

Linda Mabry, Ph.D.
Professor of Educational Psychology

Washington State University Vancouver
14204 NE Salmon Creek Avenue
Vancouver, WA 98642

telephone 360.546.9428
email mabryL@vancouver.wsu.edu



Linda began her career as a public elementary school teacher in a high-poverty, racially mixed elementary school in the Houston metropolitan area. Wanting to provide more differentiated instruction, she began to study the use of technology in the classroom and earned a master's degree in computer-assisted instruction at the University of Illinois. She stayed on for a doctoral degree, specializing in research methodology (especially qualitative case study), the evaluation of educational and social programs, and the assessment of student achievement.

Her methods in research and evaluation are typically qualitative and mixed-methods, with a smattering of quasi-experimental design. She regularly teaches courses addressing the philosophy of research and research methods and, as a faculty member of Indiana University, served as the head of evaluation methodology for six years. Her research has focused on teacher-developed and state-mandated systems for assessing student achievement, state and national educational accountability systems and their impact on teaching and learning, the administration of state performance assessments, the scoring of state performance assessments, the educational benefits of using lap-top computers at the elementary school level, high school literacy initiatives, reading tutoring, students at risk of academic failure, the preparation of teachers for bilingual classrooms, and the contribution of children's museums to public education.

She has served in the following positions:

- National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessments, Board of Trustees
- American Evaluation Association, Board of Directors and
AEA Ethics Committee
AEA Public Affairs Committee
AEA Educational Accountability Task Force (chair)
AEA High-Stakes Testing Task Force
AEA response to US Department of Education proposal to prefer quantitative evaluation designs for federal funding (chair)
AEA Theories of Evaluation topical interest group (chair)
- New York Performance Standards Consortium, Performance Assessment Review Board
- *New Directions for Evaluation*, Editorial Board
- *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, Editorial Board
- *Wisdom of Practice: An Online Journal of Action Research*, Editor
- Oregon Program Evaluators Network program committee

Qualitative Data Analysis

October 2, 2009

Linda Mabry, Ph.D.
Washington State University Vancouver

I. Interpretation of qualitative data

- A. Constructing interpretations – and "getting it right"
- B. Alternative interpretations
- C. Using a literature review in interpreting data



II. Data analysis

- A. Ongoing data analysis
 1. Observer comments [O.C.]
 2. Analytic memos
 3. Emergent design
 4. Constant comparative method
- B. Formal data analysis – a 3-phase approach
 1. Phase 1: method-by-method or subject-by-subject analysis
 2. Phase 2: analysis across all methods or across all subjects
 3. Phase 3: finalization of themes and interpretations
Example: Will group work improve my students' engagement and performance?
- C. Thematic and content analysis

III. Theory in data analysis

- A. The role of theory in research
 1. Theory in developing a research design: implicit and explicit theory
 2. Theory in recognizing and recording data
 3. Theory in analyzing data: inductive and deductive analysis
 4. Theory as a product of research
- B. Using theory to interpret data
Example – Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory to analyze the inclusion of special ed students in early childhood classrooms
- C. Theoretical triangulation
Example – 3 theories of action to analyze local impact of No Child Left Behind



IV. Findings

- A. Characteristics of assertions
 1. Important, based on significant data
 2. Focused
 3. Clarity
 4. Interpretive, the strongest possible statement data will support, avoiding both underinterpretation or overinterpretation
 5. Site-specific, avoiding overgeneralization



Practice:

- Analyzing data related to Jodi, an at-risk high school senior

Participant option:

- Discussion of participants' qualitative projects and data analysis challenges
- Types of qualitative research: An impressionistic analogy



References and Readings – by the presenter

Examples of qualitative research reports

Mabry, L. & Margolis, J. (2006). NCLB: Local implementation and impact in southwest Washington state. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 14 (23). available online at <http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/arch.html>

Mabry, L., Poole J., Redmond, L. & Schultz, A. (2003) Local impact of state testing in southwest Washington. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 11 (22). available online at <http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/arch.html>

Mabry, L. & Ettinger, L. (1999). Supporting community-oriented educational change: Case and analysis. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 7 (14). available online at <http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/arch.html>

Mabry, L. & Stake, R. (1997). Childrens museums and schools: The case of Gilbert House. In N. F. Gibans (Ed.), *Bridges to understanding children's museums* (pp.). Cleveland, OH: Case Western Reserve University Mandel Center for Nonprofit Organizations.

Mabry, L. (1991). Nicole: Seeking attention. In Strother, D. B. (Ed.), *Learning to fail: Case studies of students at-risk* (pp. 1-24). Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa.

Methodological readings

Mabry, L. (2009). Case study methods in educational evaluation. In *International Handbook of Educational Evaluation*, B. Cousins & K. Ryan (Eds.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Mabry, L. (2008). Case study in social research. In *Handbook of Social Research Methods*, P. Alasuutari, L. Bickman, & J. Brannen (Eds.) (pp. 214-227). London: Sage.

Mabry, L. (2008). Ethics for social science in postmodern times. In *Handbook of Social Research Ethics*, D. Mertens & P. Ginsberg (Eds.). (pp. 107-120) Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Bamberger, M., Rugh, J., & Mabry, L. (2006). *Realworld evaluation: Conducting evaluations with budget, time, data, and political constraints*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Mabry, L. (2003). In living color: Qualitative methods in educational evaluation. In Kellaghan & D. L. Stufflebeam (Eds.), *International Handbook of Educational Evaluation*, pp. 167-185. Boston: Kluwer-Nijhoff.

Mabry, L. (2002). Postmodern evaluation—or not? *American Journal of Evaluation*, 23 (2), 141-157.

Mabry, L. (2001). Representing the truth about program quality or the truth about representing program quality. In A. Benson, D. M. Hinn, & C. Lloyd (Eds.), *Visions of quality: How evaluators define, understand, and represent program quality* (pp. 19-27). Amsterdam: JAI Press.

More References and Readings

Examples of qualitative research reports

- Fine, M. (1991). *Framing dropouts: Notes on the politics of an urban public high school*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Kenyatta, J. (1965). *Facing Mount Kenya: The tribal life of the Gikuyu*. New York: Vintage Books, Random House.
- Spindler, G. D. (1997). Beth Anne—A case study of culturally defined adjustment and teacher perceptions. In G. D. Spindler (Ed.), *Education and cultural process: Anthropological approaches* (3rd ed., pp. 246-261). Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.
- Tobin, J. J., Wu, D. Y. H., & Davidson, D. H. (1989). *Preschool in three cultures: Japan, China, and the United States*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Wolcott, H. F. (1987). The teacher as an enemy. In G. D. Spindler (Ed.), *Education and cultural process: Anthropological approaches* (2nd ed., pp. 136-150). Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.

Methodological readings

- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). *Handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Erickson, F. (1986). Qualitative methods in research on teaching. In M. C. Wittrock (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching* (3rd ed., pp. 119-161). New York: Macmillan.
- Firestone, W. A. (1993). Alternative arguments for generalizing from data as applied to qualitative research. *Educational Researcher*, 22 (4), 16-23.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays*. New York: Basic Books. Glaser and Strauss
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. I. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory*. Chicago, IL: Aldine.
- LeCompte, M. D. & Preissle, J. (1993). *Ethnography and qualitative design in educational research* (2nd ed.). San Diego: Academic Press.
- Maxwell, J.A. (1992). Understanding and validity in qualitative research. *Harvard Educational Review*, 62 (3), 279-300.
- Merriam, S. B. (2002). *Qualitative research in practice*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Wolcott, H. F. (1994). *Transforming qualitative data: Description, analysis, and interpretation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Yin, R. K. (1994). *Case study research: Design and methods* (2nd ed.) Applied Social Research Methods Series, vol. 5. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.