

What is it like to teach qualitative methods to graduate students in predominantly quantitative departments? We draw on our experiences teaching fieldwork in three departments to show that folk notions of science—ideas about how scientific work should be done—make it difficult to teach an inductive approach to fieldwork. Specifically, these folk notions make it hard for students to take an open approach to their studies, use their emotions in developing their analyses, and write ongoing analyses of their field notes. Throughout the article, we offer strategies for dealing with students' resistance.

Abstract

QUALITATIVELY DIFFERENT

Teaching Fieldwork to Graduate Students

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What am I looking for? Sometimes I get a nervous pang in my stomach when I think to myself that fieldwork is so undirected, especially since I want to make a thesis out of it. . . . I must admit that I would feel better if I knew where I was going. . . . It is always comforting to feel like you have some grounding. I feel like I'm floating now.

A graduate student in one of our fieldwork classes freewrote this comment early in the semester.¹ This student captured well the feelings of many other students—and perhaps even experienced field-workers—in the early stages of a project.

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Why are students uncomfortable? On the first day of class, we make students choose a group or setting to study throughout the semester and have them begin their fieldwork immediately. Students hand in field notes by the second week, writing down everything they saw or heard. We also ask them to hand in commentary (notes-on-notes) about everything they found interesting in their field notes. We tell them they need not know at the outset what others have written about the setting or group or which theory they will use.

Few students are grateful for this opportunity to jump into the unknown. Students have learned from their quantitative courses that to do "real science," they should do an exhaustive search of the literature, come up with a problem and hypotheses, write a proposal, and then collect data to see if their guesses were right. Students also believe that they should put aside their feelings about the group they will study and that they should not write a word of analysis until they have finished collecting data.²

These folk notions of science—ideas about how scientific work should be done—are ingrained in our students. As teachers and advisers of students doing fieldwork, we provoke the fears and resistance of students who believe we not only violate the scientific canon but unfairly put them in an anxiety-producing situation. They think we are sending them into the woods without a compass.³

Yet some students learn that uncertainty can be exciting. One student in our class wrote,

What questions are interesting seem to change with each session [in the field]. This whole process is a slow and evolving one, quite contrary to the quantitative work I'm used to (not that quantitative is fast, it just seems more focused, though maybe that is an illusion). I am enjoying the richer experience of this qualitative work, and feel I am learning more about the subjects than is possible in any quantitative methodology.

How can we get more students to find uncertainty exciting rather than scary? We are still learning. What follows are some of the things we have done in the classroom that might help.⁴

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The image of the research at every turn

LOSING CONTROL

Some of us look back fondly at the time when we were students. We did not yet have the burden of being experts—those who are supposed to know everything. Students can make mistakes, even fall on their faces. But in our nostalgia we forget that as graduate students, we experienced a lot of anxiety and uncertainty (Mechanic 1962). We had to pass exams and prove ourselves to professors, those who had a lot of control over our lives and our livelihoods (see Egan 1989; Kleinman 1983; Sanford 1976).

Graduate students are school wise. They have done well taking tests and writing term papers for many years and have become invested in being good students. Fieldwork, they recognize, is different from the kinds of work they have done before, and they worry that they will not do it right, let alone well. Understandably, students seek comfort by trying to control what they can in this new task, beginning with their choice of a setting. They believe there is a short list of perfect settings, and if they choose "the right one," they will succeed. As one student put it in his freewriting, "I want to have *exactly* the right group. I want to pick the *best* group." And his classmate wrote,

I want to do a *good* project. I want it to be interesting, to be meaningful. I want to take *good notes* and make good observations. I want it to "flow." (I fear a dud) I fear reaching the end of the semester and feeling utterly defeated because my project has yielded no substantive sociological information, no compelling revelations, not even fieldnotes which could appeal to the prurient interest!

Students are also aware of the competitive nature of schooling, a context where they have pretty much come out on top in earlier years. They fear that they will find themselves doing worse than their peers in this kind of work. As one student freewrote, "I'm perhaps a little intimidated. Will I choose a good setting? Will I do as well as the others? Same old questions."

The image of the researcher as someone who controls the research at every turn provides comfort for graduate students.

The familiar One way students try to have control is by choosing a site that they know well (e.g., nursing students who study hospital wards). The students know they will have an easy time getting access, will feel comfortable with participants, and probably will not run into any events or characters they do not already have categories for. They like the feeling of control that comes with familiarity, but they also worry that they will have trouble being objective. Consistent with one folk belief about science, they consider their knowledge of and experiences in the setting as sources of bias that they hope to get rid of. They want to erase prior knowledge and become blank slates as they reenter the site in their field-worker role.

Break out We encourage students to choose a setting with which they have some, but not a lot of, familiarity. For most of us, but especially for first-time field-workers, it is hard to notice patterns in a setting where one has learned to take so much for granted (but see Lofland and Lofland 1995, 11-15). So we suggested that a nursing student who was interested in fertility study a Lamaze class that met outside the hospital. And we had a social science student who was interested in gender and communication study a hospital ward where she watched interactions among doctors, nurses, and patients.

Key Although we discourage students from hanging around a setting they know well, we also make it clear to them that a human being cannot be a blank slate and that this is a plus rather than a liability. Whether through experience, readings, television shows, or films, they have some expectations of the setting or its participants. They also have some "working hypotheses" (Geer 1967), ideas about how things will look, feel, and work in the setting.

Another way that students try to control their research is by reading whatever has been written on their group or setting. Students have learned from their undergraduate and graduate courses to value grand theory and published studies over direct experience. They believe that if they read enough and think long enough before they step into the field, they will come out of the experience with a worthwhile study. Students see studies of the setting or grand theory—knowledge already legitimated in the

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eyes of esteemed others—as objective renderings of the social world. Hence they believe that the literature cannot bias their research; only direct experience does that.

We tell students that having prior knowledge of the group or setting, whether through reading or experience, is fine. What is important is to become *aware* of what they know so they can use those understandings as they try to make sense of the setting. Some of their prior understandings may turn out to be consistent with what they observe, some of them may provide good comparisons or contrasts, and others may prove to be stereotypical or irrelevant. To get students to examine what they already think or know, we make them write about their expectations before they step into the field (we discuss this in more detail in the next section).

Most students feel uncomfortable starting fieldwork with so little knowledge of the setting and the method. Their anxiety leads them to ask questions about what, specifically, we want from them. Their expectation is understandable after years of psyching out professors (Becker, Geer, and Hughes 1968) and figuring out what each one wants them to say in class or write in their term papers. We use that same model to get them to feel comfortable with what feels like a loss of control over what they are doing. We tell students that they can impress us to the extent that they fail to develop a narrow focus and instead remain open to many questions. They learn that they can be successful in this class only if they are willing to be dumb—to have what Zen teachers call “beginner’s mind.” We tell them that mistakes are good and that without mistakes they won’t learn. For instance, if they ask a question a participant “misunderstands,” they will learn what those words mean in the setting or group that person belongs to. “Everything is data” becomes the motto of the course. To do well in this class, we tell students, they must write and talk about their mistakes. Hence being vulnerable in the worst ways students can imagine (e.g., admitting that they made the wrong assumption, said the wrong thing, asked the wrong question) becomes valuable and the ticket to success. We rely on former students to spread the word that we mean what we say.

Since most students in our programs have strong folk beliefs about science, they are (with a few exceptions) equally unprepared for the course. A situation of pluralistic ignorance exists at the start of the class—each student thinks he or she is the only one who is anxious and unprepared to do fieldwork. We deal with this problem by having students talk about their projects throughout the semester. Students take turns being the center of attention, though we do not tell them in advance who will talk on a given day. The student in the spotlight talks about what he or she is finding out, and the whole class asks that student questions about the setting, any problems he or she is having, and so on. The barrage of questions initially overwhelms students because these questions open up, rather than constrict, the possibilities for analysis. Yet these discussions also reassure students that others find their study interesting. Students discover that they know more than they thought they did but also that they need to find out more. All this tells them that they need not come to a narrow focus *now*. These discussions also give students ideas about what to look for, which questions to ask, and who they should talk to or observe next.

We try to break down (or at least dent) the competitive atmosphere of graduate school and the belief that the lone scholar does the best work. Through group discussions, students come to see that sharing their work gives them ideas, insights, and emotional support. That qualitative research is a minority perspective in our departments becomes a plus; students build solidarity around their special concerns.

We tell students that they have to lose control to gain control. Does this make sense to students? Probably only in retrospect. What helps more are the discussions in class about particular projects. Students learn from them that they need not focus on one question from the beginning but can follow several different lines of questioning.

BRINGING IN EMOTIONS

Most students who take our classes believe that real researchers have achieved what Parsons (1951) called "affective

neutrality," a detachment from objectivity. When we have other classes, the students have little trouble feeling distant from whom they draw on. Students modify their work; they expect to have pants, but they have

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neutrality, a detached state of mind that students equate with objectivity. When students analyze quantitative data for their other classes, they usually rely on others' data, so they have little trouble feeling distant from the anonymous people about whom they draw conclusions. Students know that it will be harder to feel distant from the people they will get to know in the field. Students modify their quantitative ideal somewhat for qualitative work; they expect to have some feelings toward participants, but they hope these will be mild rather than powerful.

Students differ in the kinds of relationships they expect to have with those they study: some expect to be on friendly terms, others expect to distrust participants, and a few try to avoid relationships altogether.

Students who expect to have friendly relations assume that they will feel only empathy for participants. *Empaths* believe that they must feel what participants feel, or at least feel for them, to get the best data. For example, if they feel mild anger in a situation where participants also feel angry, they think they are doing their job right. But if they feel angry at participants, they try to get rid of that feeling (see Kleinman and Copp 1993, 31-4).

We point out to students that their desire to feel what participants feel may lead them to *assume* that they understand what participants think and feel instead of *finding out*. If students feel angry toward participants, we reassure them that this does not mean they are incompetent or that their angry feelings are getting in the way. We point out the pitfalls of their expectation: students who expect to have empathy probably avoid writing notes about situations where they lack empathy and limit their data to situations in which they like participants.

Other students distrust whatever participants say and do; they think their job is to dig beneath the words to the unpleasant truth. These students adopt a cynical and wary stance, trying to ensure that they are not taken in by what the participants tell or show them (see also Becker [1970] on interviewing medical students; Douglas 1976). Although cynicism is an emotional stance as much as any other, these students believe that distrust and disbelief are synonymous with objectivity. They use investigative journalism—the exposé—as their model.

Unlike the empathes, the cynics are likely to take notes only when they see participants experiencing false consciousness (if they study the powerless) or acting out of self-interest (if they study the powerful). They tend to discount or doubt moments in which they think participants' actions or words are genuine. For example, one student who studied a religious sect argued that participants were trying to use religion to get better jobs. Although participants did think of their newfound religious views as a potential help in creating job stability, they also gave other meanings to their practices. We pointed out to him in class the irony that his study of a religious group ignored religious practices, relationships among group members, and so on. By dismissing the sect's religious beliefs and practices as unimportant data, he refused to consider that these practices helped participants create a sense of the sacred in their materially disadvantaged lives, a theme that was central to participants' experiences.

Cynics, in addition, often fail to see that their negative feelings about participants might mirror the feelings of outsiders. If that is the case, then the cynic's negative feelings will offer data about the kinds of reactions group members might have to deal with when they talk to people outside the group. We tell students to consider this possibility and to ask participants about their experiences in dealing with critical or curious others.

Key
The empathes and the cynics talk to each other in class, and this helps all of them see what they are leaving out of their notes and analyses. We get students to think about doing a "critical appreciation" of the group. By *critical*, we mean that students should consider the wider constraints operating on participants and the importance of power relations in the group. By *appreciation*, we mean that students should understand what group members think, feel, and do. Knowing what participants consider genuine is part of understanding them. We also tell students to look closely at the conditions that lead participants to hold particular beliefs and practices, as well as at the consequences of those beliefs and practices.

The third category of students—the *superscientists*—include those who try to avoid interacting with participants because they

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believe their words or even their presence will contaminate the setting. These students tell us that they want to be a fly on the wall, hide an activated tape recorder, or observe the setting through a one-way mirror. We point out the problems with this stance. By restraining themselves around participants, they cannot ask the questions that would get participants to explain their actions. They also forfeit opportunities to have participants teach them "who's who" and "what's what" in the setting and thus miss out on learning how participants see and do things.

When the superscientists react emotionally to events in the field, they are unprepared to deal with those feelings. They may discount their feelings or chastise themselves for having reactions. Feeling bad about their reactions, they will pay less attention to what they felt and why, thus losing data about the group (see Kleinman and Copp [1993] on using researchers' emotions as a resource for data gathering). We argue in class that their attempts to attain "scientific" distance by being inert, stiff, or invisible may lead them to produce the *least* objective data. We invoke this quote from Blumer (1969, 86) when students go on about their fear of changing the setting:

To try and catch the interpretative process by remaining aloof as a so-called "objective" observer and refusing to take the role of the acting unit is to risk the worst kind of subjectivism—the objective observer is likely to fill in the process of interpretation with his [or her] own surmises in place of catching the process as it occurs in the experience of the acting unit which uses it.

To bring out the feelings of the empaths, the cynics, and the superscientists—so that we can examine them in class—we have students write about their feelings about the group before they do their first observation. They freewrite about why they think the setting or group interests them, all their feelings and ideas about the group, and so on (see Kleinman and Copp 1993, 57-62). They also think about whose side they are on and whether they have an axe to grind.

Students do what they are told. But they believe that the goal of this freewriting is to purge themselves of bias. We tell the students that their feelings are to be used rather than erased. Neutrality is impossible because all reactions, and even obser-

* vations, contain implicit evaluations or judgments. "Every description is a conclusion," we say, so they cannot escape evaluation. They are condemned to evaluate, which means that they must take responsibility for what they notice, write down, and analyze. And they must be self-aware to handle that responsibility.

How can students attain this self-reflexivity? We urge students to think of themselves as a full-fledged participant when they write field notes, even if their role is quite distant. They must include their emotional reactions, words, and actions in their notes, just as they would for any other participant in the setting. They also are instructed to elaborate on those feelings and thoughts in their notes-on-notes. When we ask students to include their reactions, we explain that this means to analyze, not just cite, their emotions. We have students read the first author's account (in Kleinman and Copp 1993, 48-52; see also Kleinman 1996) of her study of a holistic health center. The example shows how ignoring one's feelings about the group can impede research, but understanding those feelings—including anger at group members—can lead to insights. For example, the first author discovered that the anger she did not want to acknowledge toward group members eventually led her to analyze hidden inequalities in the group. We show students that their feelings will inevitably shape their research; if they do not pay attention to their reactions and the values they reflect, they will not know how their feelings shape their research.

Another way we get students to understand how their emotional reactions are part of the data is by periodically asking them to freewrite in class, beginning with the stem, "What I like/dislike about the people I'm studying is. . . ." What we have found is that students have strong beliefs about what they should feel—distrust in the case of cynics, compassion in the case of the empaths, and distance in the case of the superscientists. The following disclaimer is typical: "What I dislike the most, although it doesn't really bother me that much. . . ." Students think we are going to jump on them for having the "wrong" emotion or for *really* being bothered by something. They ask

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We are asking students to violate the folk belief that researchers' emotions are a bias and thus should be excluded from their data. Some students come to accept that knowing one's reactions is a good thing, but only if they spend a limited amount of time thinking or writing about them. They believe that analyzing their emotions a certain percentage of the time will lead to objectivity, but going over that amount will lead to subjectivity, self-absorption, and vanity. To convince them that reflecting on their emotions is a good thing, we point out to them passages in their writing that contain the seeds of sociological analysis and discuss how the students' reactions led to those ideas. We emphasize that by trying to explain the reactions they might have otherwise set aside as irrelevant, shameful, or unmentionable, students gain insights into the group. For example, a woman who observed a self-defense class freewrote the following:

I began to notice the words that were being used—I think, no, I know I noticed some anger and fear—all the what-ifs that the women asked—an uncertainty that came across and I felt somewhat uncertain as well, as a result. I began to question—what if the guy who attacked her was three times her size—could she really defend herself? What if he had a gun or knife and she thought that, because she had had this class, she would be able to defend herself, didn't run away, and got severely hurt or worse? I think I internalized some of that fear—it made me feel more vulnerable.

By recognizing her feelings for participants (the fear she felt for them), as well as her own feelings of vulnerability, this student came up with an interesting hypothesis: the self-defense class heightened women's fears of danger rather than made them less fearful and might even increase the possible danger women faced. We pointed out in class that since *she* felt more fearful, she might have been projecting anger and fear, as she put it, onto the group rather than picking up on those feelings from members of the self-defense class. Then again, her free-

writing may have reflected what was going on—that others felt fearful and she internalized *their* fear. She would have to talk to other members of the self-defense class to find out. Either way, the student had come up with this hypothesis as a result of paying attention to participants' emotions, as well as to her own.

We also ask students to write about what surprised them about the setting or the participants. As Blanche Geer (1967) explained, surprises tell us that our assumptions or working hypotheses have been challenged. For example, a woman studying a women's collegiate athletic team learned that she had assumed that women's teams were refuges for lesbians and that many lesbians would be found in women's sports. Only when she found out that she was wrong did she become aware of these assumptions. In a freewriting, she explained her reactions:

Once I found out about the homophobic attitude of the coach, my emotional reactions became . . . complicated. I was outraged that women were apparently discriminated against (or even "outed") because of their sexual orientation, which has no bearing on their athletic performance. I was scared that somebody "in power" might find out about me, and I would have my access to the team curtailed. I was angry at having to make a choice of being true to myself, if confronted, or lying in order to continue the project. I was also very disappointed to find that a situation that I thought would be accepting of my lifestyle, if it became known, was actually hostile to it.

This student discovered that she had a hidden agenda—to find a refuge for *herself* while doing sociological research. She also expected to like the coach and the players and had to deal with her horror at finding out that the coach and some of the players were openly homophobic. This example, discussed in class, raised issues about doing qualitative research, from what to do when you find participants' behavior offensive to how much to disclose about yourself in the field. We also got the student (and the class as a whole) to think analytically about the data. Why might there be such open hostility toward lesbians? Why didn't they spend their time recruiting and working with the best players to win games? Why should they care about sexual orientation?

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We came up with this idea: the popular conception of the lesbian is that of a masculine woman. The coach and some of the players cared enough about maintaining a public image as "real women" that they distanced themselves from the jock lesbian image (which the student researcher herself had held). It was as if they were saying, "We play a man's game, but we're still feminine."

We also make it clear that it is important for field-workers to find out what their assumptions are, whether or not those assumptions turn out to be right. Students in the class whose expectations have been confirmed are less likely to realize what those expectations are than students who are surprised by what they find. Having an agenda, a working hypothesis, or a pet theory is fine, as long as they know what it is.

We try to show students that bringing emotions into their data can lead to insights and hypotheses about participants and the setting. Students learn that by analyzing what they think or what surprised them this week, they will have ideas about what to look for or who to talk to next week. Most important, this helps them get past a major hurdle we turn to next: learning to treat data collection and analysis as a joint process.

Summary

COMPLEXITIES OF ANALYSIS

Students come to our classes believing that research is done in three stages—data collection, analysis, and writing up the findings—and that each stage has a clear set of rules to follow.

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Many students assume that qualitative research is fieldwork—a method—and that analysis and theory happen in the library. As one student freewrote at the end of the semester:

I [now] think qualitative research is both theory and methodology. Initially I had the feeling that qualitative research was a tool for data collection. I did not think it was a whole body of study encompassing theory, data collection and analysis, and the presentation and dissemination of findings.

Nice

Until we make it clear that field-workers believe that theory emerges from the data and that theory depends on how those

data were collected, students fail to see that theory and methods are bound together.

When we teach and advise, we tell students early on that field-workers overlap data collection and analysis. We explain that field-workers alternate between collecting and analyzing data and write frequent, open-ended accounts during and after leaving the field. By having students write about their preconceptions before they enter the field and getting students to talk about them in class, we point out that they are already doing analysis. Yet we still have difficulty dispelling their three-stage folk notion of research.

Great!

MAKING SENSE OF THE DATA

In addition to having students put their reactions into early sets of field notes, we also have them reread their notes a few days later and write about why they think they had those reactions. What assumptions about the group or about how life should be lived underlie their reactions? We also ask them to discuss the different roles, meanings, and behaviors they observed or have hypotheses about. These elaborations constitute the notes-on-notes we mentioned earlier; they are students' first attempts at analysis.

As students spend more time in the field, we ask them to note things they have observed before. What seems familiar about participants' words or actions? By recognizing what is familiar, students get to see that they know more than they think they do and can find patterns in the data. We also ask them to bring in anything that comes to mind from previous notes that seems relevant to their current fieldnotes and to think about links between them. In doing so, they might discover gaps in what they know or explore new ideas that lead them to see old or new data differently (see Charmaz 1983). They may learn that an earlier hypothesis was not supported and thus should be discarded or modified.

But even students who write detailed field notes sometimes neglect writing notes-on-notes. They write a few cryptic comments at the end of their field notes and hope this takes care of

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"analysis in progress." For example, a student studying a clinical class for nursing students wrote at the end of her field notes:

There are several themes emerging here, I think, which involve becoming accustomed to touching another's body, asking for attention, receiving attention, technical competence/incompetence, use of tools of the trade (like the stethoscope), body image/self-awareness of our body functions.

Listing themes is fine. But we pointed out in class that the student should bring data to bear on these themes. The second author wrote in response, "What would you say about even one of those themes right now? Elaborating on themes is what makes notes-on-notes interesting and worthwhile to you in the long run."

Some students scrawl notes such as this: "My field notes are still a work-in-progress. I need to do notes-on-notes here and have run out of time." We tell students that their notes-on-notes are just as important as their field notes, and leaving them out means they have done only half the assignment. We dispel their belief that analysis is merely additional, akin to extra credit.

Students treat field notes as data—the objective rendering of reality—and thus labor over them. Because students think of field notes as immediate facts that might get away from them rather than as constructed understandings, they assume that their field notes are transparent and thus analysis can wait. We remind students that their field notes contain evaluations and judgments and that notes-on-notes should include commentary about what those judgments are.

Not all students listen to us. Consequently, some students have a mountain of field notes and few pages of analysis near the end of the course. They believe we have been holding out on them and will now produce, like a rabbit from a hat, a set of rules for what to do with it all. As one student freewrote, "I expected some sort of sociological framework of rules that should be superimposed on data in order to organize them, prepare them, and present them." Students know that quantitative methods have conventions for testing relationships among variables. In addition to providing a structure for analy-

sis, these conventions serve as rhetorical devices; they dictate what a finding is and how it should be phrased. Without those analytical and writing crutches, students grow uneasy, as this student reported:

The whole issue of relying on my judgment for interpreting the data scares me. . . no significance levels or statistical tests. What if I'm wrong? Will other people take what I find to be "The Truth"? Does anybody really believe the quantitative stuff, either?

yes! Without rules or tests to fall back on, students feel the weight of responsibility for authorship. Science does not do the analysis—they do. At the end of one course, a student freewrote,

The fact is that the analysis doesn't occur in a computer, off the written page, but right in front of you. The explanation of the events or issues, the analysis, occurs in the process of explaining the data. . . . Qualitative research does away with the conventional legitimizing *methods* of analysis and is truthful about the power of the *mind*. I mean, the "computer" is us, the fieldworkers, the writers. . . . I've written two articles recently. One a case study, one a quantitative analysis. . . . In the [quantitative study] I hide safely behind the math.

This student was an exception in that she recognized differences between the methods. For many students, however, a powerful folk belief continues to operate: writing happens only after you have figured everything out. In the mythical three stages of research, writing is a fixed endpoint rather than a process that begins on the first day. Fearing that their early notes-on-notes will be simplistic, naive, or eventually proven wrong, they write little to nothing. Paradoxically, until students force themselves to write, it is harder for them to believe that they can do qualitative analysis.

We deal with this problem in several ways. We point out that our interpretations continue to change as we learn more about participants and the setting and ask different questions. But we cannot know how our understandings will deepen, and it is through writing that we find out. As Deegan and Hill (1991, 328) put it: "Many of the questions which taunt and disconcert the [student] are answered through the act of writing, an act that is

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too often set aside." We tell students the same thing we said earlier about noting their own reactions—they need to write their interpretations along the way. Committing their interpretations to paper is a way to remember them and develop hypotheses they can test out during later visits to the field. Writing their guesswork commits them to finding out if they are right or wrong.

Rather than only have students turn in their field notes and notes-on-notes to us, we have students exchange sets and give each other comments. This allows them to use other's notes to interpret their data. It also might make them feel guilty if they have left out their notes-on-notes. They get to read a variety of notes-on-notes and incorporate other styles into their own. We make copies of several students' notes-on-notes and have the class read them and talk about differences among them. What did this student include that some other student left out? What are the different kinds of analyses found in the notes-on-notes?

Sometimes we make copies of a page or two of someone's field-notes, hand these out to the class, have students freewrite about what they think things mean, and then discuss their interpretations. As they stumble over gaps in each other's notes, students learn that they cannot assume that their readers will understand their cryptic remarks. Many realize that field notes are not transparent.

DEALING WITH COMPLEXITY

After students write a few sets of field notes and notes-on-notes, we have them practice coding their data. We usually hand out an excerpt (about two pages) from a student's notes. Students want to know what a good code is. We tell them that codes are not universal, but good suggestions can be found in several qualitative texts (e.g., Lofland and Lofland 1995; Miles and Huberman 1994; Strauss 1987; Strauss and Corbin 1990). We emphasize that their codes will depend on the data they have and how they went about collecting them.

Students bring ideas about coding from their quantitative classes into this exercise. Typically they want to reduce the unit

of data to one code (e.g., role distance) because they think that parsimony is a goal. They seek the "real code" and want to discard anything that cannot fully encompass the paragraph (or other unit) we are examining. We ask them instead, "What else is this piece of data about?" and have them brainstorm about all the categories they could possibly assign.

What we are breaking down is the common idea in survey research that data should fall into mutually exclusive categories. Since every piece of data is linked to every other piece of data—though they do not yet know how—it is best to overcode and have too many rather than too few categories. Every bit of data is not only this *or* that, but this *and* that.

Coding in class gets students to see that their job is to understand the phenomenon as a whole rather than to isolate tiny pieces of it. Coding hits home the idea that qualitative analysis requires making complex connections among themes rather than reducing and isolating concepts.

But focusing exclusively on what is in their notes also can take them away from what is not in their notes, either because they did not write about certain things or because participants did not do or say those things. We get students to think about patterned silences, as well as patterned talk and actions, by asking them, "Which topics were taboo? What did you think would happen but didn't? Are the patterned holes in your notes things you didn't want to write about but which occurred frequently?" One student freewrote,

There is a richness and uncertainty to this approach. . . . The richness includes the recognition of silence as well as speech, of discomfort in a setting and the elements which cause it. I guess it just is admitting "data" that aren't simply the words spoken by the interviewee.

We tell them that coding also can become a crutch that takes them away from thinking about the whole. There is no substitute for rereading their data—in some sense internalizing it—and writing about it.

As students start to see patterns or subthemes in the setting or in participants' actions, roles, and beliefs, we push them to

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write about these patterns in memos or short drafts. We also push them to study outliers—unusual events or people who do not seem to fit the pattern. Students initially think we are forcing them to think about their mistakes; their assumption from quantitative courses is that a deviant case is an error.

Other students dismiss deviant cases as irrelevant. In introductory courses on quantitative methods, students learn that unexpected data can be glossed as “unexplained variance.” Students assume that as long as they have only a few exceptions, they can overlook unexplained or contradictory data instead of trying to understand it.⁵

We explain that field-workers find deviant cases crucial for analysis because they provide the exception that tests the rule. They should ask, “How is this case (or person, event, role, etc.) different from the norm and in what ways?” We share examples of deviant cases from our own studies. For example, we might show them how the first author (Kleinman 1984) found in her study of a seminary that the students learned to devalue intellectual discussions of theology in favor of discussing personal relations. Yet a few seminary students did intellectualize. The first author first worried that this meant that she was wrong—the program didn’t espouse a personalized egalitarian ideology. But she learned that she could test the salience of this ideology by seeing what happened to the seminary students who engaged others in intellectual talk or were known as “the intellectuals.” The first author found that others made fun of them or accused them of acting like elitists. Thus the exceptions provided important tests for the finding that intellectualizing was taboo. Through this example, we show that deviant cases are resources for analysis rather than flaws in our thinking.

Once students link subthemes with deviant cases, we discuss how field-workers try to find a central theme that ties many subthemes together. For example, we mention how Becker and his colleagues (1968) used the “making the grade” perspective to explain not only how undergraduates dealt with classes but also with much of college life. Our students, all of whom have been undergraduates, recognize how this concept explains aspects of undergraduate lives that seem unrelated to grades:

extracurricular activities, entrance into fraternities and sororities, and so on.

By inducing students to write about smaller topics, figure out how subthemes are linked, and see whether their understandings fit their data, we get around their inclination to wait to write protoanalyses until they have gathered masses of data. In this way, students begin earlier to write more sociologically about their research. Helping students write sociologically without falling into the trap of the "academic pose" (Mills 1959, 219) is another major challenge.

WRITING SOCIOLOGICALLY

Students know from years of schooling what the academic voice sounds like: distant, abstract, and authoritative. Some students carry this voice not only into their papers but into early sets of their notes-on-notes. For example, one student wrote after an encounter in the field:

I have noted that except for cases in which mainline African American denominations have neo-Pentecostal overtones, which include the concepts of baptism in the spirit and speaking in tongues, the higher the socioeconomic level of the members, the "quieter" the church.

In addition to reaching a conclusion without having brought data from her one week of observation to bear on it (nor any concrete details from her experiences at churches over the years), the student's writing exemplifies the distant, authoritative tone of much academic writing. More often we come across this kind of writing in students' final papers for the course or in thesis drafts. Even if they have used the active voice and given vivid details until then, they stiffen up when it is time to write the real paper. As they move farther from the data in their analyses, they invoke the "Voice of Science."

This writing also reflects students' belief that the only way to write sociologically is to stand on the shoulders of previous theorists. For example, one student freewrote,

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I feel that I don't have enough theoretical background to do qualitative research. . . . Whether or not you start with a particular theory, I think that it is a good idea to have some sort of knowledge about general theories of social interaction so that you are even able to look at your group or setting in a "sociological" way. I don't feel quite up to weaving stories and interpretations about my setting.

Knowing "general theories of social interaction" is a good thing. But we have noticed no differences in students' analytical abilities between those who have had courses in theory and those who have not. And some students who have had lots of theory cannot "weave stories and interpretations" about their settings but rather use their data merely as illustrations of theory. We tell students that their backgrounds in theory sometimes stand in the way of doing analysis.

We get students to think about the constraints operating on participants in the setting; the beliefs, feelings, and actions of participants; the relationship between participants' perspective and the constraints of the setting; participants' responses to those constraints; and the consequences of participants' actions for themselves and others. What some students do instead is psychologize about their data: either they reduce everything to personality traits or they reduce everything to one or two variables (e.g., gender or race) that may have predisposed individuals to act as they do.

When students explain behavior by writing "the manager is a control freak," we ask them to consider two things. First, can the conditions of work or the interactions with others in various roles explain how this person came to control as much as he or she does? Second, what are the consequences for others of this behavior? In addition, we get students to unpack "control freak" (or whichever personality label they are using). Once we press them for details, the label usually wears thin.

Getting students to deal with the second kind of psychologizing is harder. Although gender and race are considered sociological variables, students do not always use them in an analytical way. If students write, "These people act this way in the setting because they're women," we ask them, "What are the

ways that the setting is gendered? Are women expected to act in conventionally masculine ways? Or are they expected to be feminine? What are the consequences of these expectations for women and men in the setting?"

For example, one student wrote about a nonprofit women's organization that, much to her disappointment, looked like a conventional, hierarchical work organization. She talked about her findings with two quantitative sociologists who suggested to her that gender did not seem to matter in this case. Yet her field notes revealed that the powerful women in the organization at times used "women's culture" as a means to recruit and keep women working there for little pay. The senior women relied on a pool of young women who would expect to work for less, especially in an organization that was meant to help women. The seniors spoke of the mission to help women help other women—though their work in the organization mostly helped corporate women outside the organization rather than those in the (nonprofit) organization itself. They also offered free tampons in the bathrooms and gave the women flowers on their first day of work. Roses, not bread, were reserved for the workers, while the higher-ups had both bread and roses. Thus, on closer scrutiny, gender did matter (see Barber 1995).

Students sometimes pursue their analyses with a quantitative mind-set. They talk about their projects this way: "I think what's going on is that the budget was cut, and the workers are women, and they're reaching middle age"—as if a qualitative analysis were a regression equation in search of variables. We get the class to talk about the assumptions behind this way of thinking and ask them how else they could interpret the events, situations, and actions they have observed. This usually leads to talk about contradictions in social life. We suggest to students, for example, that the very conditions that create X may also undermine X or lead participants to resist X. Getting students to accept the possibility of contradiction, rather than thinking of social life as operating according to arithmetical logic, helps them to develop more holistic—and realistic—accounts of social life.

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We also have a hard time getting students to open their minds to their own work. They jump to conclusions without mining their data. Their quantitative training leads them to ask "Why?"—which usually results in a one- or two-variable, static, one-sentence answer—rather than "How?"—which can result in an analysis of a detailed process. (Chapters 7, 8, and 9 in *Analyzing Social Settings* [Lofland and Lofland 1995] also help here). We emphasize that looking at the *What* and the *How* is what they need to focus on; later, they can see about the *Why* (which often has been answered by the *How*). Having students take turns talking about their work in class forces the *What* and the *How* on students, since classmates usually ask questions about details.

Students often seem more caught up in the question of generalizability—as they learned it in quantitative courses—than in relating subthemes and building a story about the setting or group. They have learned that the only worthy argument is one that generalizes to a large population. Students believe that because one cannot generalize this way from a qualitative study (unless the entire population is studied), then no one, including themselves, will be impressed with their results.

For example, early in a course taught by the second author, a student proposing an interview study was interrupted by a classmate who challenged him with this question: "What population are you generalizing to after talking to just a few people?" The second author broke in and pointed out that although it is important to know who you are talking about, generalizability neither justifies nor damns a qualitative project. We cannot know at the outset where a project will lead us and what will be important about it.

When we get students to talk or write about their concerns with generalizability, we discover that students are mostly concerned with what others will think about their work. Generalizing to a large population provides instant legitimation; not being able to, they fear, means that people will think they are not doing real sociology.

We tell students that qualitative research is known for its analytic generalizability more than its generalizability to bodies.

For example, we talk about Arlie Hochschild's (1983) study of flight attendants, asking, "What else is this book about?" Students see that *The Managed Heart* is a study of emotional labor under late capitalism rather than a study of flight attendants per se. Because of the arguments she made, Hochschild's study of flight attendants at one airline has analytic relevance for other service occupations, such as social workers and counselors. This is more important to the work than the question, "For how many flight attendants is Hochschild's story true?" We encourage students to relate their sociological concepts to groups beyond the one they studied.

For students to learn how to make analytic generalizations, we suggest they think of what they are looking at in terms of something else. One thing that helps is to have them freewrite on "This setting/group/event reminds me of . . ." We also draw on classic studies for illustrations. Goffman's (1961) work is filled with examples of places, events, or situations that seem different on the surface but that, from a sociological perspective, belong to the same category. For instance, we use Goffman's images of a Navy boat, a convent, and a prison to show students that these seemingly different settings are similar because each is a "total institution." Everett Hughes's (1971) work provides other good examples. His concept of "dirty work" applies to all professions and occupations, not just janitors. With this concept, students learn that studying low-status workers also can lead them to learn about professionals. Although students will not have statistical generalizability, their analyses, if done well, might lead them to discover a phenomenon that affects many different people.

One problem is this: students have learned in their quantitative courses that they can know, from the start, who and what they will later generalize about. For instance, if they study a shelter for the homeless, they think they will make discoveries about "homeless shelters." Since they define what they are interested in by its conventional label—homeless shelter—they assume that their sociological story will be about how homeless shelters work. Yet this assumption might be false. In discussing the nature of generalizability in field research, Becker (1990,

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Next point about Generalizability

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238) argues that "the notion that things called by the same name are the same in other respects" is "one of the great scams of our society." Whether all homeless shelters (or schools) are alike is, as Becker points out, an empirical question. Students may discover that they learn more in the homeless shelter about stigma, identity work among do-gooders, or organizational legitimacy than about homeless shelters per se. Hence they will be able to make general statements about those matters rather than about shelters.

Part of what we are trying to teach is how to see sociological value in knowledge about a particular place. If, for instance, a student found that staff members at a homeless shelter infantilized the residents, this could be useful knowledge for people who wanted to change things at that shelter to provide help more humanely. But there might be a bigger lesson to be learned if we can push students to specify the conditions that produce the results they observe. By thinking in terms of the conditions under which such and such occurs, students can start to see how their findings about one place might generalize to other places that operate in similar ways.

For the final paper, we ask students to write a spew draft (Becker 1986, 55). We tell them that this is an informal gathering of all the observations, patterns, and guesses they have about their data. The draft is an extended notes-on-notes. Students can flit from topic to topic without worrying about transitions. They also can spend a few pages trying to link two things without coming to a conclusion. We tell them everything is possible and everything is permissible—except not writing. They can write, "I am sick of going on about this part of my data and I'm going to move on to something else." Students have the option of writing their spew draft as a letter to us or to someone else (they often choose a friend)—whatever makes the job less threatening. We put some spew drafts from former students on reserve, so students can see that we mean what we say.

We used to have students write regular term papers, but we found these narrow, dry, and unhelpful to the students who continued their projects once the course was over. Students wrote "safe" papers, sticking to one small part of the data about

which they felt comfortable writing. They usually failed to offer any analysis—or even guesses—about what they observed. Rather, they searched for concepts (such as [Goffman's] [1959] “front stage” and “back stage”) that they could apply to some of their data.

The spew draft, on the other hand, encourages students to widen rather than narrow their thinking. The assignment gets them to try out all kinds of guesses about their data, write about contradictory findings, ask themselves (and us) questions about the data, confess inadequacies, and think about what to do next. Many students have told us that the spew draft at first scares them. When we asked students on the last day of class (the day they hand in the draft), “What’s so scary about it?” one student replied, “There was no literature to hide behind, nothing between me and what I wrote. That’s scary!” Yet the students also felt good about having done it. Despite their fear, writing the spew draft, they said, felt honest and creative in ways their previous term papers had not.

We tell students that if they continue with the project after the course is done, they should return to the spew draft with fresh eyes and read it as if it were data. If they pay attention, their draft will tell them what they think is important, give them leads for what to collect more data about, and provide many of the pieces they need to link analytically later on. The spew draft may be the final requirement of the course, but it is, we tell them, just a beginning.

CONCLUSION

Students take our courses for a variety of reasons: they want to learn something new, they want to combine qualitative with quantitative methods, or they are “fed up with number crunching.” No matter why they come, they bring the same folk beliefs about science into our classes. They would all prefer to read about the philosophy and practice of qualitative methods for half the semester, spend a few weeks reading the literature about the group or setting, write a proposal, and then contact some-

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Students want to put off doing fieldwork because they think fieldwork is scary. And they are right, as we know from published confessionals about what can go wrong (DeVita 1990; Hobbs and May 1993; Sanjek 1990; Shaffir and Stebbins 1991; Whitehead and Conaway 1986). Even when things go right, they can feel wrong; we might learn things we did not want to know about other people or about ourselves. Students also dread the amount of work they will have to do. Although a few students expect qualitative work to be easy, most students have learned through the grapevine that the workload is heavy. One student in a class taught by the first author circulated a cartoon she had doctored, where the caption read: "I love Sociology 320, but the homework is killing me." Still, most students are surprised at how hard it is to remember what happened in the field and how long it takes to write up their notes. In addition to the labor, students find the creative demands difficult. They think of qualitative as an artsy method. And if they discover they are not good at it, they worry that they will not have the option of doing anything other than normal science in the future.

Students know that creativity means leaving behind old ways. But their belief in the old ways is so strong that they are unaware of how deeply they hold those beliefs. Part of our job is to bring those folk beliefs into relief so that students can examine them. In practice, this means that we talk about the assumptions of quantitative methods in our courses. We do not plan on doing that, but it always happens. When a student invokes the logic of multiple regression by supposing that the social world can be understood by chopping it up into variables, we have to take time to examine the assumptions behind that sort of thinking.

Students who are fed up with numbers relish these discussions, but students who are wedded to quantitative and hope to do "a little qualitative on the side" become uncomfortable. They want to believe that methods are hats of equal value, to be put on or taken off at will. They do not want to hear that different conceptions of reality underlie different methods. The reason they resist these discussions is that they learn quickly

in our mainstream departments that quantitative is the dominant method in the social sciences. They know that they will have more access to powerful faculty, grant money, status, and jobs if they do quantitative work than if they stake their careers on qualitative work. And we are forthright with students about the minority status of qualitative research in sociology.

So how do students feel about qualitative methods at the end of the class? All of them learn that the method is hard, time-consuming, and earns fewer status rewards in the profession. Some students learn that they aren't willing to "lose control," examine their emotions, and write complicated analyses. And others, whom we might consider our successes, begin the course with fear and end it with an ability to live with the ambiguity and uncertainty of the method. They have embarked on a "liminal journey" (Deegan and Hill 1991) that transforms them into professionals.

But the idea of success is more complicated than this. We think students need the opportunity to fully engage in fieldwork for a semester so that they can see and feel what it is like. We try to reduce students' anxieties and help them write good analyses, but we also want them to find out, from their own experience, whether fieldwork is for them. If they find out it isn't, we do not consider this a failure.

The students who decide to put up with the anxiety, the risk, and the enormous effort it takes to do good qualitative work need not develop a thick skin or bravado. They just need courage. And as many smart people have said in the past, courage is not the absence of fear but rather the willingness to work in the face of it.

NOTES

1. Throughout the semester we have students freewrite in class (for about ten minutes) about a variety of topics, including anxieties about fieldwork, problems in the field, interesting findings, contradictory data, and changing ideas about what fieldwork is. We also have them freewrite about their peers' work. All references to freewritings refer to these in-class timed writings.

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2. We recognize that some field-workers prefer a less inductive approach to fieldwork than ours (see Wolcott 1983).

3. We focus exclusively on our experiences as teachers of qualitative methods and the folk ideas that stand in the way of our teaching. Howard Becker (personal communication, 5 October 1995) pointed out to us that those who teach quantitative methods might well complain that students bring in lay notions that are counterproductive for learning statistics or doing survey research. Since quantitative methods predominate in sociology, we think it is likely that those who teach statistics will have fewer students challenge their assumptions or perspective than those who teach qualitative methods.

4. Sheryl Kleinman has taught a graduate course in qualitative methods in a predominantly quantitative sociology department since 1980. Martha Copp was a teaching assistant for a graduate course in qualitative methods for three semesters and now teaches the course to undergraduates and M.A. students in sociology and anthropology. Karla Henderson has taught qualitative and quantitative methods since the mid-1980s to undergraduate and graduate students in leisure studies and recreational administration.

5. This folk belief about deviant cases also gets dashed in some advanced courses in quantitative methods, where faculty members take a greater interest in outliers.

6. See Schmid (1992) and Wolcott (1983) for discussions of different ways to overcome the temporal limitations of a semester- or quarter-long course.

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