

Qualitative Research Methods

CJT 664 – Spring 2012

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CJT 664 is designed to give students an introduction to the qualitative methods used in the communication discipline. The course will have two major “content” areas:

Ethnographic (naturalistic) Analysis: The study of speech communities and the discourse they produce within their natural settings.

Rhetorical/Historical/Textual Criticism: The analysis of cultural artifacts (books, movies, architecture, videos, magazines, etc.) and what they tell us about the rhetor, culture, power, history, and society.

The “form” of the course will utilize a seminar-learning format (also referred to as the dialectic/Platonic format) in which students actively engage the readings and each other. In my role as professor, I will not lecture; I will serve as a facilitator and a resource for discussions. As a result, students must read ALL the assigned material and be prepared to discuss, debate, and question the readings if the class is going to most effectively meet the course’s goals.

The learning outcomes for this course are as follows:

- 1) To investigate the historic foundations of qualitative research in communication studies.
- 2) To develop an appreciation of the art and science of qualitative research.
- 3) To learn the major theoretical assumptions surrounding qualitative research.
- 4) To critique some of the salient qualitative researchers & writings in the social sciences.
- 5) To engage in the important debates surrounding the nature, ethics, and value of qualitative research.
- 6) To inventory, categorize and examine the elements that comprise well-formed and written research.
- 7) To understand the criteria, tools, and approaches that drive naturalistic/ethnographic research.
- 8) To understand the criteria, tools, and approaches that drive rhetorical research.
- 9) To learn the strengths and limitations of qualitative research.
- 10) To develop the ability to evaluate the quality of ethnographic and rhetorical research.
- 11) To prepare your own qualitative proposal that is thesis/dissertation quality.

Required Books

Berg, B. L. (2009). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences* (7th edition). Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.

Bettie, J. (2003). *Women without class: Girls, race, and identity*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Conover, T. (1987). *Coyotes: A journey through the secret world of America's illegal aliens*. New York: Vintage Books.

Duneier, M. (1999). *Sidewalk*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.

Hochschild, A. R. (2003). *The second shift*. New York: Penguin Books.

Humphreys, L. (2005). *Tearoom trade: Impersonal sex in public places*. New Brunswick, NJ: Aldine Transaction.

Assignments

I. An Ethnographic Research Proposal (25%):

- You will have to write a qualitative research proposal that details an envisioned & realistic ethnographic study.
- A nice outline for your paper can be found in Anthony W. [Heath](#)'s "The Proposal in Qualitative Research." (see addendum at end of syllabus)
- This assignment will be discussed in more detail throughout the semester.
- Your proposal will be 15 to 20 pages in length and written in APA form.
- Your proposal is due the last day of class.

II. Weekly Reading Outlines and Reviews (65%)

- To both reward your reading and to help you create a set of detailed notes on qualitative research (*useful for qualifying exams and for young assistant professors*), you will turn in typed notes on *each* reading at the end of each class.
- These assignments should be typed (one-inch margins, single spaced).
- No late summaries/reviews will be accepted.
- The article summaries should be written in complete-sentence outline form. This exercise will help you search for the order and structure behind the research.
- Each article summary should also contain your opinions, reflections, and reactions to the *end* of the review.

III. Class Participation (10%)

- Given the nature of a graduate-level seminar class, everyone is expected to participate in the collective educational process.
- Ideally, your participation will be well informed and contribute to a positive learning environment.
- If you are naturally introverted, push yourself out of your comfort zone. If you are naturally extroverted, self monitor 😊

Class Expectations

It is expected, that as graduate students, you will . . .

- 1) attend every class. For every missed class, there will be a 5% grade reduction.
- 2) arrive on time.
- 3) stay for the entirety of the class.
- 4) read everything that is assigned.
- 5) participate in class.
- 6) play nicely with others (i.e., be kind and respectful of each other)
- 7) complete the class on time (i.e., no incompletes)
- 8) most importantly, have a great attitude about this class.
 - o Even if you consider yourself a “quantitative” researcher, this class will hopefully make you a more well-rounded, informed, and smarter teacher, researcher, and colleague.
 - o Or, at the very least, you get to read some really interesting works.

Weekly Schedule

“Web Site” material can also be found on my web page:

<http://www.uky.edu/~addesa01/Readings667.htm>

(Each work will be listed under the 1st author’s last name)

January 11--Course Introduction

January 18—Introduction to Ethnographic Work

Readings:

- Chapter 1: Introduction (in Berg’s *Qualitative Research Methods*) —
No Typed Outline For This Reading
- Homeboys and hoods by [Conquergood](#) (Web Site)
- More than refuge by [Dordick](#) (Web Site)
- Stronger than Dirt by [Lankenau](#) (Web Site)

January 25—Ethnographic Analysis (Foundational Theory)

Readings:

- Chapter 2: Designing qualitative research (in Berg’s *Qualitative Research Methods*) —
No Typed Outline For This Reading
- Karl Marx by [Cropsey](#) (Web Site)
- Friedrich Nietzsche by [Dannhauser](#) (Web Site)
- Postmodern by [DeSantis](#) (Web Site)

February 1—Ethnographic Analysis

Readings:

- Chapter 4: A Dramaturgical look at interviewing (in Berg’s *Qualitative Research Methods*) —
No Typed Outline For This Reading
- Ten lies of ethnography by [Fine](#) (Web Site)
- Murderers’ relatives by [May](#) (Web Site)
- Adderall 1: Illicit use of prescription ADHD medications by [DeSantis](#)
(Web Site)
- The rhetorical power of a compelling story by [Hollihan](#) (Web Site)

February 8

Readings:

- Conover, Conover, T. (1987). *Coyotes: A journey through the secret world of America's illegal aliens*. New York: Vintage Books.

February 15—Ethnographic Analysis

Readings:

- Chapter 5: Focus group interviewing (in Berg's *Qualitative Research Methods*) —*No Typed Outline For This Reading*
- Rescued Journey by [Wittenberg](#) (Web Site)
- Star Trek by [Jenkins](#) (Web Site)
- Romance Novels by [Radway](#) (Web Site)
- Smoke screen by [DeSantis](#) (Web Site)

February 22—Ethnographic Analysis

• Readings:

- Bettie, J. (2003). *Women without class: Girls, race, and identity*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
 - Skip Chapter 5

February 29--Ethnographic Analysis

Readings:

- Hockschild, A. R. (2003). *The second shift*. New York: Penguin Books.
 - Skip Chapters 7, 9, 15

March 7—Ethnographic Analysis

Readings:

- Humphreys, L. (2005). *Tearoom trade: Impersonal sex in public places*. New Brunswick, NJ: Aldine Transaction.

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March 14—UK's Spring Break

March 21—Ethnographic Analysis

Readings:

- Chapter 8: Unobtrusive measures in research (in Berg's *Qualitative Research Methods*) —*No Typed Outline For This Reading*
- Performance ethnography by [McCall](#) (Web Site)
- Working in the fantasy factory by [Wood](#) (Web Site)
- In search of Naunmy's grave by [Trujillo](#) (Web Site)
- My Father by [Miller](#) (Web Site)

March 28--Ethnographic Analysis

Readings:

- Duneier, M. (1999). *Sidewalk*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.
Read the Introduction, Part One (excluding "The Magazine Vendors"), Part Three (excluding "Talking to Women"), Part Four (excluding "A Christmas on Sixth Avenue), and Part Five (Stop after "Conclusion).

April 4—No Class (*work on proposal*)

April 11—Rhetorical Criticism

Readings:

- They spoke in defense of themselves by [Ware](#) (Web Site)
- Road Myth by [Barbopoulos](#) (Web Site)
- Hegemonic masculinity on the mound by [Trujillo](#) (Web Site)
- Narrative analysis of sexual etiquette in teenage magazines by [Garner](#) (Web Site)

April 18— Rhetorical Criticism

Readings:

- Cigar Aficionado by [DeSantis](#) (Web Site)
- Indigestible food, conquering hordes, and waste materials by [O'Brien](#) (Web Site)
- The Princess and the Magic Kingdom: Beyond nostalgia, the function of the Disney princess by [Do Rozario](#) (Web Site)
- Domesticating the personal computer: The mainstreaming of a new technology and the cultural management of a widespread technophobia by [Reed](#) (Web Site)

April 25--Rhetorical Criticism (Final Class)

<u>Readings:</u>

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|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Matthew Shepard by Ott (Web Site) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bush by Murphy (Web Site) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Law enforcement and crime on Cops and World's Wildest Police Videos: Anecdotal form and the justification of racial profiling by Prosise (Web Site) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Put on a happy face: "Batman" as schizophrenic savior by Terrill (Web Site) |

The Proposal in Qualitative Research¹

by
Anthony W. Heath²

The Qualitative Report, Volume 3, Number 1, March, 1997
(<http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR3-1/heath.html>)

The purpose of "qualitative" or "naturalistic" research varies according to the research paradigm, methods, and assumptions. Generally speaking, qualitative researchers attempt to describe and interpret some human phenomenon, often in the words of selected individuals (the informants). These researchers try to be clear about their biases, presuppositions, and interpretations so that others (the stakeholders) can decide what they think about it all.

Unlike conventional, positivist research, there is no single accepted outline for a qualitative research proposal or report (Morse, 1991). The generic outline that follows is suggested as a point of departure for qualitative research proposals, and it applies specifically to the research paradigm and methods that seem most applicable to the study of families and family therapy (e.g., post-positivist, phenomenological clinical observation and long interviews). The outline is intended to serve as a point of departure for researchers, who must decide how to organize their proposals (a) to best communicate their ideas to their intended audiences and (b) to satisfy the demands of the context.

I. Introduction

- A. Begin with something interesting, e.g., a quote or story, to capture the reader's interest.
- B. Introduce your question or curiosity. What is it that you want to know or understand? How did you get interested in the topic? If your question has evolved since you have begun, describe the process.
- C. Tell why there's a need for the study. Cite relevant literature that calls for the need for the research in this area, or demonstrates the lack of attention to the topic. In your own words, describe how you think this study will be useful.
- D. Describe the intended audience for your research (e.g., the public, family therapists).

- E. Describe your research product. What form will the report take (e.g., scholarly manuscript, magazine article for the public, script for a documentary video)?
- F. Conclude the introduction with an overview of your proposal.

II. Research Paradigm

This section should be included in your proposal when you expect to have readers who are not familiar with the naturalistic research paradigm. It may not be necessary in contexts where qualitative research is an accepted form of inquiry.

- A. Use specific language to name and describe your research paradigm (e.g., naturalistic, post-positivist). The term "paradigm" is used here to represent the epistemological, conceptual foundation for qualitative research. See [Guba \(1990\)](#).
- B. Describe the philosophical correlates of your research paradigm (e.g., phenomenology, hermeneutics).
- C. Cite authors who have defined your research paradigm in the social sciences and suggested its application to your field of study and/or your specific topic of study. See [Moon, Dillon, and Sprenkle \(1990\)](#).
- D. Explain the assumptions of your research paradigm.
 - 1. Broadly speaking, describe what you intend to accomplish through this research (e.g., expanding a knowledge base, generating hypotheses for quantitative research, developing a grounded theory, emancipating informants, establishing the trustworthiness of a theory). See Atkinson and Heath ([1990a](#), [1990b](#)); [Lincoln and Guba \(1985\)](#).
 - 2. Explain the assumptions about the nature of knowledge and reality that underlie your research paradigm. Discuss how a formal literature review will be used.
 - 3. Describe the major tasks of the researcher in this paradigm of research. Comment on how the tasks differ in conventional social science research.
 - 4. Explain the type of relationship that the researcher has with the informants (e.g., unobtrusive observer, participant observer, collaborator, emancipation).

- E. Suggest the appropriate criteria for evaluating the research findings, research process, and the research report. The criteria should be consistent with your research paradigm and well documented. See [Atkinson, Heath, and Chenail](#) (1991).

III. Research Method

- A. Identify and generally describe your research method (e.g., ethnographic field study, single case study), and your research procedures (e.g., long interviews, observation).
- B. Cite the major authors who have described your research method. See [Lincoln and Guba](#) (1985); [Glaser and Strauss](#) (1967), etc.
- C. Describe what you intend to do in detail, as you begin your study.
 - 1. Explain how you will select informants and gain entry into the research context (if relevant).
 - 2. Describe the procedures you will take to protect the rights of your informants (e.g., informed consent, human subjects approval, debriefing).
 - 3. Describe the kind of relationship you intend to have with the informants. Will you be neutral, collaborative, objective?
 - 4. Describe the kind of data you will collect (e.g., field notes from memory, audio tapes, video tapes, transcripts of conversations, examination of existing documents, etc.).
 - 5. Describe your intended data collection procedures. If interviews are to be used, list your question(s) or attach as an appendix. Describe any equipment to be used.
 - 6. Describe the procedures you will use to keep track of the research process. This will become part of your audit trail.
 - a. Process notes: Day to day activities, methodological notes, decision making procedures.
 - b. Materials relating to intentions and reactions: personal notes about motivations, experiences with informants, etc.
 - c. Instrument development information: revisions of interview questions, etc.

7. Describe your intended data analysis procedures (coding, sorting, etc.)?
 - a. Data reduction: Write-ups of field notes, transcription procedures and conventions, computer programs used, etc.
 - b. Data reconstruction: development of categories, findings, conclusions, connections to existing literature, integration of concepts.
 8. Describe how the research design may evolve as the process unfolds.
 9. Describe how you will organize, format and present your data, interpretations, and conclusions.
- D. Describe how you will consider and protect "reliability" and "validity." Will you use systematic methods and procedures, triangulation, member checking, peer debriefing, auditing?

IV. Preliminary Biases, Suppositions and Hypotheses

- A. Summarize and reference all of the relevant literature that you have reviewed to date.
- B. Describe how your review of the literature has influenced the way you are approaching the research.
- C. Discuss how your previous experience with your topic has influenced the way you have conceptualized this research. Summarize relevant personal and professional experiences, if you have not done so in the Introduction.
- D. Disclose the anticipated findings, your hypotheses and your hunches.
- E. Describe the procedures you will use to remain "open" to unexpected information (e.g., peer debriefing).
- F. Discuss the limitations of your study in the context of the limitations of all similar studies.

V. References and Mini-Bibliography

Atkinson, B., & Heath, A. (1990a). Further thoughts on second-order family therapy: This time it's personal. *Family Process*, 29(2), 145-156.

Atkinson, B., & Heath, A. (1990b). The limits of explanation and evaluation. *Family Process*, 29(2), 164-168.

Atkinson, B., Heath, A., & Chenail, R. (1991). Qualitative research and the legitimization of knowledge. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 17(2), 175-180.

Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago: Aldine.

Guba, E.(1990). *The paradigm dialog*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. New York: Sage.

Moon, S., Dillon, D., & Sprenkle, D. (1990). Family therapy and qualitative research. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 16(4), 357-373.

Morse, J. (1991). On the evaluation of qualitative proposals. *Qualitative Health Research*, 1(2), 147-151.

¹This proposal was produced in collaboration with Brent J. Atkinson, Ph.D.

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Heath, A. W. (1997, March). The proposal in qualitative research [41 paragraphs]. *The Qualitative Report* [On-line serial], 3(1). Available: <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR3-1/heath.html>