

5YYD0010 Approaches to Researching Development: Qualitative Methods

Academic year: 2017-2018, Term 2

Convenor: Dr. Raphael Susewind

Seminar leaders: Andrea Espinoza and Artur Borkowski

Rationale: This module explores the theory and application of qualitative approaches to researching development. The module covers foundational texts and approaches to qualitative methods. This exposure to qualitative methodology is valuable in developing students' ability to critically engage with development scholarship. It is also directly relevant to helping students advance the design of their own research projects, such as dissertations, and qualitative research conducted in non-academic jobs.

Lectures: the two hour lectures consist of a combination of lecture based upon the core readings and interactive sessions aimed at the application of the specific aspect of qualitative research covered that week to questions of development. The lectures strive to distil and convey the core concepts presented in each week's readings. Once essential ideas from the readings are covered, the lectures will offer interactive activities to foment students' ability to apply the approach.

Seminars: the weekly seminars before reading week consist of structured discussion of particularly difficult readings (for the first two weeks) and practical exercises around specific methods (weeks 3-5). After reading week, the seminars act as 'writing labs' for the joint development of students' essays. There will be particular focus on revising & editing; this is aimed at advancing students' critical thinking and analytical engagement in the context of qualitative research on development.

Assessment (for this Term 2 component of the module only):

- Assessed essay: 3,000 words
- Due date: TBC

This term's mark comes from the assessed essay only, but this will build upon material generated in the various seminar exercises (before reading week) and writing lab (after reading week). Active participation is thus compulsory.

Educational aims:

- The aim of the module is to familiarise students with basic research approaches relevant to development studies, including the foundations of research, the design and implementation of qualitative research designs, and how to understand and use empirical findings.
- The course aims to familiarize students with aspects of the qualitative research process, the collection of verbal data, and the analysis of text.

Learning outcomes:

- understand the foundations of social research and its uses
- understand the importance of matching question to method and how qualitative research projects are designed and implemented
- demonstrate a knowledge of qualitative techniques appropriate to the study of economic and social development

Employability skills:

- Critical thinking, research & analysis
- Ability to produce clear, structured written work
- Practical experience in select qualitative research methods
- Teamwork, interpersonal skills, valuing diversity and difference

Core course readings:

- Hammersley, Martyn and Atkinson, Paul, 2007: *Ethnography*. Routledge.
- Silverman, David, 2013: *Doing qualitative research*. Sage.
- Desai, Vandana and Potter, Robert B, 2006: *Doing development research*. Sage.

Recommended readings:

- Becker, Howard, 2007: *Writing for social scientists*. Chicago University Press.
- Becker, Howard, 1998: *Tricks of the trade*. Chicago University Press.
- Becker, Howard, 2007: *Telling about society*. Chicago University Press.

Weekly Outline:

Philosophy	1	Lecture: Qualitative material as stuff <i>in</i> the world (RS) Seminars: Debate on Almond & Genco
	2	Lecture: Qualitative methods as view <i>on</i> the world (RS) Seminars: Debate on Geertz
Methods	3	Lecture: Fieldwork: Ethnography and PRA (AE) Seminars: Discussion around DIE report
	4	Lecture: Interviews: Structured, narrative, group (AB) Seminars: Interview exercises
	5	Lecture: Documents: Coding and hermeneutics (RS) Seminars: Content analysis exercises
Reading Week		
Design	6	Lecture: Research ethics (RS) Seminars: Writing Lab
	7	Lecture: Case studies and case selection (RS) Seminars: Writing Lab
Analysis	8	Lecture: Causal mechanisms (RKV) Seminars: Writing Lab
	9	Lecture: Grounded Theory (RS) Seminars: Writing Lab
	10	Lecture: Comparisons and typologies (RS) Seminars: Writing Lab

Detailed syllabus

Week 1: Qualitative material as stuff *in* the world

The terms' first two weeks introduce the field of qualitative methods in the context of social inquiry and research in development. This week makes a start by presenting the position that qualitative methods are appropriate to study specific kinds of phenomena, namely those who cannot or should not be quantified into numbers. Philosophically speaking, this position is often underpinned by a positivist (and sometimes constructivist) epistemology, prominent among political scientists and hence links beautifully to last term's introduction to quantitative methods. The seminars this week will deepen the discussion with specific reference to the paper by Almond & Genco.

Core Readings

- Almond, Gabriel A., and Stephen J. Genco, 1977: Clouds, clocks, and the study of politics. *World Politics* 29(4), 489–522.
- King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane and Sidney Verba, 1994: The science in social science. In: *Designing social inquiry. Scientific inference in qualitative research*. Princeton University Press.

Week 2: Qualitative methods as view on the world

The second introductory week presents another take on qualitative methods. Rather than arguing that these are appropriate for specific kinds of phenomena, this position holds that qualitative research is a distinct perspective on any phenomenon.

Philosophically, this position is underpinned by an interpretivist epistemology, and more frequently found in disciplines such as history or anthropology. The seminars this week will deepen the discussion with specific reference to the two chapters (theory & application) by Geertz. Homework for next week is to conduct the DIE exercise as discussed in the lecture, and write this up in one page or so.

Core Readings

- Geertz, Clifford, 1975: Thick Description. In: Interpretation of cultures. Selected essays. Hutchinson.
- Taylor, Charles, 1971: Interpretation and the sciences of man. The Review of Metaphysics 25(1), 3-51.

Further Readings

- Wikan, Unni, 2012. Preface. A way in the world. In: Resonance. Beyond the words. Chicago University Press.
- Geertz, Clifford, 1975: Deep Play. Notes on the Balinese cockfight. In: Interpretation of cultures. Selected essays. Hutchinson.

Week 3: Fieldwork: Ethnography and PRA

Having examined the philosophical underpinnings of qualitative research, the lectures until reading week turns to practical methods of collecting qualitative data. We start by looking at two sets of fieldwork methods: ethnography (usually interpretivist) and Participatory Rural Appraisal (usually positivist). What are the relative benefits of participant and non-participant observation, for being engaged or maintaining a distance? And how can ethnography help to capture meaning that doesn't get expressed in spoken language? These are some of the questions we discuss. The seminars this week will relate the lecture material back to your reports from the DIE exercise.

Core Readings

- Hammersley, Martyn and Atkinson, Paul, 2007: What is ethnography? In: Ethnography. Routledge.
- Campbell, John R., 2001: Participatory Rural Appraisal as Qualitative Research. Distinguishing Methodological Issues from Participatory Claims. Human Organization 60(4), 380-389.

Further Readings

- Wikan, Unni, 2012: Beyond the words. The power of resonance. In: Resonance. Beyond the words. Chicago University Press
- Wedeen, Lisa, 2010: Reflections on ethnographic work in political science. Annual Review of Political Science 13, 255-272.

Week 4: Interviews: structured, narrative and group

Qualitative approaches to studying development encompass a range of different methods for data collection and interpretation, but interviews are undoubtedly among the most prominent. These come in different forms: expert interviews, biographical interviews, focus groups, to name just a few. This week we focus on how these types are different, but also how all kinds of interviewing rest on similar fundamentals. We explore how to judge the quality of interviews and the pros and cons of working with assistants and interpreters. We also delineate the limits within which interviews are useful in making sense of development – and for which kinds of questions and in which kinds of design other methods should be preferred. The seminars this week consist of hands-on experiments with these different kinds of interviews: you will interview, be interviewed, and observe & discuss interviewing.

Core readings

- Roulston, Kathryn, 2010: Considering quality in qualitative interviewing. *Qualitative Research* 10(2), 199–228.
- Halkier, Benter, 2010. Focus groups as social enactments. Integrating interaction and content in the analysis of focus group data. *Qualitative Research* 10(1), 71–89.

Further readings

- Winchatz, Michaela R, 2006: Fieldworker or foreigner? Ethnographic interviewing in nonnative languages. *Field Methods* 18(1), 83–97.
- Bujra, Janet, 2006: Lost in translation? The use of interpreters in fieldwork. In *Doing development research*, edited by Vandana Desai and Robert B Potter. Sage.

Week 5: Documents: Coding and hermeneutics

Perhaps the second most prominent qualitative method in development research is the study of documents. So-called grey literature, NGO reports, archival material, policy drafts, etc all form the basis of analysis, in lieu of or complementary to fieldwork and interview material. Document analysis is less straight-forward than one might assume, and we will discuss two ways to tackle it: coding and counting for content analysis (in a positivist tradition) and hermeneutic approaches (in an interpretivist tradition). The seminars this week will consist of hands-on experiments with content analysis.

Core readings

- Drisko, James W., and Tina Maschi, 2016: Introduction. In: Content Analysis. Oxford University Press.
- Freeman, Mark, 2015: Narrative as a mode of understanding. In: The handbook of narrative analysis, edited by Anna de Fina and Alexandra Georgakopoulou. Wiley

Further readings

- Blommaert, Jan. 2005. Language and inequality. In: Discourse. A critical introduction. Cambridge University Press.
- Jennings, Michael, 2006: Using Archives. In Doing Development Research, edited by Vandana Desai and Robert B Potter. Sage.

Week 6: Research ethics

After looking at very specific methods before reading week, we now broaden the perspective to wider issues of research design. This week concerns a number of ethical questions around qualitative research in development, including how to work with governmental and non-governmental partners, research assistants and translators, how to navigate power balances, safeguarding data and conducting research in difficult, sensitive or outright dangerous situations. The seminars after reading week will run as a series of writing labs to jointly plan, develop, write, revise, and edit your assessed essays.

Core readings

- Hammersley, Martyn and Atkinson, Paul, 2007: Field relations. In: Ethnography. Routledge.
- Brydon, Lynne, 2006: Ethical practices in doing development research. In: Doing development research, edited by Vandana Desai and Robert B Potter. Sage.

Further readings

- Kendall, Nancy and Miriam Thangaraj, 2013: Ethnography. In: Reviewing qualitative research in the social sciences, edited by Audrey A Trainor and Elizabeth Graue. Routledge.
- <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/innovation/research/support/ethics/index.aspx>

Week 7: Case studies and case selection

The second week on research design is devoted to one of the most fundamental decisions for many qualitative studies – and one that is most frequently ill conceived: the selection, contrasting and comparison of cases. When is it better to study a phenomenon in one single case study, when are several cases of advantage – and either way, how can one select good ones? The seminars will continue to run as a series of writing labs to jointly plan, develop, write, revise, and edit your assessed essays.

Core Readings

- Small, Mario Luis, 2009: 'How many cases do I need?' On science and the logic of case selection in field-based research. *Ethnography* 10(1), 5-38.
- Gerring, John and Jason Seawright, 2008: Case selection techniques in case study research: A menu of qualitative and quantitative options. *Political Research Quarterly* 61(2), 294-308.

Further readings

- Savolainen, Jukka, 1994: The rationality of drawing big conclusions based on small samples. In defense of Mill's methods. *Social Forces* 72(4), 1217-1224.
- Geddes, Barbara, 1990: How the cases you choose affect the answers you get. Selection bias in Comparative Politics. *Political Analysis* 2, 131-152.

Week 8: Process Tracing and Causal Mechanisms

This week turns to the final set of lectures, on analytical strategies. We start with process tracing as a method employed to test, and demonstrate, a causal chain. Process tracing is a research method that involves the identification of a series of events, decisions and other occurrences chronologically. Causality – and causal mechanisms in particular – refer to concepts to explain (the how and why of) an outcome. This is very much a positivist, Almond & Genco style take. The seminars will continue to run as a series of writing labs to jointly plan, develop, write, revise, and edit your assessed essays.

Core Readings

- Tilly, Charles, 2001: Mechanisms in political processes. *Annual Review of Political Science* 4, 21–41.
- Gerring, John, 2010: Causal mechanisms. Yes, but.... *Comparative Political Studies* 43, 1499-1526.

Further Readings

- Collier, David, 2011: Understanding process tracing. *PS: Political Science & Politics* 44(4), 823-830.
- Brady, Henry E, 2008: Causation and explanation in social science. In: *Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*, edited by Janet Box-Steffensmeier, Henry Brady and David Collier. Oxford University Press.

Week 9: Grounded Theory

The second lecture on analytical strategies looks at a prominent set of strategies developed from an interpretivist tradition: Grounded Theory. What are its principles, and when are they implemented well? The seminars will continue to run as a series of writing labs to jointly plan, develop, write, revise, and edit your assessed essays.

Core Readings

- Becker, Howard, 1998: Concepts. In: Tricks of the trade. Chicago University Press.
- Charmaz, Kathy, 2013: An invitation to grounded theory. In: Constructing grounded theory. Sage.

Further readings

- McCormack, Coralie, 2000: From interview transcript to interpretive story. Part 1 – viewing the transcript through multiple lenses. *Field Methods* 12(4), 282-297.
- McCormack, Coralie, 2000: From interview transcript to interpretive story. Part 2 – developing an interpretive story. *Field Methods* 12(4), 282-297.

Week 10: Comparisons and typologies

The module's final week explores an epistemologically agnostic analytical strategy, which is hence particularly prominent in mixed method research: contrast & compare approaches, and the creation of typologies. We also explore qualitative approaches that offer large-N and mixed method techniques, such as "fuzzy sets" and Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA). The seminars will conclude the process of jointly planning, developing, writing, revising, and editing your assessed essays.

Core readings

- Ragin, Charles, 2014: The distinctiveness of comparative social science. In: Comparative method. Moving beyond qualitative and quantitative strategies. University of California Press.
- Sartori, Giovanni, 1991. Comparing and miscomparing. *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 3, 243-257

Further Readings

- Jensenius, Francesca Refsum, 2014: The Fieldwork of Quantitative Data Collection. *PS: Political Science & Politics* 47(2), 402-404.
- Maxwell, Joseph A, 2010: Using numbers in qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry* 16(6), 475–82.