

in rethinking their designs and developing their research design skills.

Despite the difficulty of some of these choices, and my inability to adequately resolve some of them, this course was a lot of fun to teach. It gave me the chance to closely follow the burgeoning literature on qualitative methods, and the quality of the student's research designs seems to indicate that many of these decision were the correct ones. Philosophy of social science issues did come up periodically in our discussion, and it would have been best if we had addressed them systematically. For those of you "lucky" enough to have thirteen weeks of teaching, I would recommend adding several sessions on it.

Qualitative Methods Textbooks

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Over the past few years, the number of political science departments offering qualitative methods courses has grown substantially. The number of qualitative methods textbooks has kept pace, providing instructors with an overwhelming array of choices. But how to decide which text to choose from this exhortatory smorgasbord? The scholarship desperately needs evaluation. Yet the task is not entirely straightforward: qualitative methods textbooks reflect the diversity inherent in qualitative methods itself. Consequently, evaluating qualitative methods textbooks consists more of weighing competing strengths than identifying weaknesses. I undertake just such an evaluation in the following survey, which should be useful both to teachers of qualitative methods and to researchers keen to brush up on specific techniques.

What counts as a textbook? In general, I have let existing teachers of qualitative methods decide. This sample includes texts that are regularly assigned in qualitative methods classes,¹ as well some additional recent publications. I have, however, restricted the sample to books published in the last twenty years; thus classics like Smelser (1976), Przeworski & Teune (1970), and Stinchcombe (1968) are not included. Moreover I have excluded books that, while quite useful for addressing particular topics, are not precisely teaching texts, such as Mahoney and Rueschemeyer (2003) and Goertz and Starr (2002). Finally, I do not include eagerly awaited, but still unpublished texts, like Brady and Collier (Fall 2003) and George and Bennett (Fall 2003). Nonetheless, the criteria I employ here should continue to be useful for evaluating future contributions to the field.

Much of the evaluation has been incorporated into a summary chart, which allows readers to quickly compare the strengths of the sampled textbooks. The letters that run along the top of the chart correspond to the first three letters of textbook authors' last names listed below (with full bibliographical information, price, and page-length). In closing, I com-

ment briefly on three authors whose work has proved exceptionally useful to qualitative-methods instructors and practitioners.

Three Authors in Greater Detail

Ragin, Charles. 1989 *The Comparative Method*, Berkeley: UCP. 218 pages. \$18.95.

———. 1994. *Constructing Social Research*. Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge. 208 pages. \$29.95.

———. 2000. *Fuzzy Set Social Science*. Chicago: University of Chicago. 352 pages. \$20.00.

Charles Ragin's methodological trilogy seems particularly ill-suited to the tabular evaluation used above. Though Ragin addresses many of the same issues as other authors (e.g., conceptualization, measurement, causation, and research design), his vision of social-science is rather different. In synthesizing qualitative and quantitative strategies, he provides probing comparative criticism of case-oriented and variable-oriented research. This discussion provides constructive interlocution for advocates from diverse methodological traditions. His treatment of causal complexity, combinatorial causation, and the dialogue between ideas and evidence should be useful at both the undergraduate and graduate level. Finally, graduate students and professional scholars alike will benefit from insightful instructions for qualitative comparative methods (QCA) from their chief advocate.

Becker., Howard S. 1998. *Tricks of the Trade: How to Think about Your Research While You're Doing It*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago. 232 pages. \$9.65.

Tricks of the Trade provides a long-overdue and welcome complement to standard approach to methods. Becker provides graduate students with what we crave: practical knowledge (*metis*) about how research *is* done, rather than how research *should be* done. As a result, most scholars will probably find at least one – more likely several – pieces of advice they disagree with in the book, depending on their methodological and ontological tastes. Yet the book overflows with insight. Becker supplements his valuable discussions of sampling and conceptualization with less well-trodden topics, like how one's image of the world shapes one's own research. The book also spends a good deal of time discussing less familiar qualitative research strategies, such as truth tables and property space analysis. Adding to the book's charm, Becker's engaging informal writing style makes *Tricks of the Trade* a particularly accessible and pleasurable read.

Lieberson, Stanley. 1987. *Making it Count: The Improvement of Social Research and Theory*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 272 pages. \$21.95

In this thoughtful book, Stanley Lieberson carefully dissects the differences between experimental and non-experimental research. His damning critique of scholars who misuse

	Babbie Booth et al. Cresswell Denzin et al. Donovan et al.	Emerson Ethridge Feldman Gerring Gubrium et al.	King et al. Johnson et al. Marshall et al. Maxwell Miles et al.	Monroe Neuman Newman et al. Patton Scholz et al.	Shively Stern et al. Van Evera Wolcott Yin
Politics as Science (Causality)	x	x	x x	x x x	x
Builds to Large-N?	x	x	x x		x
Post-Modern Leanings?		x x	x	x	
Hypotheses, Law, Theory	x	x	x x x	x x x	x x x x
Research Questions	x x		x	x x	x x
Research Proposals			x x	x	x
Literature Review			x	x	x x
Research Design	x		x x	x x	x x x
Concept Formation	x	x	x x x x	x x	x
Data Collection Prep	x x		x	x x x x	x x
Measurement	x	x	x x	x x x	x
Case Selection/Sampling	x x x	x	x x x x x	x x	x x x
Case Studies		x x		x x	x x
Observation	x x x		x x	x x x x	x x
Interviewing/Survey	x x x	x	x x	x x x	
Field Research	x	x x x		x x x	
Interpretivism		x		x x	
Ethnography		x x	x	x x	
Content Analysis	x	x	x x	x x	
Comparative-historical analysis	x			x x	
Grounded Theory		x x		x x	
Descriptive Stats	x	x	x	x x	x
Bi-/Multivariate Stats	x	x	x	x x	x
Data Management	x x x	x	x x	x x	x x
Writing	x x x		x	x x	x x x x
Validity/Evaluation/Verification/Testing	x x x x		x x x x	x x x x	x x x x
Just Political Science?		x	x x	x	x x
Appropriate for Undergraduates?	x x	x	x x	x x x	x x x
Exercises?	x x		x x	x x	x x
Exceptionally readable	x		x		x x

Bold-face indicates an extensive discussion of the issue. Full citations are listed below.

the experimental analogy to describe and evaluate non-experimental research remains an important benchmark for thinking about the limits of research questions and design. More generally, this practitioner’s critique effectively debunks several long-standing myths of statistical research. In particular, this quite readable book’s discussions of case selection, counterfactuals, and control variables will provoke ample discussion among newcomers (and not-so-newcomers) to social-scientific methods.

Endnotes

¹Thanks to David Yang for his help compiling this sample.

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Qualitative Methods Syllabi

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The teaching of qualitative methodology covers a broad spectrum of courses ranging from the survey of philosophy of science to hands-on advice on conducting focus groups. This report focuses on courses that are designed to provide a general introduction to qualitative research, leaving aside more advanced seminars focusing on specific methodological topics. A total of 25 syllabi were selected for review from the list compiled by the CQRM website, all of which are from nationally renowned universities with substantial doctoral programs in political science. Included in the sample are contributions from some of the premier scholars in our discipline today. This summary provides a partial list of topics covered under the rubric of “qualitative methodology” and identifies some “essential readings” in this area of study. In addition, it will present a few examples of innovative assignments that other instructors might wish to adopt.

Broadly speaking, the topics covered can be categorized into three main areas: A macro area dealing with the philosophy and epistemology of social science; a meso area dealing with research design and strategies; and a micro area dealing with the practical nuts-and-bolts of research implementation. (Some recurrent topics in each area are provided in table 1.) I included in the “macro” category those topics relating to the philosophy of social science, overviews of various scholarly approaches, as well as the basic building-block concepts in social scientific methodology. In the “meso” category are basic strategies of qualitative research, topics in comparative methods, as well as entries in the quantitative-qualitative debate. Discussions of specific research techniques are placed in the “micro” category.

The categorization is somewhat arbitrary, as one can hardly separate issues of research design from their epistemological foundations, nor isolate problems of implementation from the overall blueprint of the study. Many of the syllabus items also defy simple categorization. Nonetheless, this schematic is a useful heuristic for organizing the large body of material, and is reflective of three major approaches to the teaching of methodology.

Not surprisingly, the areas receiving the most attention were the macro and meso areas dealing with epistemological issues and research design. While almost every syllabus in this sample touched upon the above two areas, only about half the syllabi covered practical research techniques. A few courses were obviously designed primarily as “how-to” courses em-