P-770: Basic Research Methodology

Christian Theological Seminary
Spring 2008

Instructor: Jacqueline Braeger, Ph.D., LMFT
Phone: (317) 931-2350
E-mail Address: jbraeger@cts.edu

Credit Hours: 3 (Tuesday evenings, 6pm – 8:45pm)

Learning Objectives

1. To recognize the relevance, usefulness, and limitations of the scientific paradigm, particularly as it applies to professional development and the development of the counseling profession.

2. To understand major systemic considerations when conducting research.

3. To understand issues associated with diversity when conducting research.

4. To intelligently evaluate research by being familiar with the core principles of quantitative, qualitative and mixed research methodologies.

5. To recognize the complementary nature of quantitative and qualitative design.

6. To understand the factors one must consider in an effort to determine which research design is most useful for a particular research question at a particular point in time.

7. To understand the major considerations (e.g., validity, reliability, sampling strategy, design, context) one must weigh in an effort to make sense of research findings.

8. To understand clinical and statistical significance and the major factors associated with determining significance (e.g., randomization/sampling, independent variable, dependent variable).

9. To become familiar with A.P.A. format, to understand the sections typical in a research report, and to effectively demonstrate this knowledge.

10. To understand ethical issues associated with research.

11. To equip students to locate and evaluate research in their area of major interest.
MFT Core Competencies Addressed in this Course:

- Know the extant MFT literature, research, and evidence-based practice (6.1.1)
- Understand research and program evaluation methodologies, both quantitative and qualitative, relevant to MFT and mental health services (6.1.2)
- Understand the legal, ethical, and contextual issues involved in the conduct of clinical research and program evaluation (6.1.3)
- Recognize opportunities for therapists and clients to participate in clinical research (6.2.1)
- Read current MFT and other professional literature (6.3.1)
- Use current MFT and other research to inform clinical practice (6.3.2)
- Critique professional research and assess the quality of research studies and program evaluation in the literature (6.3.3)
- Determine the effectiveness of clinical practice and techniques (6.3.4)
- Evaluate knowledge of current clinical literature and its application (6.4.1)

Course Requirements

**Required Texts:**


**Recommended Texts:**


Description of Assignments

**Research Proposal**  
50 points
Students will develop a research proposal that is amenable to empirical investigation in a clinical area of special interest to them. This will consist of:

- **Statement of the problem & review of existing literature** related to topic
- Identification of a specific **research question**
- Selection of appropriate research **methodology** to address research question
- Description of proposed research design (e.g., **participant selection, data collection plan, data analysis plan – statistical procedures utilized, and/or description of qualitative methodology**)
- An example of an **informed consent document** that would be reviewed with all participants prior to participation in study
- Discussion of the potential **usefulness** of this study
- Discussion of the **resources** that would be needed to complete this study
- Written **timeline** for execution & completion of proposed study
- **Bibliography**

The final draft of this paper (with all previous listed components) is due the last day of class **(29 April 2008)**

**Sectional Rough Drafts of Research Paper**  
10 points
In addition to the final research proposal, students will be asked to submit five parts of the assignment for initial review & feedback throughout the course of the semester. Submissions will meet the following schedule:

- Brief **description of topical area of interest & bibliography** to include a minimum of 15 research article/chapter references in **APA format**  
  **APA style resources:**
  1) [http://www.docstyles.com/apacrib.htm#top](http://www.docstyles.com/apacrib.htm#top)
  2) [http://www.psywww.com/resource/apacrib.htm](http://www.psywww.com/resource/apacrib.htm)  
  **(Due Class #5: 26 Feb.)**

- Submission of a specific **research question** that will direct study proposal  
  **(Due Class #6: 4 March 2008)**

- Rough draft of first section of the Research Proposal – narrative discussion of **problem statement and existing research as it relates to proposed study**  
  **(Due Class #7: 11 March 2008)**

- Discussion of proposed research **methodology selection** that addresses research question & written example of **Participant Informed Consent Document**  
  **(Due Class #11: 15 April 2008)**
Midterm Exam: 20 points
Written exam will be given during class #9 (4/1/08) covering material through class #7.

Final Exam: 20 points
Written exam will be given during finals week (Tues. evening at 6pm on 6 May 2008). Material from class #8 through class #13 will be included.

- Test to be taken finals week during regularly scheduled class time

Grading and Attendance

Grades will be determined by the number of points accumulated out of a total of 100 possible points.

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According to Seminary policy, students are required to notify the course instructor of any absences. No student may receive credit for a course if they miss more than ¼ of the class sessions.

Course Schedule

22 January (Session 1): Orientation and Organization: Syllabus Overview
Electronic Search Strategies

Readings:
Chapter 15: Reading & writing social research (pp. 470-495).

Chapter 2: A clinician’s primer for evaluating research (pp. 13-17).

29 January (Session 2): Research & the Clinical Consumer:
How can research inform clinical practice?

Readings:
Chapter 1: Merging science & practice in psychotherapy (pp. 3-12).
Chapter 5: What can we say about the effectiveness of psychotherapy (pp. 39-45)
Chapter 6: The science of clinical artistry: Research-based principles for effective practice (pp. 47-54).
Chapter 16: *The messenger is the message: The effectiveness of treatment still depends on who delivers it* (pp. 131-137).

Chapter 23: *New science for psychotherapy: Can we predict how therapy will progress?* (pp. 201-210).

Chapter 24: *Learning to love assessment: Today’s research tools to assess progress can help you be a better therapist* (pp. 211-219).

Chapter 25: *Do-it-yourself research: The practical advantages of studying your own practice* (pp. 221-228).

Chapter 26: *Models for evaluating psychotherapy practices and community mental health programs: Public health perspectives* (pp. 229-237).

5 February (Session 3): How do people successfully change? Research & the Stages of Readiness for Change

**Readings:**

Introduction (pp. 1-12)

Chapter 8: *How do people change, and how can we change to help many more people?* (J. Prochaska, pp. 227-255).


Chapter 7: *Transformation now! (Or maybe later): Client change is not an all-or-nothing proposition* (pp. 55-60).

12 February (Session 4): Research & the Practice of MFT

**Readings:**


Chapter 17: *Family therapy scorecard: Research shows the family approach is often the treatment of choice* (pp. 141-152).

Chapter 18: *Marital preparation and enrichment programs document their value* (pp. 153-160).

Chapter 19: *What really makes couple happy? A controversy divides the world of marital researchers* (pp. 161-167).
Chapter 20:  Emerging evidence in the research about divorce (pp. 169-179).
Chapter 21:  Not quite the Brady Bunch: Research on remarriage (pp. 181-187).
Chapter 22:  Methods of relational assessment (pp. 189-198).

19 February  No Class! (Reading Week)

26 February (Session 5):  Introduction to Scientific Inquiry
The Ethics & Politics of Social Research

RESEARCH TOPIC/BIBLIOGRAPHY due:

Readings:
Chapter 1: Human inquiry and science (pp. 3-31).
Chapter 2: Paradigms, theory, and research (pp. 32-63).
Chapter 3: The ethics & politics of social research (pp. 64-89).

4 March (Session 6):  The Structuring of Inquiry:
Quantitative & Qualitative Research Design

RESEARCH QUESTION due

Readings:
Chapter 4: Research Design (pp. 94-129).
Chapter 5: Conceptualization, Operationalization & Measurement (pp. 130-167).

11 March (Session 7)  Measurement & Sampling

LITERATURE REVIEW due

Readings:
Chapter 6: Indexes, Scales & Typologies (pp. 168-197).
Chapter 7: The logic of sampling (pp. 198-241)
18 March  No Class!!!  (Easter Recess)

25 March  (Session 8)  Modes of Observation  
Midterm Review  

**Readings:**
Chapter 8: *Experiments* (pp. 244-267).  
Chapter 9: *Survey Research* (pp. 268-310)

1 April  (Session 9)  Midterm Exam  (Good Luck!!!)

8 April  (Session 10): Qualitative Observation  

**Readings:**
Chapter 10: *Qualitative field research* (pp. 312-346).

15 April  (Session 11): Qualitative Data Analysis  

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY DISCUSSION due**  
**INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT due**

**Readings:**
Chapter 13: *Qualitative data analysis* (pp. 414-440).

22 April  (Session 12): Quantitative Data Analysis  

**Readings:**
Chapter 13: *Quantitative data analysis* (pp. 443-468).

29 April  (Session 13): Quantitative Analysis (cont’d)  
Test Review  

**RESEARCH PROPOSAL due:**

6 May: Final Exam  (Good Luck!!!  Have a Great Summer!!!)