



# QUALITATIVE METHODS FOR GATHERING DATA

SOWK 430: Social Work Research Methods  
Module 7: Qualitative Inquiry  
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Ella/she/her



## Let's Review

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- Provide a definition of qualitative research (foundation, characteristics).
- What is ethnography?
- What is phenomenology?
- Provide examples of field research.
- What is grounded theory?
- Provide examples of case studies.

## Class Objectives

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- Learn about qualitative methods for gathering data.
- Discuss the difference between participant and non-participant observation.
- Discuss the difference between structured and unstructured interviewing.
- Identify case study documents.
- Understand the use of field notes and practice completing field notes.

## Qualitative Methods

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- Qualitative traditions all have certain methods that are employed to both:
  - Collect data
  - Analyze data
- Don't confuse the tradition with the method! The "Methods" are:
  - Observation (Participant or Direct)
  - Interviews (Unstructured or Structured)
  - Case Studies
  - Focus Groups

## Participant/Non-Participant Observation

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- A method of qualitative observation where the researcher becomes a participant in the culture or context being observed
- This method often involves a time commitment
  - Months or years
  - Researcher must work to establish a connection/relationship with the group being studied

# Participant/Non-Participant Observation: Community G-8 in Puerto Rico

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# Participant/Non-Participant Observation:

What to observe

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- The social, cultural, political, or economic context in which the behavior occurs and why it occurs
- Physical surroundings
- Other people in the setting
- The interactions among different people in the setting
- Formal and informal patterns of interaction among people
- Organization of people
- Informal or formal rules in operation

# Participant/Non-Participant Observation: Community G-8 in Puerto Rico

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# Participant/Non-Participant Observation:

What to observe II

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- Recurring events
- “Down time” when things don’t happen
- Sequence of events
- Differences in what happens at various times
- Ritual and Ceremonies
- Crises
- Unplanned activities



# Participant/Non-Participant Observation: Community G-8 in Puerto Rico

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# FIELD NOTES!

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- Field notes are the details of the events in our research context
  - They constitute the data on which later conclusions will be based.
  - It is essential that field notes be taken “in the moment” or as soon as possible after leaving the field site. So...
- Field notes should contain:
  - **Jottings:** Brief words or phrases written down while at the field site; kept in a notebook and are meant to help you remember things afterward.
  - **Field Notes:** Everything you can remember about the occasion (details based on “jots”).

## Structured/Unstructured Interviewing

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- An interviewing method that uses a pretermitted/no predetermined interview protocol wherein the interview questions emerge and evolve as the interview proceeds
- Much like a natural conversation
- **Next week, you will learn about constructing questions and developing interviewing skills.**



# Case Study Documents

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- Case notes
- Interviews
- Collateral information
- Media
- Historical records



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## Focus Groups

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- The researcher gathers information about attitudes, opinions, and preferences of selected groups of participants
- Can be used to generate as many ideas on a topic as possible and to achieve consensus in a group
- Useful in marketing, survey development



## LET'S PRACTICE!

- Group
- Interaction
- Crowd



## Presentation Feedback

THANK YOU FOR  
YOUR TIME!

