Title: A Mini, Mini Ethnography

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Abstract

Since I first taught methods in graduate school, students have consistently requested more hands-on experiences prior to their senior research projects. In response, I have developed a series of labs, discussion issues, and field work exercises that can be integrated into a variety of social science research methods courses. Drawing on Wolcott's (1990) use of the term "micro-ethnography," I began calling this qualitative unit a "mini mini ethnography." This series is designed to encourage discussion of qualitative research concepts, implementation of multiple qualitative methods, and skills development by building on early work. By integrating these lab exercises and outside field work into a lecture and discussion schedule, the instructor can introduce major concepts and reinforce their importance throughout the term. Unlike observation or interview exercises often utilized in methods courses, this approach gives students a much more realistic glimpse of field work; a glimpse that demands a high level of organization and continual engagement with concepts and research questions as they evolve. At the same time, students can improve upon their early missteps for the final portfolio and produce a project appropriate for any student symposium.