spring, 2003). The Substantive and Symbolic Consequences of a District's Standards-Based Curriculum, American Educational Research Journal, Vol. 40(1).

LeTendre, G., Hofer, B., & H. Shimizu (Spring, 2003). What is Tracking? Cultural Expectations in the United States, Germany and Japan, American Educational Research Journal, Vol. 40(1).

O'Connor, C. (Winter, 2002). Black Women Beating the Odds from One Generation to the Next: How the Changing Dynamics of Constraint and Opportunity Affect the Process of Educational Resilience, American Educational Research Journal, Vol. 39(4).

Address each of the following in your critique: 1) Is there a strong theoretical grounding? 2) What are the key concepts/theories undergirding the study and are these concepts well explicated in the literature review? 3) Is the research methodology well designed and appropriate to the authors' research questions? 4) Briefly describe the key findings 5) Are the findings linked to the key concepts? 6) Does the paper make a significant contribution to theory? To policy? To practice? Briefly describe strengths and weaknesses in these areas. *Due: October 31 (scary!)*

Weekend 3 (Nov. 4-5) Qualitative Data Analysis and Presentation of Results

The third weekend will focus upon data analysis and presentation of qualitative research findings.

Before Weekend 3, read:

- Patton: pp. 431-454 (Chap.8)
- Rubin & Rubin: Chap. 10-11

Written Assignments due after Weekend 3:

6) Data Analysis Plan and Coding Scheme (1-2 pages)

Describe your data analysis strategies. How will you organize the data? What are your organizing themes/topic areas? *due: November 14*

7) Project Report (20-25 pages)

Report should include: 1) Executive summary (1/2 page); 2) Introduction and Statement of the Problem: What we know; What we need to know (4-5 pages); 3) Methodology (3-4 pages) Results (8-10 pages); 5) Summary; directions for future research; implications for policy and practitioners (2-3 pages) *due: December 12*

Reading list: Charter School Project

(**additional reading/not assigned in LPO 3600)

In Pursuit of Educational Excellence and Equity

Gill, B., Timpane, M., Ross, K., & D. Brewer (2001). Rhetoric Versus Reality: What We Know and What We Need to Know about Vouchers and Charter Schools, (Chapters 2 & 3), RAND.

**Gill, B., Timpane, M., Ross, K., & D. Brewer (2001). Rhetoric Versus Reality: What We Know and What We Need to Know about Vouchers and Charter Schools, (Chapters 4 & 5), RAND.

**Zimmer, R., et al ((2003). Academic Environments of Charter and Conventional Public Schools (pp. 115-141), in Charter School Operations and Performance, RAND.

American Educational Research Association (Fall, 2004). Closing the Gap: High Achievement for Students of Color, Research Points, Vol. 2, Issue 3. www.aera.net/publications. Click on "Research Points"

**Wisconsin Center for Education Research (2005). Achievement Gap Can Be Narrowed Further. www.wcer.wisc.edu/news/coverStories/achievement_gap_narrowed.php

Families, Communities, and Schools

Hoover-Dempsey, K.V. & Sandler, H.M. (1995). "Why Do Parents Become Involved in their Children's Education?" Review of Educational Research, 67, pp. 3-42.

Lareau, A. (1987). "Social Class Differences in Family-School Relationships: The Importance of Cultural Capital," Sociology of Education, Vol. 60, pp. 73-85.

Equity, Opportunity, and the Organization of Schools

Jencks, C. & Phillips, M. (1998). "The Black-White Test Score Gap: An Introduction" (Chap. 1), in The Black-White Test Score Gap, Brookings Institution.

Ferguson, Ronald F. (1998). "Can Schools Narrow the Black-White Test Score Gap?" (Chap. 9), in C. Jencks & M. Phillips (Eds), The Black-White Test Score Gap, Brookings Institution.

Hallinan, M. (April, 1994) "Tracking: From Theory to Practice," Sociology of Education, 67.

Gamoran, A. (2001). "American Schooling and Educational Inequality," Sociology of Education (extra issue), pp. 135-153.

Perna, L.W. (2000). "Differences in College Enrollment Among African Americans, Hispanics, and Whites," Journal of Higher Education, 71(2), 117-141.

Reading List: Merit Scholarship Research Project

(*additional reading/not assigned in LPO 3600)

Equity, Opportunity, and the Organization of Schools

Jencks, C. & Phillips, M. (1998). "The Black-White Test Score Gap: An Introduction" (Chap. 1), in The Black-White Test Score Gap, Brookings Institution.

Ferguson, Ronald F. (1998). "Can Schools Narrow the Black-White Test Score Gap?" (Chap. 9), in C. Jencks & M. Phillips (Eds), The Black-White Test Score Gap, Brookings Institution.

Higher Education, Diversity, and Access: The Case of Merit Scholarships

Perna, L.W. (2000). "Differences in College Enrollment Among African Americans, Hispanics, and Whites," Journal of Higher Education, 71(2), 117-141.

**Venezia, A., Kirst, M., & A. Antonio (2005). Betraying the College Dream: How Disconnected K-12 and Postsecondary Education Systems Undermine Student Aspirations, Stanford University Bridge Project Policy Brief.
www.stanford.edu/group/bridgeproject/publications.html (click policy brief)

St. John, E., Simmons, A., & G.D. Musoba (2002). Merit-Aware Admissions in Public Universities, Thought & Action, Vol. 27(2), pp. 35-46.

Heller, D. (2004). State Merit Scholarship Programs: An Overview, in D. Heller & P. Marin (Eds), State Merit Scholarship Programs and Racial Inequality, (Chap. 1), The Civil Rights Project, Harvard University.
www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu/research/meritaid/fullreport04.php
Click on chapter pdf

Farrell, P. (2004). Who Are the Students Receiving Merit Scholarships? in D. Heller & P. Marin (Eds), State Merit Scholarship Programs and Racial Inequality, (Chap. 3), The Civil Rights Project, Harvard University.
www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu/research/meritaid/fullreport04.php

**Cornwell, C. & Mustard, D. (2004). Georgia's HOPE Scholarship and Minority and Low-Income Students: Program Effects and Proposed Reforms, in D. Heller & P. Marin (Eds), State Merit Scholarship Programs and Racial Inequality, (Chap. 4), The Civil Rights Project, Harvard University.
www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu/research/meritaid/fullreport04.php

**St. John, E. (2004). The Impact of Financial Aid Guarantees on Enrollment and Persistence: Evidence from Research on Indiana's Twenty-First Century Scholars and Washington State Achievers Programs, in D. Heller & P. Marin (Eds), State Merit Scholarship Programs and Racial Inequality, (Chap. 6), The Civil Rights Project, Harvard University.
www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu/research/meritaid/fullreport04.php