

In this article Fontes and Piercy (2000) review activities that help psychology students experience the depth and meaning of qualitative research and data collection methods. These activities included but were not limited to types of qualitative data research such as focus groups, observation, and ethnography, and further discussed the importance of data analysis, and ethics. The students approached this class with the suspicion that qualitative research is somehow weaker (or easier) than quantitative research (Fontes and Piercy, 2000). The purpose of this exercise was to assist students in understanding the value of qualitative research, and experience it firsthand. Below are a few types of qualitative research the instructors allowed them to experience, while coaching them on best practices:

- **Focus Groups:** Researchers use focus groups to determine needs, obtain group interview data, and evaluate proposed research protocols. The purpose of the focus group in this experiment, was to explore components of effective teaching. The instructors organized a focus group discussion on an engaging topic and then assigned five groups to observe the discussion and collect five different types of qualitative data.
- **Observation/Field Notes:** As part of learning how to observe and take field notes, the overall goal was to teach students learn to draw inferences, and encourage students to become sophisticated nonjudgmental observers without interpreting or drawing conclusions. The students were told to not interact with people, and write in detail what they observed. They were to included practical information such was where, when, how long, and their feelings about it. In this exercise they were able to demonstrate how to successfully describe without editorializing.
- **Ethnography** – This is the study of ordinary, routine, everyday behavior that is usually invisible because people take it for. Ethnomethodological experiments that disrupt normal routines by doing something out of the ordinary. The students were asked to choose a task or to propose one of their own and write a short paper describing their reactions to conducting the out-of-the-ordinary experiment using the observation tactics that they learned.

There are more types of qualitative research, but this was an interesting article because it showed psychology students why qualitative research was just as important as quantitative, and had them experience it firsthand. They also were coached so they not only experienced the method, but they conducted the research appropriately, ethically, and as unbiased as possible. This experiment with the psychology class I felt was successful, and it's exactly how I would want to learn how to conduct qualitative research. The students got to learn the qualitative research methods through direct experience, and rated the class favorably. They also continued to use qualitative research in their own experiments which meant that the instructors were successful in making them comfortable with the method and approach.

References:

Fontes, L., & Piercy, P. (2000, July 1). Engaging students in qualitative research through experiential class activities. *Teaching of Psychology*, 27(3), 174-179. Retrieved from: https://doi.org/10.1207%2FS15328023TOP2703_03