Title: A Mini, Mini Ethnography

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As stated in the abstract, the collection offered here should be integrated into an instructor's lecture and discussion schedule and paced appropriately. Such pacing will allow students to digest reading and discussion work, apply this work to the labs, and complete outside field work in stages. In order to consider this pacing more fully, I thought it best to start with an example of what students might see as the end goal in their course syllabus. I have highlighted pieces that would require editing:

- **Qualitative Research Portfolio:** Your final qualitative assignment will be to produce a "mini, mini ethnography" through a field work project that will include jottings from the field, final field work notes and reflections, analysis, and outside documents that enhance your understanding of the research question you develop. This project will start with Lab 1 and carry through the rest of the unit. You will be asked to bring in local media sources and sociological theory to inform your analysis. All materials will be organized/scanned/copied into a single document that you will post to **Blackboard/D2L/etc. by DATE/TIME**. While we will discuss this project daily throughout the term, a brief outline of the requirements is available in the content section of Blackboard/D2L.

- Instructor Note: Notice the Qualitative Research Portfolio Outline document. This can give the students an idea of the workload and serve as an ongoing reference over the term. The labs below are designed to answer some of the questions stated throughout the outline or, at very least, get the students moving in the right direction in regard to research questions, observation, interview, outside sources, and so on.

Of course, the instructor will be required to establish a variety of concepts/terms/ideas before this work can commence. Below, I offer a variety of texts and readings I find useful for structuring this qualitative unit. The Bryman (2012) text has been my required text for three years now because of its depth, incorporation of feminist perspectives, and easy reference for students. I pick and choose readings from the others to expand concepts and offer more examples.

- **Suggested Texts and Readings:**
    - Bryman, Allen. 2012. *Social Research Methods. 4th ed*. Oxford University Press.
    - Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. 2011. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes, Second Edition*. University of Chicago Press.

- Sprague, Joey. 2005. *Feminist Methodologies for Critical Researchers: Bridging Differences*. Rowman Altamira.
- Shaffier, William B. 1980. *Fieldwork Experience: Qualitative Approaches to Social Research*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

To build on readings, I incorporate a series of lab exercises that incorporate components of the qualitative research portfolio. This approach will facilitate ongoing interaction among the students in regard to the final project. This, I think, creates some accountability as they know what's expected of them on lab days. It will also structure feedback between the instructor and students allowing the instructor to monitor progress and the students to build on early attempts.

- **Lab Work:** There will be five in-class lab assignments throughout the qualitative unit. These are designed to take a hands-on look at the issues from the text we are currently working with. Moreover, each lab will help you develop pieces of the final project and get feedback on your ideas. Lab assignments should be easy and fun points but please keep in mind that these days CANNOT be made up. In other words, missing these days or failing to take them seriously can result in significant damage to your grade. I encourage you to prepare for these labs and participate fully. All necessary information for these days will be provided in the class prior but for now, here is a brief preview of what we will be doing…

  LAB 1: Developing a Qualitative Research Strategy – This lab will allow you to begin conceptualization of your project through discussion with your colleagues.

  Instructor Note: This lab requires that each student bring some sort of news article that is related to the topic she/he is interested in studying. Reminding the students that this article can be used as a component of the final project can motivate them to bring something good. A discussion of seeing research projects in everyday life and developing research questions from social issues should precede this lab. I like to follow up with a discussion about how students might improve upon early research questions.

  LAB 2: Observation (finished before the start of class) – The best way to learn some research methods is to do them. You're going to be doing at least 2 hours of observation for class discussion.

  Instructor Note: With 2 hours of observation involved in this lab, students can get started on the 10 hours required for their final project here. It is therefore necessary that they have settled on a research strategy after getting some feedback from the instructor from lab one. Most of this lab is done outside of class so in-class discussion is more about the experience of research. Clinton Sanders's "Rope Burns" in Shaffir (1980) can be helpful here. In addition, here are some questions that you can use to facilitate group discussion:

  Take some time to discuss your project with your group members.
  - What did you decide to observe?
  - Did this affect your conceptualization of your research question(s)? In what way?
  - How did you sample? How was this driven by your research question?

- How did you take notes? Did note-taking compromise your work in any way?

Discuss the experience as a researcher.

- How did doing this type of work make you feel?
- Did anyone confront you about your work? What did you do/say?
- What will you do differently for your next observation?

Now that you've observed for two hours, what might you say about the standpoint/perspective of your primary subject?

- Has your understanding changed at all at this early stage?

Assess the standing of your research question.

- What's working?
- What isn't?
- Is your data answering your question(s)?
    - If yes, how will you go about obtaining more depth in your next observation?
    - If no, what question is it answering? How might you have to adjust?

LAB 3: Operating and Interviewing in the Field – As a component of your final project, this lab will prepare you for semi-structured interviewing.

Instructor Note: This lab prepares a semi-structure interview schedule. Despite the disadvantages, I do not allow recording of any interview in this project. Thus it is important that when discussing qualitative interviewing, students understand the challenges they will face in regard to note taking, recall, response bias, and so on. I have included a sample of a simple consent form as an additional resource.

LAB 4: Coding Qualitative Data - Here we will code a piece of interview data for themes and patterns. This group work will prepare you for similar work in your own project.

Instructor Note: For this lab, I use a piece of interview data from my own work that has been authorized by my respondent for course usage. In the best interest of this respondent, I suggest you find your own piece of interview data that offers a clear and simple account that students can code. I would not suggest allowing them to bring in their own interview data because the point is to have students compare/contrast what they find in a similar piece of text.

LAB 5: Document Analysis – This work will help break down outside documents that can be used as primary or secondary data in a qualitative study.

Instructor Note: This lab requires that each student bring two news articles or organization documents that she/he anticipates using in the context section of their final project. This lab is a more involved version of lab 4 and takes coding and synthesis to a level consistent with requirements of the final project. It can be beneficial to give time for each student to briefly present these findings to the rest of their class so each student can hear the different ways others are understanding phenomena through outside materials.