

PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHOP
THURSDAY, JANUARY 15, 2009, 1:00 pm – 5:30 pm
HALF DAY WORKSHOP

Title

Doing Qualitative Research: Balancing Flexibility with Methodological, Ethical and Practical Considerations

Instructors

Deborah K. Padgett, Professor, New York University
Ben F. Henwood, PhD student, New York University

Abstract

Many textbooks and journal articles have been devoted to qualitative methods but the actual doing of qualitative research remains an ‘untold story’ (Cheek, 2000). With their inherent flexibility, qualitative studies often present unforeseen challenges in design and implementation. This workshop will address the practical, methodological and ethical issues of doing qualitative research based upon the experiences of the presenters’ experiences in conducting a four-year NIMH-funded qualitative study. While attention is given to dealing with external funders and working as a team, most of the topics are applicable to studies conducted by a solo investigator (e.g., dissertation research).

Topics addressed in the workshop include:

- ◆ Deciding on each team member’s role, time and effort
- ◆ Fostering teamwork and ensuring adequate supervision
- ◆ Recruiting study participants; working with gatekeepers and study sites
- ◆ Monitoring budgets and allocating resources
- ◆ Retaining and keeping track of study participants
- ◆ Managing data and ensuring confidentiality
- ◆ Debriefing re: emotional and ethical issues
- ◆ Using and applying strategies for rigor
- ◆ Use(s) of qualitative data analysis software
- ◆ Writing progress and final reports
- ◆ Ending the study: notifying participants and sharing findings (and feelings)
- ◆ Publishing results from the study

As qualitative studies gain in popularity, their success depends upon a sound infrastructure. Fostering rigorous methods and confidence in findings depends upon mentoring and sharing information on what works.

Career Level and Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites but attendees are assumed to have previous experience and/or coursework in qualitative methods. Dr. Padgett’s 2008 textbook (*Qualitative Methods in Social Work Research, 2nd ed., Sage Publications*) is a helpful adjunct to the workshop content.

Methods and Approach

The workshop format will be didactic but also interactive. Attendees will be urged to share their experiences in conducting qualitative research (although there will not be sufficient time to deal with individual projects in any depth). Specific examples of challenges associated with qualitative studies will be described and alternative solutions discussed. The presenters will share examples of forms, spreadsheets and other materials useful in doing qualitative research.

Materials

Participants will receive a set of Powerpoint slides and copies of illustrative forms and materials.

Presenter Bios

Dr. Deborah Padgett, a Professor at the Silver School of Social Work (New York University), is an anthropologist and mental health services researcher. She is the editor of *The Qualitative Research Experience* (2004), author of *Qualitative Methods in Social Work Research* (2nd edition, 2008), and co-author of *Program Evaluation* (5th ed., forthcoming). Dr. Padgett was co-principal investigator on two NIMH-funded grants and an NCI-funded mixed methods study of African-American women and breast cancer screening; she was also national Co-Director of the Screening Adherence Follow-up (SAFe) project funded by the Centers for Disease Control. She was most recently Principal Investigator of The New York Services Study, an all-qualitative four-year study of dual diagnosed homeless funded by the National Institute of Mental Health. Her expertise in qualitative methods has led to invitations to speak at several NIH-sponsored training institutes and grant proposal reviews. Dr. Padgett has also been an active mentor of other researchers and has served on numerous journal editorial boards. Recently, she has been teaching courses on socio-behavioral health and qualitative/field methods in NYU's Global Public Health program.

Benjamin Henwood, LMSW, is a doctoral student at NYU's Silver School of Social Work whose clinical and research experience has focused on services for dually diagnosed homeless adults. He is the recipient of a NIMH pre-doctoral fellowship (Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Award) that supports a qualitative study of mental health providers' treatment approaches for his dissertation. He was an interviewer and data analyst on the New York Services Study.