

Field Management, Teamwork and Partnerships in Large Scale Qualitative Inquiry



Small Solutions
for Big (Social) Science

CIRST

Centre interuniversitaire de recherche sur la science et la technologie



For further discussion...

email: releveST@er.uqam.ca

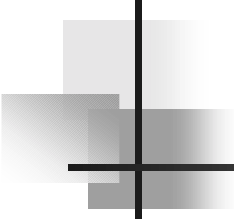
Brigitte Gemme
CIRST UQAM
CP 8888 Succ Centre-Ville
Montreal (Quebec) H3C 3P8

This research project is funded by the *Action concertée pour la relève en sciences et en technologies au Québec* program of the Fonds FCAR. The research team members would like to thank all funding and supporting partners.



Who are we?

- Brigitte Gemme, M.A. Sociology student and project coordinator, Université du Québec à Montréal (UQÀM) and CIRST
- Guy Gibeau, professor of sociology, Cégep de St-Laurent
- Monique Lasnier, research professional, Collège de Sherbrooke
- Pierre Doray, professor of sociology, UQÀM and CIRST



Other Research Committee Members

- Pierre Chenard, director of institutional research, Université du Québec
- Claire Deschênes, professor of mechanical engineering and chair holder of the NSERC/Alcan joint chair for Women for Science and Engineering at Laval University
- Martine Foisy, research professional at the Chair



Research Assistants

- Claude-Julie Bourque, B.A.
Sociology, UQAM
- Carl Brownrigg, B.A. Phys. Ed.,
U. Laval
- Rémi Coignard, Ph.D.
Sociology, U. of Mtl and Paris 7
- Karine Demers, B.A. Sociology,
UQAM
- Pierre-David Desjardins, B.A.
Sociology, UQAM
- Lamine Diédhiou, Ph.D.
Sociology, U. of Mtl
- Brigitte Doyon, B.A.
Sociology, Laval U.
- Isabelle Gourdes-Vachon, B.A.
Sociology, Laval U.
- Patrick Henry, M.P.A., ÉNAP
- Patricia Leclerc, B.A. STS,
UQAM
- Julie Nadeau, M.A. Social
Work, Laval U.
- Alexandre Royer, M.A.
Criminology, U. of Mtl



Partners

- Fédération des cégeps
- Association des collèges privés
- Ordre professionnel des conseillers et conseillères en orientation
- Cégep de St-Laurent
- Collège Ahuntsic
- Collège de Sherbrooke
- Six anonymous colleges (sites)



Our project

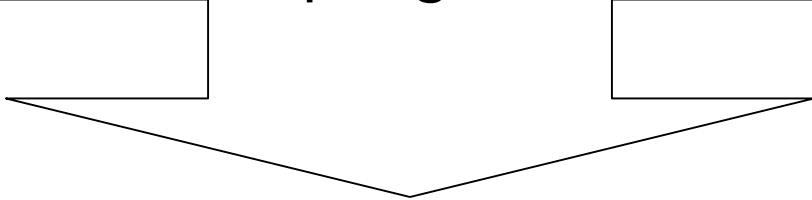
What combination of factors allow us to understand student persistence, program switching and dropout phenomena in college science and technology programs?

- Phase I: 120 interviews in :
 - biochemistry
 - computer technology
 - electronics
- Phase II: 120 in pre-university science programs
- Longitudinal: Frequent follow up with each student



Context

- Industry and government preoccupied by personnel shortage in ST sectors
- New public policy focusing on science training
- High dropout and program-switching rates



Joint funding program coordinated by FCAR
9 more organizations, including 3 ministries, ACFAS,
ADRIQ, CLDS, OIQ, TC and SPST



Challenges

- Multi-site:
 - 6 colleges
 - 2 geographical regions
 - 2 headquarters: Montréal and Québec City
 - Large sampling
- Large team of researchers and RAs
 - Different disciplines
 - Different institutional backgrounds
 - Never (or almost never) worked together
- Social demand and expectations



Methodological Stakes

- Issues neglected by the literature
- Reliability of data collection and treatment
 - Multiple interviewers, transcribers and coders
 - Multiple subjectivities and biases
- Validity
 - Perceived social problem
 - College-effect bias
 - Early crystallization of advising committee
- Continuous interpretation

Project Submission

- Written by three team members only
- Recruiting
 - Researchers from diverse backgrounds and institutions
 - Supporting partners



Different appropriation of research goals by team members



Interview Guide Design

- First appropriation activity by the team
- Goal: consensus on methods and contents
- Coordinated by researcher trained in Q.M.

3 steps method:

1. Exhaustive survey of questions
 2. Themes, questions, probes
 3. Level of directivity
- Gain: Creativity and Thickness



Research Assistants Hiring

- Wide posting of positions available
- 40 candidates met in our 2 HQ
 - Traditional interview with candidate
 - Interview simulation with a student
 - Transcribing part of the interview
- Hesitations over:
 - Problematic Skills
 - Imperfect knowledge of school system
- Job offer conditional to training



Research Assistants Training

Goals:

- Acquiring a common approach and method to interviewing;
- Sharing the research goals and orientations

Ways:

- Interview guide presentation and exercises
- Interview simulation (videotaped)
- Discussion of possible problems
- Collective feedback



Field Guide

- Project summary
- Site information
- Guidelines for most research activities:
 - Making appointments
 - Before the interview
 - During the interview
 - Attitudes
 - Interview Guide
 - After the interview
 - Ethics and Confidentiality
 - Transcription



Fieldwork Monitoring

- Appointment making
 - Scheduling
- Post-interview memo
 - Interview contents
 - Interviewer's questions
- Interview listening
- Feedback to interviewers
- Supervision
- Data management



What will change

- In doubt, second interview before hiring
- Advance preparation of training
- More monitoring of interviews
 - Methods and attitudes
 - Contents

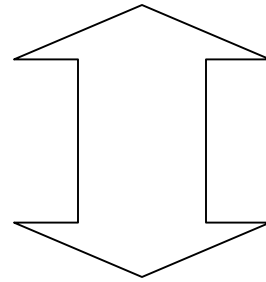


Question Marks

- What should be done about problematic interviewers *after* they have started to do interviews?
- What will be the impact of the multiplication of perspectives on the analysis process?
- How can we make sure that the results of the study are used diligently?

Conclusion

Thought-provocativeness of process
Adaptativeness of procedures



Increased quality
Continuous learning process
Lots of fun



References

Fiedler, Judith (1978). *Field Research: A Manual for Logistics and Management of Scientific Studies in Natural Settings*. Jossey-Bass.

Ford, Kate, Oberski, Iddo and Steve Higgins (2000). « Computer-Aided Qualitative Analysis of Interview Data: Some Recommendations for Collaborative Working », *The Qualitative Report*, v. 4, n. 3-4, available online: <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR4-3/oberski.html>.

Liggett, Annette, M., Glesne, Corrine E., Johnston, A.P., Hasazi, Susan Brody and Richard A. Schattman (1994). « Teaming in Qualitative Research: Lessons Learned », *Qualitative Studies in Education*, v. 7, n. 1, pp. 77-88.

MacQueen, Kathleen, McLellan, Eleanor, Kay, Kelly and Bobby Milstein (1998). « Codebook Development for Team-Based Qualitative Analysis », *Cultural Anthropology Methods*, v. 10, n. 2, pp. 31-36.

Marshall, Catherine and Gretchen B. Rossmann (1989). *Designing Qualitative Research*. Sage Publications.

Miles, Matthew B. and A. Michael Huberman (1984). *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Sourcebook of New Methods*. Sage Publications.

Peshkin, Alan (October 1988). « In Search of Subjectivity – One's Own », *Educational Researcher*, pp. 122-127.

Rossmann, Gretchen B., Corbett, H. Dickson and William A. Firestone (1988). « Appendix: Research Methods », *Change and Effectiveness in Schools: A Cultural Perspective*, pp. 143-159.

Wasser, Judith Davidson and Liora Bresler (1996). « Working in the Interpretive Zone: Conceptualizing Collaboration in Qualitative Research Teams », *Educational Researcher*, v. 25, n. 5, pp. 5-15.

Whitt, Elizabeth J. and George D. Kuh (1991). « Qualitative Methods in a Team Approach to Multiple-Institutions Studies », *The Review of Higher Education*, v. 14, n. 3, pp. 317-338.