

COMMUNICATION 7434-8434: QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS

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Goals

The goal of this course is to provide an understanding of how communication research is conducted in natural settings using naturalistic/qualitative research methods, "an umbrella term covering an array of interpretive techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate, and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world" (Van Maanen, 1983, p. 9). By the end of the course, the following objectives should be achieved:

1. Understand some of the philosophical assumptions that inform naturalistic research methods in the study of communication processes and practices
2. Know rationales for selecting naturalistic research methods to study communication, the types of questions that can and cannot be answered using these methods, and the strengths and limitations of these methods
3. Understand steps involved in the planning and designing of naturalistic communication research
4. Know and be able to use the naturalistic research techniques of participant observation and in-depth interviewing
5. Learn ways to analyze qualitative data gathered from using naturalistic research methods
6. Conduct a naturalistic study of communication using participant observation and in-depth interviewing

Required Reading

Lindlof, T. R. (1995). Qualitative communication research methods. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. (This is the main textbook for the course, and readings for each chapter are given below in the course syllabus. Additional readings are/will be assigned as needed.)

Adelman, M. B., & Frey, L. R. (1997). The fragile community: Living together with AIDS. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum. (This text is used throughout the semester as an example of naturalistic communication research. Please read it in its entirety as soon as possible.)

Syllabus

January 17-24

Studying Communication in Context: An Introduction to
Naturalistic Inquiry in Communication Research (Chapters 1-2)

A. Additional Readings

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2000). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), Handbook of qualitative research (2nd ed., pp. 1-29). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

B. Assignments (January 24)

1. Each student will provide a short overview (5-10 minutes, with an appropriate handout) of one of the following articles that examines a particular paradigm/perspective relevant to naturalistic research.

Schwandt, T. A. (2000). Three epistemological stances for qualitative inquiry: Interpretivism, hermeneutics, and social constructionism. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), Handbook of qualitative research (2nd ed., pp. 189-214). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Olesen, V. L. (2000). Feminisms and qualitative research at and into the millennium. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), Handbook of qualitative research (2nd ed., pp. 215-256). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2000). Radicalized discourses and ethnic epistemologies. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), Handbook of qualitative research (2nd ed., pp. 257-278). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Kincheloe, J. L., & McLaren, P. (2000). Rethinking critical theory and qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), Handbook of qualitative research (2nd ed., pp. 279-314). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Frow, J., & Morris, M. (2000). Cultural studies. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), Handbook of qualitative research (2nd ed., pp. 315-346). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Gamson, J. (2000). Sexualities, queer theory, and qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), Handbook of qualitative research (2nd ed., pp. 347-365). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

2. Each student should explain the initial purpose and intended site for the field research project. (Note: You must receive permission from me to study the site of your intended field research project; failure to do so will result in a grade of "F" for the project.)

Jan. 31-Feb. 14 Planning and Designing Naturalistic Communication Research
(Chapters 3-4)

A. Additional Readings

Janesick, V. J. (2000). The choreography of qualitative research design. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), Handbook of qualitative research (2nd ed., pp. 379-399). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Punch, M. (1994). Politics and ethics in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), Handbook of qualitative research (pp. 83-97). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

B. Assignment (Due January 31)

1. Each student will provide a short overview (5 minutes) of one of the following articles that examines a particular naturalistic method (ethnography, autoethnography, and critical ethnography):

Braithwaite, C. A. (1997). Sa'ah Naaghai Bik'eh Hozhoon: An ethnography of Navajo educational communication practices. Communication Education, *46*, 219-233.

Communication Studies 298. (1997) Fragments of self at the postmodern bar. Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, *26*, 251-292.

Conquergood, D. (1988). Health theatre in a Hmong refugee camp: Performance, communication, and culture. TDR: Journal of Performance Studies, *32*, 174-208.

Jones, J. L. (1996). The self as other: Creating the role of Joni the ethnographer for Broken Circles. Text & Performance Quarterly, *16*, 131-145.

Novek, E. M. (1995). West Urbania: An ethnographic study of communication practices in inner-city youth culture. Communication Studies, *46*, 169-186.

Trujillo, N. (1993). Interpreting November 22: A critical ethnography of an assassination site. Quarterly Journal of Speech, *79*, 447-486.

- C. Assignment (Due February 14): Visit the site that you have selected for your research project and conduct an initial observation. Be prepared to discuss how this site meets the three "resonance tests" described by Lindlof.

February 21-28 Observing and Learning (Chapter 5)

A. Additional Readings

Adler, P. A., & Adler, P. (1994). Observational techniques. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), Handbook of qualitative research (pp. 377-392). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

B. Assignments (Due February 21)

1. Each student will provide a short overview of one of the following articles that uses some form of naturalistic observation. In addition to describing the research, especially its strengths with regard to using observational procedure, point out what might have been learned had some type of interviewing procedures also been used.

Bird, S. E. (1999). Chatting on Cynthia's porch: Creating community in an e-mail fan group. Southern Communication Journal, 65, 49-65.

Bullis, C. (1991). Communication practices as unobtrusive control: An observational study. Communication Studies, 42, 254-271.

Cawyer, C. S., & Smith-Dupre', A. (1995). Communicating social support: Identifying supportive episodes in an HIV/AIDS support group. Communication Quarterly, 43, 243-258.

Hollihan, T. A., Riley, P., & Freadhoff, K. (1986). Arguing for justice: An analysis of arguing in small claims court. Journal of the American Forensic Association, 22, 187-195.

Murphy, A. G. (1998). Hidden transcripts of flight attendant resistance. Management Communication Quarterly, 11, 499-535.

Tracy, K., & Standerfer, C. (in press). Selecting a school superintendent: Sensitivities in group deliberation. In L. R. Frey (Ed.), Group communication in context: Studies of bona fide groups (2nd ed.). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

2. Visit again the site that you have selected for your research project and conduct another observation. Be prepared to discuss the sixth question Lindlof identified with respect to tactical observing, "What communicative events are significant?"

March 7-21

Eliciting Experience: In-depth Interviewing (Chapter 6)

A. Additional Readings

Fontana, A., & Frey, J. A. (2000). The interview: From structured questions to negotiated text. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), Handbook of qualitative research (2nd ed., pp. 645-672). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

B. Assignment (Due March 7)

1. Each student will provide a short overview of one of the following articles that uses some form of qualitative interviewing. In addition to describing the research, especially its strengths with regard to the interview procedure(s) used, point out what might have been learned had some type of observational procedures also been used.

Aden, R. C., Rahoi, R. L., & Beck, C. S. (1995). "Dreams are born on places like this": The process of interpretive community formation at the Field of Dreams site. Communication Quarterly, 43, 368-380.

Cissna, K., Cox, D., & Bochner, A. (1990). The dialectic of marital and parental relationships within the stepfamily. Communication Monographs, 57, 45-59.

Cooks, L. M., & Hale, C. L. (1992). A feminist approach to the empowerment of women mediators. Discourse & Society, 3, 277-300.

Schely-Newman, E. (1995). Sweeter than honey: Discourse of reproduction among North-African Israeli women. Text and Performance Quarterly, 15, 175-188.

Smith, R., & Eisenberg, E. (1987). Conflict at Disneyland: A root-metaphor analysis. Communication Monographs, 54, 367-380.

Stamp, G. H., & Sabourin, T. C. (1995). Accounting for violence: An analysis of male spousal abuse narratives. Journal of Applied Communication Research, 23, 284-307.

- C. Assignment (Due March 21): Conduct an interview with a relevant person from the site that you are studying for your field research project and be prepared to talk about how you conducted it (e.g., types of questions asked or format used), how you think it went (e.g., strengths or weaknesses), and at least one thing that you learned from the interview that you think will be important when you get ready to write up the study.

March 28-April 11 Analyzing Qualitative Data (Chapter 7)

A. Additional Readings

Charmaz, K. (2000). Grounded theory: Objectivist and constructivist methods. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), Handbook of qualitative research (2nd ed., pp. 509-535). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

B. Assignments (Due March 28):

1. Dr. Kevin Wright will be a guest speaker in the class, talking about the grounded theory approach to qualitative data analysis. Everyone should read the following article and be prepared to ask Dr. Wright questions about this approach.

Wright, K. B. (1997). Shared ideology in Alcoholics Anonymous: A grounded theory approach. Journal of Health Communication, 2, 83-99.

2. Each student will provide a short overview of one of the following articles that uses some form of analytic induction, constant comparative method, and/or grounded theory approach. Concentrate on explaining the way in which the data were analyzed and what conclusions could be drawn from those data-analytic procedures.

Brashers, D. E., Haas, S. M., Klinge, R. S., & Neidig, J. L. (2000). Collective AIDS activism and individuals' perceived self-advocacy in physician-patient communication. Human Communication Research, 26, 372-402.

Hogelucht, K. S. B., & Geist, P. (1997). Discipline in the classroom: Communicative strategies for negotiating order. Western Journal of Communication, 61, 1-34.

Kelley, D. (1998). The communication of forgiveness. Communication Studies, 49, 255-271.

Miller, M. (1995). An intergenerational case study of suicidal tradition and mother-daughter communication. Journal of Applied Communication Research, 23, 247-270.

Oseroff-Varnell, D. (1998). Communication and the socialization of dance students: An analysis of the hidden curriculum in a residential arts school. Communication Education, 47, 101-119.

- C. Assignments (Due April 11): Each student will provide a short overview of one of the following articles, focusing on the method by which the data were analyzed and what conclusions could be drawn from that method. In addition, each student should think about whether the analytic method might be useful for analyzing the data acquired for the his/her field research project.

DiSanza, J. R. (1995). Bank teller organizational assimilation in a system of contradictory practices. Management Communication Quarterly, 9, 191-218.

Kellett, P. M. (1999). Dialogue and dialectics in managing organizational change: The case of a mission based transformation. Southern Communication Journal, 64, 211-231.

Orbe, M. P. (1994). "Remember, it's always whites' ball": Descriptions of African American male communication. Communication Quarterly, 42, 287-300.

Owen, W. F. (1990). Delimiting relational metaphors. Communication Studies, 41, 35-53.

Putnam, L., Van Hoeven, S. A., & Bullis, C. A. (1991). The role of rituals and fantasy themes in teachers' bargaining. Western Journal of Speech Communication, 55, 85-103.

April 18

Writing Naturalistic Communication Research (Chapter 8)

A. Additional Readings

Richardson, L. (2000). Writing: A method of inquiry. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), Handbook of qualitative research (2nd ed., pp. 929-948). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- B. Assignments Each student should read the first four, short, experimental writing pieces, and be prepared to discuss your reaction to each piece. Think about

whether there is anything in the form that the essay takes that might be useful in writing up your field research project. Each student will then provide a short overview of one of the following articles, focusing on the way in which the articles are written.

Corey, F. C., & Nakayama, T. K. (1997). Sextext. Text and Performance Quarterly, 17, 58-68.

Meyer, M., with Bede-Fabbamila, B. O. (1997). Ifa and me: A divination of ethnography. Text and Performance Quarterly, 17, 33-57.

Pacanowsky, M. (1988). Slouching towards Chicago. Quarterly Journal of Speech, 74, 453-467.

Pelias, R. J. (1997). Confessions of an apprehensive performer. Text and Performance Quarterly, 17, 25-32.

Arnold, L. B. (1994). Through the narrow pass: Experiencing same-sex friendship in heterosexual(ist) settings. Communication Studies, 46, 234-244.

Brown, M. H., & McMillan, J. J. (1991). Culture as text: The development of an organizational narrative. Southern Communication Journal, 57, 49-60.

Cherry K. (1995). The best years of their lives: A portrait of a residential home for people with AIDS. Symbolic Interaction, 18, 463-486.

Nelson, S. (2000). Choric communication: The case of a Togolese women's musical organization. Text and Performance Quarterly, 20, 268-289.

Wendt, R. F. (1994). Women in positions of service: The politicized body. Communication Studies, 46, 276-296.

April 25 Research Presentations

May 2 Final Examination

Assignments (Note: Plus and minus grades will be used)

1. Exams (Midterm and Final; 30%, 15% each): The midterm examination is tentatively scheduled for February 28, and the final examination is scheduled for May 2. (Please do not make plans to leave before that date, as an early final exam will not be given.)
2. Book Review (5%): A 3-5 page review of a recent ethnography text, similar to reviews published in academic journals, that describes, interprets and critiques the text. The book review is due March 21. (Note: Only one text will be reviewed per person. You must receive permission from me for the text you review; failure to do so will result in a grade of "F" for the review.)
3. Field Research Project (35%): You are to conduct—as an individual, dyad, or part of a group—a study of people's communicative behavior/processes that occur in a natural setting of your choice using the methods examined in this class (at the very least, both participant observation and in-depth interviewing must be used). Ordinarily, you are expected to spend at least one hour per week conducting research in the field setting

exclusive of any additional time you spend there for other purposes, although as you will find out, more time than that undoubtedly will be needed. Two copies of a paper (about 10-15 pages in length) are due April 25, and an oral presentation will be given during that class session.

4. Participation (30%): This grade is based on both in-class participation—in the form of verbal contributions to class discussions (i.e., sharing your viewpoints about the material we discuss, which helps make the class discussions more meaningful, and asking questions, which helps you and other class members understand the material more effectively) and percentage of the many (virtually daily) in-class activities completed (e.g., watching video documentaries and participating in exercises) and the quality of any additional assignments that must be completed (e.g., reports of additional readings).