

# Research Design II: Qualitative methods Connecting Data and Arguments

1<sup>st</sup> semester, 2<sup>nd</sup> Block 2012

University of Amsterdam - RMSS

**Instructor:** Dr. Francois Bonnet ([f.c.a.bonnet@uva.nl](mailto:f.c.a.bonnet@uva.nl), Spinhuis 1.18)

**Location:**

Monday, 9h-11h, OIH D3.06

Wednesday, 9h-11h, OIH D3.06

**Credits:** 6 EC

## Course Description

The aim of the course is to provide students with the basic tools needed to connect qualitative methods and theory into a valid sociological argument. It consists in reading notable sociology articles and discussing how published authors connect data and arguments in their writings.

The course is reading intensive and aims at developing the students' critical mind and ability to link fieldwork and theory. Each week, we will read two sociology articles and analyze how recent authors manage to get published while using diverse types of qualitative methods. For each text, we will ask the following questions:

- What are the author's research questions?
- What is the author's theoretical/thematic environment?
- What is the author's empirical protocol? How does the author's protocol relate to the research question? What substantive argument is the author able to make with his empirical protocol?
- What is the endgame? How is the research non-trivial? How could things be different?

The expected benefits from the course are:

- Extend one's sociological culture by reading important papers in various fields
- Learn how to read closely sociology articles and to discuss sociological arguments
- Be attentive to concrete methodological questions
- Always think of methods of a means to an end – the end being the ability to construct a sociological argument by connecting data and theory

The course is not an introduction to qualitative methods and is aimed at students who understand the basic concepts of qualitative research.

## Course Structure

The weekly sessions are centered on readings and practical discussions of how to link theory and data in qualitative research. Students are required to actively participate in the discussions. Class attendance is mandatory.

## **Course Objectives**

- Develop the ability to discern the relevance of qualitative data
- Be familiar with (some of) the different styles of qualitative research and develop an openness to the diversity of the social sciences
- Identify the articulation of theory and methods in contemporary research.

## **Readings**

All readings will be made available electronically, through blackboard or emails.

## **Attendance**

Students are expected to attend all lectures. Students who miss more than 2 meetings will lose 2 points on their final grade.

## **Assignments and assessment**

Every session (10 sessions), students will write a 500-word paper about the readings, basically responding to the questions outlined *supra*, plus addressing each week's theme. Students are allowed to skip 2 paper, but will receive a bonus for the additional assignment(s) that they write. There are therefore 8 mandatory papers to complete to receive a grade for this course. The final grade of the course will consist in an assessment of the average quality of said 8 papers, plus bonus for completing additional papers. An extra bonus on the final grade will be awarded for participation in class.

Papers are printed and handed out in class.

## **Plagiarism and fraud**

All exams and papers will be checked for plagiarism and fraud (and when found out, consequences will be serious). For university regulations and procedures in case of plagiarism and fraud see:

[http://www.ishss.uva.nl/Rules\\_Regulations\\_Procedures/plagiarism.htm](http://www.ishss.uva.nl/Rules_Regulations_Procedures/plagiarism.htm)

## **Organizational meeting (29/10)**

*These texts need to be read but students are not supposed to write anything about them (take notes, by all means, but do not submit anything about it).*

Abend, Gabriel 2008, "The Meaning of Theory", *Sociological Theory*, 26 (2)

Abbott, Andrew. Chapter 2 (selection) and 6 from *Methods of Discovery: Heuristics for the Social Sciences*. W. W. Norton & Company, 2004. pp. 41-53, pp.162-210

Healy, Kieran 1999, "How to think about your research paper", unpublished manuscript, <http://www.kieranhealy.org/files/teaching/methods2.pdf>

## **Session 1. The limitations of qualitative research (31/10)**

*These texts need to be read but students are not supposed to write anything about them (take notes, by all means, but do not submit anything about it).*

Ambert, Anne-Marie et al. 1995, "Understanding and evaluating qualitative research", *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, vol. 57, pp. 879-893

Stanley, Lieberman 1992, "Small N's and big conclusions: an examination of the reasoning in comparative studies based on a small number of cases", in Charles C. Ragin, Howard S. Becker (ed.), *What is a Case? Exploring the Foundations of Social Inquiry*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 105-118

## **Session 2. Ethnography and access (5/11)**

Goffman, Alice 2009, "On the Run. Wanted Men in a Philadelphia Ghetto", *American Sociological Review*, vol. 74, 2009

Geertz, Clifford 1973, "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight", in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books

## **Session 3. Systems of actors (7/11)**

Marwell, Nicole P. 2004, "Privatizing the Welfare State: Nonprofit Community Based Organizations as Political Actors", *American Sociological Review*, 69 (2), pp. 265-291

Callon, Michel 1986, "Some elements of a sociology of translation: domestication of the scallops and the fishermen of St Brieuc Bay", in J. Law (ed.), *Power, action and belief: a new sociology of knowledge?*, London, Routledge, 1986, pp.196-223

#### **Session 4. Samples (12/11)**

Kirschenman, Joleen and Kathryn M. Neckerman, "'We'd love to hire them but...': The Meaning of Race for Employers", in C.Jencks and P.E. Peterson (ed.), *The Urban Underclass*, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1991, pp. 203-234

Lee, Jennifer 2002, "From Civil Relations to Racial Conflict: Merchant-Customer Interactions in Urban America", *American Sociological Review*, 67 (1), pp. 77-98

#### **Session 5. Analyzing documents (14/11)**

Rivera, Lauren A. 2008, "Managing "Spoiled" National Identity: War, Tourism, and Memory in Croatia", *American Sociological Review*, 73 (4), pp. 613-634

Tavory, Iddo and Ann Swidler 2009, "Condom Semiotics: Meaning and Condom Use in Rural Malawi", *American Sociological Review*, vol. 74, pp. 171-189

#### **Session 6. Theorizing: interpretative and positivist routes (19/11)**

Bernstein, Elizabeth 2001, "The meaning of the purchase", *Ethnography*, 2 (3), pp. 389-420

Uzzi, Brian 1997, "Social structure and competition in interfirm networks: the paradox of embeddedness", *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 42 (1)

#### **Session 7. Theorizing: culture and morality (21/11)**

Pattillo-McCoy, Mary. 1998. "Church Culture as a Strategy of Action in the Black Community". *American Sociological Review*, vol. 63, December, pp. 767-784

Abramson, Corey M. and Darren Modzelewski 2011, "Caged Morality: Moral Worlds, Subculture, and Stratification Among Middle-Class Cage-Fighters", *Qualitative Sociology*, vol. 34, pp. 143-175

#### **Session 8. Exposing greater evils (26/11)**

Auyero, Javier and Debora Swistun 2008, "The Social Production of Toxic Uncertainty", *American Sociological Review*, 73 (3), pp. 357-379

Scheper-Hughes, Nancy 2004, "Parts unknown. Undercover ethnography of the organs-trafficking underworld", *Ethnography*, 5(1), pp. 29-73

#### **Session 9. Special guest: Giselinde Kuipers (28/11)**

Giselinde Kuipers, "Lost (and gained) in globalization: Screen translation and the production of national difference in global media culture"

Eliasoph, Nina 1990, "Political Culture and the Presentation of a Political Self. A Study in the Spirit of Erving Goffman", *Theory and Society*, vol. 19, pp. 465-494

**Session 10. Special guest: Olga Sezneva (3/12)**

Olga Sezneva, “Re-thinking Copyright Through the Copy in Russia”

Francois Bonnet, “How to perform non-racism?” + reviews from journals

**Session 11. Special guest: Rachel Spronk (5/12)**

Rachel Spronk, “Good sex” in Nairobi. Gender, sexuality and erotic pleasures in anthropological praxis”

*Debriefing*