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### COMX 561.01: Communication Research Methods: Qualitative

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**COMM 561 - Communication Research Methods: Qualitative**      **Spring, 2016**  
Mondays and Wednesdays 2:10 - 3:30 p.m. LA 302

Betsy Wackernagel Bach, Ph.D.  
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Office: M 10:00 – 11:00 am; TR 1:00 – 2:00 p.m.; and always by appointment

**Required Readings**

Tracy, S. J. (2013). *Qualitative research methods*. West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.

Emerson, R. M., Fretz, R. I., & Shaw, L. L. (2011). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed).  
Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

I will email you the readings

**Course Description**

This course is a practicum in the qualitative case study. It emphasizes a) learning to write qualitative case studies and b) using them in the development of theories of human communication. We will examine the nature of qualitative inquiry by reading, talking about what we have read, and engaging in qualitative research.

**Course Objectives**

As a result of satisfactorily completing this course, you should be able to do the following:

1. Describe the philosophical assumptions of qualitative (ethnographic) inquiry;
2. Understand and evaluate the different methods of and uses for qualitative research;
3. Identify and enact phases of the qualitative research sequence, specifically:
  - a. identifying a class of phenomena to be the subject of study,
  - b. carrying out QI following a specified descriptive framework (or by generating a DFW of your own),
  - c. observing naturalistic behavior,
  - d. recording naturalistic behavior,
  - e. coding the behavior "openly,"
  - f. writing the case study,
  - g. interpreting what is observed, recorded, and coded.

**Course Requirements**

The requirements for this course are probably different than many graduate courses you have taken. There are several papers to write which will not be graded. They will be submitted to me for feedback before you write your final case study. Specific due dates are as follows:

<u>Requirement</u>	<u>Date Due</u>	<u>% of Grade</u>
Research Site Permission	2/15	-
Practice Case Study	2/24	-
Midterm Examination	3/02	30%
Preliminary Conceptualization	3/09	-
Interview Guide and Notes	3/22	-
Data Analysis and Preliminary Findings	4/24	-
Peer Critique	5/03	-
Final Case Study	5/20	55%
Class Participation		15%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

### **Instructional Policies**

This course will be taught much like one does qualitative research. We will begin with a broad overview of qualitative methodology and then become more specific about methods as the course progresses. It is hoped that this approach will parallel what goes on in the field. As one gains entry, and begins to gather and analyze qualitative data, the task seems overwhelming and out of control. Let me assure you that there is pedagogical merit in the way that I have designed the class. It is hoped that, upon completion of this course, that you will be able to retrospectively make sense out of the process of qualitative inquiry.

Because of the pedagogical strategy adopted, I expect that you will read all assigned material prior to class and be prepared to discuss that material. Know that some of the readings are "purposefully redundant." I want you to read what different (and respected) field researchers have said about the nature of qualitative inquiry, so that you get different perspectives on the issues at hand. Moreover, you will be reading early, key articles on many different topics. Rest assured that these articles are not "out of date." Rather, they are essential to the understanding of qualitative inquiry. As such be prepared to come to class with questions and comments about the readings. Specifically, I'd like to see you do the following in our class discussion:

1. show knowledge of reading and thinking about what you read;
2. argue effectively for your positions;
3. transfer the information in the readings to your own fieldwork and testing/extension of theory;
4. contribute to a lively discussion;
5. have fun with what you're learning.

## Course Outline and Readings

### January 25 and 27

**Introduction to Course**  
**Pre-Assessment**  
**Historical Overview of Qualitative Methods**  
**Definitions of Qualitative**

Vidich, A. J., & Lyman, S. M. (2000). Qualitative methods: Their history in sociology and anthropology. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 41-110). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Anderson, J.A. (1987). *Communication research: Issues and methods* (pp. 237-266). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Halfpenny, P. (1979). The analysis of qualitative data. *Sociological Review*, 27,(4), 799-823

Tracy, Chapters 1 and 2

### February 1 and 3

**Philosophical Assumptions of Qualitative Inquiry**  
**Perspectives on Qualitative Methods: Phenomenology/Autoethnography; Interpretive Research**

Tracy, Chapter 3

Ellis, C.S., & Bochner, A. (2000). Reflexivity: Researcher as subject. In N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 733-768). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

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

Goodall, H. L. (1989). *Casing a promised land: The autobiography of an organizational detective as cultural ethnographer*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press (pp. 1-14; ix-xxv).

Braithwaite, D.O., Moore, J. Abetz, J.S. (2014). "I need numbers before I will buy it": Reading and writing qualitative scholarship on close relationships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 31(4), 490-496.

Braithwaite, D. O., Bach, B. W., Baxter, L. A., DiVerniero, R., Hammonds, J., Nunziata, A. M., Willer, E. K., & Wolf, B. (2010). Constructing family: A typology of voluntary kin. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 27, 388-407.

## February 8 and 10

### **Perspectives on Qualitative Methods: Culture and Ethnography The Qualitative Case Study: An Overview Institutional Review Board Procedures**

Tracy, Chapter 5

Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures* (pp. 3-27). New York: Basic Books.

Carbaugh, D. (1995). The ethnographic communication theory of Philipsen and associates. In D. Cushman & B. Kovacic (Eds.), *Watershed traditions in communication* (pp. 269-297). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Philipsen, G. (1992). *Speaking culturally* (pp. 3-17; 21-42). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Philipsen, G. (1990). Reflections on speaking "like a man" in Teamsterville. In D. Carbaugh Ed.), *Cultural communication and intercultural contact* (pp. 21-26). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Philipsen, G. (1982). The qualitative case study as a strategy in communication inquiry. *The Communicator*, 12, 4-17.

Philipsen, G. (1977). Linearity of research design in ethnographic ways of speaking. *Communication Quarterly*, 25, 42-50.

Spradley, J. P. (1980). *Participant observation* (pp. 26-35). New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.

## February 15 and 17 (No Class 2/15 – President's Day Holiday)

### **The Ethnographic Case Study: An Overview Development and Use of Descriptive Frameworks-Bring in Sample DFW's RESEARCH SITE PERMISSION DUE!**

Hymes, D. (1972). Models of the interaction of language and social life. In J. Gumperz and D. Hymes (Eds.), *Directions in sociolinguistics: The ethnography of communication* (pp. 52-72). New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Hymes, D. (1962). The ethnography of speaking. In T. G. Gladwin and W.C. Sturtevant (Eds.), *Anthropology of human behavior* (pp. 13-53). Washington, DC: Anthropological Society of Washington.

Roberts, P. (1994). Speech communities. In V. P. Clark, P. A. Escholz, & A. F. Rosa (Eds.), *Language: Introductory readings* (5th ed.) (pp. 509-518). New York: St. Martins Press.

## **February 22 and 24**

### **Entry, Ethics, and Roles**

#### **RACTICE CASE STUDY (February 24)**

Tracy, Chapter 4

Danzinger, S. K. (1979). On doctor watching. *Urban Life*, 7, 513-532.

Punch, M. (1998). Politics and ethics in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The landscape of qualitative research: Theories and issues* (pp.156-184). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Lofland, J., & Lofland, L. (1984). *Analyzing social settings* (2nd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, pp. 1-30; 31-43.

Spradley, J. P. (1980). *Participant observation* (pp. 20-25). New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

## **February 29 and March 2 (NO CLASS 2/29 – BB at WSCA)**

### **MIDTERM EXAMINATION (Oh joy, oh rapture!)**

#### **Observation Techniques**

#### **Discussion: What did you learn doing your practice case study?**

Tracy, Chapter 6

Spradley, J. P. (1980). *Participant observation* (pp. 53-62). New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

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.

## **March 7 and 9**

### **Observation Techniques and Interviewing Your Informants**

#### **PRELIMINARY CONCEPTUALIZATION DUE!**

Tracy, Chapters 7 and 8

Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, Chapters 1 and 2

Spradley, J. P. (1979). *The ethnographic interview* (pp. 45-68). New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Whyte, W. F. (1982). Interviewing in field research. In R. Burgess (Ed.), *Field research: A sourcebook and field manual* (pp. 111-122). London: George Allen & Unwin.

Fontana, A., & Frey, J. H. (1994). Interviewing: The art of science. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 361-376). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Blum, F. H. (1970). Getting individuals to give information to the outsider. In W. Filstead (Ed.), *Qualitative methodology: Firsthand involvement with the social world* (pp. 83-89). Chicago: Markham Publishing Co.

Whyte, W. F. (1984). *Learning from the field* (pp. 113-127). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

### **March 14 and 16**

#### **Writing Up Fieldnotes Coding Your Data**

Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, Chapters 3 through 6

Tracy, Chapter 9

### **March 21 and 23**

#### **Coding and Analyzing Your Data INTERVIEW GUIDE AND NOTES DUE!**

Tracy, Chapter 10

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and Procedures for developing grounded theory* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage (pp. 101-162).

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M., (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: A sourcebook of new methods* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.), pp. 245-287. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Bulmer, M. (1979). Concepts in the analysis of qualitative data. *The Sociological Review*, 27, 651-677.

**March 28 and 30 - FIELD WORK Days**

**April 4 and 6 – Spring Break!!**

**April 11 and 13**

**Validity and Reliability  
Analyzing and Interpreting Your Results**

Tracy, Chapter 11

LeCompte, M. D., & Goetz, J. P. (1982). Problems of reliability and validity in ethnographic data. *Review of Educational Research*, 52, 31-60

Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter (pp.101-115).

Burgess, R. G. (1982). The role of theory in field research. In R. Burgess (Ed.), *Field research: A sourcebook and field manual* (pp. 209-232). London: George Allen & Unwin.

Denzin, N. (1995). The art and politics of interpretation. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 500-515). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

**April 18 and 20 (No Class 4/20 – BB at Central)**

**Writing Your Case  
DATA ANALYSIS AND PRELIMINARY FINDINGS DUE!**

Tracy, Chapters 12 and 13

Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, Chapter 7

Braithwaite, C. (1989). Metamorphosis: On Becoming a Vietnam `Vet.' Paper presented to the annual meeting of the Western States Communication Association, Spokane.

Re-read Philipsen's article from 9/22 (Place and Personae in Teamsterville Speaking - pp. 21-42).

**April 25 and 27 - FIELD WORK Days**

**May 3**

## **Preliminary Research Presentations and Course Wrap-up**

Tracy, Chapter 13

## STUDY QUESTIONS FOR MID-TERM EXAMINATION

1. Compare and contrast the basic assumptions of qualitative and quantitative research. Identify the strengths and weaknesses of each approach. What types of research questions would best be explained using qualitative methods? (60 minutes)
  
2. We have talked about the importance of using qualitative inquiry to generate, test, and support theory. How does one generate, test, or support theory with qualitative data? (30 minutes)
  
3. What is ethnography? Explain how it is a reliable method for gathering and analyzing qualitative data. What seven steps can be used in qualitative/ETHNOGRAPHIC inquiry? Explain these steps using examples. (60 minutes)
  
4. What is a descriptive framework? Why does one use a DFW rather than entering a situation *tabula rassa*? What benefits (if any) are there to using a DFW? (30 minutes)
  
5. Identify the components of Hymes' SPEAKING mnemonic. Provide an example for each of the components using data from your practice observation. How is Hymes' framework useful in identifying ways of speaking in a given speech community? (30 minutes)
  
6. What is a speech community? What are the parameters used to identify speech communities? Identify a particular group that you perceive to meet the criteria for a speech community and explain how it fits the criteria. (30 minutes)

## PRACTICE CASE STUDY

### Rationale

The assignment of this project assumes there is some value in practicing your observation skills, testing a specific descriptive framework (DFW), and writing a sample case study before you begin your "formal" observation and case study preparation.

### Procedure

You are to observe (alone or with one other person) the public behavior of a group of people for approximately 3 - 4 hours in a setting of your choice using a descriptive framework of your choosing.

### Task

You are to produce a "mini" case study of no more than 10 double spaced pages in which you engage in both qualitative description and qualitative abstraction by doing the following:

1. describe the location and setting of your observation;
2. report your methods for gathering data;
3. identify the descriptive framework (DFW) you choose to "test;"
4. provide a rationale for the use of your DFW;
5. report your findings;
6. interpret your findings in light of your DFW;
7. provide an addendum in which you explain your feelings about your "practice" observation, and describe any biases you had;
8. include in the addendum a discussion of what went well and what you'll do differently in your "real" case study.

### Evaluative Criteria

There are no formal evaluative criteria for this practice case study. I will read your papers and make comments and suggestions on each.

### Notes

There are sample practice case study papers on file in the Reserved Readings cabinet in the central office.

## FINAL CASE STUDY

### Task

The final case study should be no more than 25 pages in length. It is a summary report of your project, written to be interesting to communication scholars and persons interested in behavioral science and ethnomethodology who know little of communication theory. The style should be precise and careful, but more toward the readable, case-study style than toward the factual, academic style. Use liberal amounts of anecdotes, speculations (supporting them with theory or observation), vivid (not verbose) description, and stories. Your case should include the following information:

#### I. Rationale and Literature Review.

Provide an introduction to your work (1-2 paragraphs) where you "set the stage" for your paper. Identify your class of phenomena (e.g., what ways of speaking are used to socialize newcomers to an organization) and then cite and summarize relevant previous research to reinforce the phenomena you have identified (typically you should argue what communication theory you are testing/extending in order to articulate how your research is a communication study). In many cases, your DFW will be part of the relevant research you cite. Make sure you identify and defend your choice of DFW. Also, end the section with your research questions (those you used during the data gathering process) (3-6 pages).

#### II. Methods.

(Remember, you don't have to spell this information out directly; rather, some of the best ethnographies make this point in the actual writing of the case)

- A. Describe your speech community. (2-4 paragraphs)
- B. Identify procedures for entry and data gathering. (2-4 pages)
  1. How did you gain entry?
  2. What was your role in the speech community (e.g., full participant, observer, participant/observer)? How did you account for your role when asked by members of the speech community?
  3. Note any ethical considerations (within footnotes).
  4. How did you gather data (e.g., Did you write brief notes in the field and then immediately go home and make full field notes? Did you record and then transcribe interview notes? Did you use videos, etc.?)?
- C. Discuss your data analysis. (3-5 pages)
  1. Procedures for data analysis - how were data coded and what decision rules were used to code data? Were the data coded into categories that you generated or were data coded into pre-existing categories (e.g., a DFW)? What did you do with "deviant cases?"
  2. How did you analyze your data (e.g., did you use constant comparison, generate

- grounded theory, use clustering techniques, etc.?)? If you are generating grounded theory, what decision rules were used to generate categories? How were these categories, organized, narrowed, added to? If you are using a DFW, how did you "test" or extend your DFW? In either case, how were categories of findings generated, organized, narrowed, added to, etc.?
3. How reliable are your findings?

### III. Findings/Interpretations.

Here you describe as well as interpret the results of your data analysis. Make sure that your interpretations are made in light of your DFW (or the categories you discovered through analytic induction). In this section it is important to give enough supporting information such as dialogue, description of events (e.g., case descriptions) so the reader can understand and make sense of what you found. Give the "flavor" of the informants' and respondents' social reality (this is where you use thick description without being overly detailed or verbose). Arrange your findings in some order that makes sense to you. (10-15 pages)

### IV. Discussion of Findings.

Here you persuade the reader of the importance of what you accomplished. What have you contributed to the literature by doing all of this work?

- A. How do your findings relate to the literature? What new information is added, extended?
- B. What's the "news?" (e.g., What do we know about the communication behavior of this particular speech community that we didn't know before? What do we know about communication in general that we didn't know before you did this study?)?
- C. What are the theoretical implications (e.g., how have you tested or extended existing communication theory?)?
- D. What are the possible applications? (How can we apply this information to train or teach others about communication?)?
- E. What future research could be done based upon what you found? (5-7 pages)

**THIS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT SECTION OF YOUR PAPER!!**

### Evaluative Criteria

Your paper will be evaluated upon the following criteria:

1. The extent to which there is evidence of each "task" area mentioned above.
2. The extent to which you write in an organized fashion and present your information clearly and cogently.

## PEER EDITING GUIDELINES

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_ Peer Editor's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Complete this guided peer editing sheet and give a copy to the author. Please also provide comments to the writer directly on the first draft of the paper. Please also make a copy for me.

A. General Comments

1. Is the focus of the paper adequately limited? Is the thesis or research question clearly defined early in the paper? Explain.

2. Is the descriptive framework clearly highlighted? Was it clear that the framework was tested? Is it clear that it was extended (if that was the case?) How could the test of the framework be made clearer?

3. How well are the communication principles investigated in this paper explained?

4. Comment on the quality of the literature review. Are the sources relevant, clearly explained, and explained in sufficient detail to make sense? Are the sources in the literature review integrated with one another and with the rest of the paper?

## Peer Edit

5. Is there a topic sentence in each paragraph? Do paragraphs need to be made longer or shorter? Do the main ideas within each paragraph all fall within the focus of the topic sentence?

6. Are theoretical principles explored in sufficient detail throughout the paper? Are the observations integrated with theoretical principles? Are observations and methods described in appropriate detail?

7. Does the paper draw relevant and interesting conclusions? Are the conclusions and implications of the paper adequately summarized at the end?

8. Is the overall organization of the paper easy to follow? Are the main points or main divisions of the paper clear? Are all points clearly relevant to the thesis of the paper? Is the thesis fully developed by the main points?

## Peer Edit

9. Edit the entire paper for punctuation, organization, clarity, sentence structure, spelling, and any other items that stand out. Mark your comments directly on the manuscript. Check to see if the writer has followed APA or MLA guidelines.

B. Specific Criteria (if these seem redundant from the items above, skip them. I have opted for redundancy to insure that this is a thorough review)

1. Is the rationale and literature review relevant? Does it logically lead to beginning hunches and research questions?

2. Are the research question(s) clear? Do they logically follow the literature reviewed?

3. Is the description of methods clear? Is reliability discussed?

4. Are the findings adequately described with supporting information?

5. Are the findings related to the literature reviewed? Are possible theoretical implications noted? Is the "news" of the study clear? Is mention made of directions for future research based upon the findings?