Designing and Implementing Mixed Method Research

Kathryn Edin
Harvard University
• Motivated by the failure of explanations flowing from the standard economic model
  – Why do poor women have children while young and unmarried when they’ll face such an uphill battle to support them?
• Focused ethnographic observations in 8 communities, all moderate to high in poverty
• N=162 qualitative study in one MSA
• Repeated in-depth interviews
Site
Philadelphia County

% Non-Marital Births

Figure 1 - Hispanic female-headed household poverty rate by census tract, Philadelphia, 2000

% below poverty
- 0 - 10
- 11 - 21
- 21 - 30
- 31 - 40
- 40 - 100
- No Data

West Kensington
East Camden
North Camden
South Camden
Figure 1 - Black female-headed household poverty rate by census tract, Philadelphia, 2000

% below poverty
- 0 - 10
- 11 - 21
- 21 - 30
- 31 - 40
- 40 - 100
- No Data

- Strawberry Mansion
- North Central
- East Camden
- North Camden
- South Camden
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Younger</th>
<th>Older</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>25-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rican</td>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>25-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>25-30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Fieldwork
  – Edin moved to Camden to begin fieldwork
  – Kefalas began fieldwork in Kensington and Pennsport
  – Graduate students in West Kensington, Strawberry Mansion, and North Central.

• Interviewing
  – Maximum Heterogeneity Method
  – Repeated In-Depth Semi-Structured Interviews
Pennsport
What was New?

• Using census data to select neighborhood contexts within a single metro area to study.

• Combining ethnographic and in-depth interview techniques within neighborhoods.
Qualitative Addition to Fragile Families

• Motivated by “discovery” of new family form
  – What are the couple dynamics that lead to stability or breakup, and after breakup, to ongoing father involvement or disengagement?””
• Stratified random survey subsample in three cities.

• Hospital recruitment, Interviews at
  – 2 months, 1, 2, and 4 years
  – in-depth interviews with both the couple and each individual parent

• Longitudinal in nature, timing of interviews complementary to FF.
  – birth, 1, 3, and 5 years
• Multi-Disciplinary team from Sociology, Economics, and Psychology.
• Initial FF findings and other research on father involvement over time provided motivation for study.
• Questions of Interest
  – What forces pull non-marital couples who share a birth together or push them apart?
  – What forces keep non-custodial fathers to engaged with their children or push them to disengage?
Site Selection

- Chicago
  - Michael Reese
  - 25 couples
- Milwaukee
  - St. Mary’s
  - 25 couples
- New York
  - Lutheran
  - 25 Couples
Design

• Roughly even numbers of African Americans, Caucasians, and Latinos
• Within each group, roughly two-thirds non-marital and one-third marital
• All relatively low-income
What was New?

- Stratified Random Subsample
  - Couple-Level Data
  - Longitudinal
Moving to Opportunity

• Motivated by hypothesis about “neighborhood effects” – how do neighborhoods matter for the people who live in them?

• Unique features
  – Nested within a field experiment
  – Stratified random sample represented all “program groups”
    • Experimental group – used voucher to move to neighborhood < 10% poor
    • Section 8 comparison group – used voucher anywhere
    • Control group – did not receive any change to housing
  – Also stratified by household type
  – Followed a survey which took place 4 – 7 years after random assignment.
  – Focused on “puzzles” from the survey results
Questions

• Why are there large mental health gains, as well as improvement in obesity for mothers in the experimental group, but no employment or earnings gains?
• Why were there no educational gains for children in the experimental group?
• Why do adolescent girls in the experimental group experience benefits in terms of mental health and risk behavior, while boys show no improvement or are at greater risk?
Methodology

• In-depth interviews:
  – Adults (N=187)
  – Youth (14 – 19 years old) (N=129)
  – Teachers (Baltimore only) (N=41)

• Classroom observation:
  – (Baltimore only)
  – 80 classrooms (Math & English)
What was New?

• Survey findings motivated qualitative study & affected methods & construction of interview guide
• Qualitative methods sought to capture “process” to go along with “outcome” in survey
• Using experimental design for qualitative analysis
• Nested within a field experiment - can be messy