

University of Massachusetts Amherst
ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst

Travel and Tourism Research Association:
Advancing Tourism Research Globally

2017 ttra International Conference

Qualitative Research Methods for Critical Inquiry: An Emergent Method of Analysis from the Social Sciences

Linda L. Lowry
University of Massachusetts-Amherst

Elizabeth A. Cartier
University of Massachusetts – Amherst

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umass.edu/ttra>

Lowry, Linda L. and Cartier, Elizabeth A., "Qualitative Research Methods for Critical Inquiry: An Emergent Method of Analysis from the Social Sciences" (2017). *Travel and Tourism Research Association: Advancing Tourism Research Globally*. 2.
https://scholarworks.umass.edu/ttra/2017/Qual_Methods_Papers/2

This Event is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. It has been accepted for inclusion in Travel and Tourism Research Association: Advancing Tourism Research Globally by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. For more information, please contact scholarworks@library.umass.edu.

Qualitative Research Methods for Critical Inquiry: An Emergent Method of Analysis from the Social Sciences

Introduction

Tourism research is evolving and there are positive indicators that critical inquiry is taking a more prominent place in extant literature found in *Annals of Tourism Research (ATR)* (Tribe, Xiao, & Chambers, 2012) and in tourism journals such as *Current Issues in Tourism (CIT)* and *Tourist Studies (TS)* that specifically aim to advance critically focused research. However, the dominate form of tourism related research remains situated in the positivists' paradigms and focuses more on tourism management related issues and uses quantitative tools of analysis. Most of the top-rated tourism journals also take this perspective and publish predominantly quantitatively focused articles and are less inclined to publish qualitative research, interpretive or critical (Riley & Love, 2000).

In addition, a review of articles using qualitative research methods in *ATR* by Riley and Love (2000, p. 180) found that authors mostly used traditional data gathering techniques such as participant observation, in-depth interviews and ethnography along with newer forms of data collection such as photographs and personal experiences and techniques using semiotics, phenomenology, critical theory and deconstructionism. Tribe et al. (2012, pp. 22-23) also found that tourism scholars use traditional methods of analysis such as content and thematic analysis, narrative and critical discourse analysis, and grounded theory. How, then, can innovative and emergent methods gain traction and acceptance in tourism journals? Airey, Tribe, Benckendorff, and Xiao (2015) suggest that tourism scholars need to become more engaged with leading research outside of tourism's fields of study and we concur that external engagement will not only improve tourism education but will also foster the use of new research methods.

The aim of this paper is to introduce a social science based method from the field of communication as a complementary alternative to the currently used methods for critical analysis in tourism research. We begin by brief mention of emergent methods for critical inquiry followed by a vignette that illustrates the use of a well-respected and innovative method for critical inquiry that comes from outside the fields of tourism. We conclude with suggestions about ways in which same-paradigm based methods can be triangulated as mixed-methods.

Emergent Methods for Critical Inquiry

The realm of critical inquiry in tourism research is foregrounded by the life's work of four venerable scholars, C. M. Hall, K. Hollingshead, J. Tribe, and J. Urry and their body of work is both extensive, influential, and well beyond the review of this paper. Instead, we suggest that a basic framing of what critical ideology entails can be found in Tribe (2008) and the Foucauldian perspective that permeates much of the critical ideology in tourism research is exemplified by Hollingshead (1999). A longer expose on power and critical ideology in tourism can be found in Hall (1994). Early iterations of the "gaze" emanate from Urry (1990) and later versions are described in Urry and Larsen (2011) and in the edited book of Moufakkir and Reisinger (2013).

Two works that capture emergent methods for critical inquiry in the field of tourism include an edited volume by Ateljevic, Pritchard, and Morgan (2011) and a journal article by Wilson and Hollinshead (2015). Although there is some overlap, the following methods suggested by Wilson and Hollinshead (2015) represent a list of the newly emerging critical methods in tourism research: critical pedagogy, critical discourse analysis, feminist research, ethnoaesthetics and ethnopoetics, autoethnography, and performance ethnography.

We add to this mix, the Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) that is both a theoretical perspective and analytical tool that has developed over the past 40 years in the social science discipline of communication through the work of W. Barnett Pearce and Vernon E. Cronen. Within the social sciences, CMM is considered to be both critical and pragmatic and resides among other focus areas in the field of communication which include rhetoric, semiotics, phenomenology, cybernetics as well as sociopsychological, sociocultural, and other critical and pragmatic perspectives (Craig, 1999, 2007). CMM assumes that there are multiple layers of meaning that are socially constructed through human interaction that includes verbal and non-verbal communication and their artifacts (Pearce & Cronen, 1980). These hierarchically organized layers of meaning are each informed and contextualized by the other and include speech acts (SpAct) (turn taking in human communication), episodes (Ep) (series of speech acts that constitute human engagement and the situated context in which they occur), relationships (R) (how and on what terms people relate), life scripts (Ls) (personal ideology and perception of self), and cultural patterns (Cp) (the practices that both legitimate and inhibit knowing and being). Power is inherently present in the ways in which meanings are (re)constructed and this particular form of analysis is well suited for examining “how” types of questions and in circumstances that are contentious.

In order to demonstrate this method, we use the familiar host/guest encounter as the various types of grazes and the power differentials contained within the situated episode of the encounter are well documented in the tourism literature and are familiar to tourism scholars. In keeping with this body of literature, the broader research question that CMM analysis aims to answer is – “How does this episode of host/guest interaction re(create) the actors’ relationships to each other, their own notions of self, and broader cultural patterns in which they live?” Lastly, we frame our vignette utilizing the work/play perspective suggested by Nash (1989). Both the positionality of the researcher and the framing perspective (i.e., theoretical underpinning) that is adopted for the study influence what and how we see. For example, if we had chosen to frame the encounter from a service failure /recovery perspective, the resultant analysis would be markedly different.

Reframing the Episode of Host/Guest Interaction Using a Communication Perspective with a Critical Lens

CMM can be used to analyze any one of the layers of meaning (i.e., SpAct, Ep, R, Ls, and Cp) that are socially constructed through human interaction; however, its unique strength lies in its ability to analyze multiple layers of meaning simultaneously. Our vignette begins with a narrative episode that one might construct during fieldwork. Actors include tourists from a western country visiting a developing country, an expatriate manager from a western country who manages a restaurant within a hotel, and a host-country hospitality service worker in that restaurant (see Figure 1). This episode of interaction re(creates) the actors relationships to each other, their own notions of self,

and broader cultural patterns in which they live. The hierarchical levels of meaning of the visitors, hostess, and manager illuminate the different realities in which each lives and how conflict, confusion, and problematic episodes of interaction (re)create an environment that is neither conducive to tourism nor to satisfactory employment.

Figure 1: Episode of the Service Encounter in a Developing Country: Western Visitors, Expatriate Manger, and Host Country Hospitality Worker

Upon arrival at the hotel's main restaurant, the visitors are greeted by the hostess - a native of the developing country - and are taken to a small table for two [the only table for two that is available] near the entrance to the restaurant. The visitors refuse to be seated at this table and demand that they be given a larger table in a better location. The hostess explains that the larger tables are reserved for parties of three or more people and that there are no other tables for two that are presently available. They are advised that they can wait at the bar until another table for two becomes available or they can be seated immediately at the table for two near the entrance. The visitors exhibit their displeasure over the choices they are given by talking very loudly, demanding to see the restaurant manager, and reminding the hostess that they are guests of the hotel who are staying for a week in an expensive room and will not eat another meal in the hotel if this is how they can expect to be treated.

As this conflicted episode is occurring, additional guests arrive to be seated. The restaurant manager, overhearing the noise and noticing that there are guests waiting in line to be seated, goes over to the hostess and visitors to find out what is going on. The visitors repeat their story about the table and tell the manager that the hostess needs to be trained in the concept of service and that her behavior is a poor reflection of the hotel's image. The manager curtly dismisses the hostess and proceeds to personally seat the visitors at one of the available tables for four.

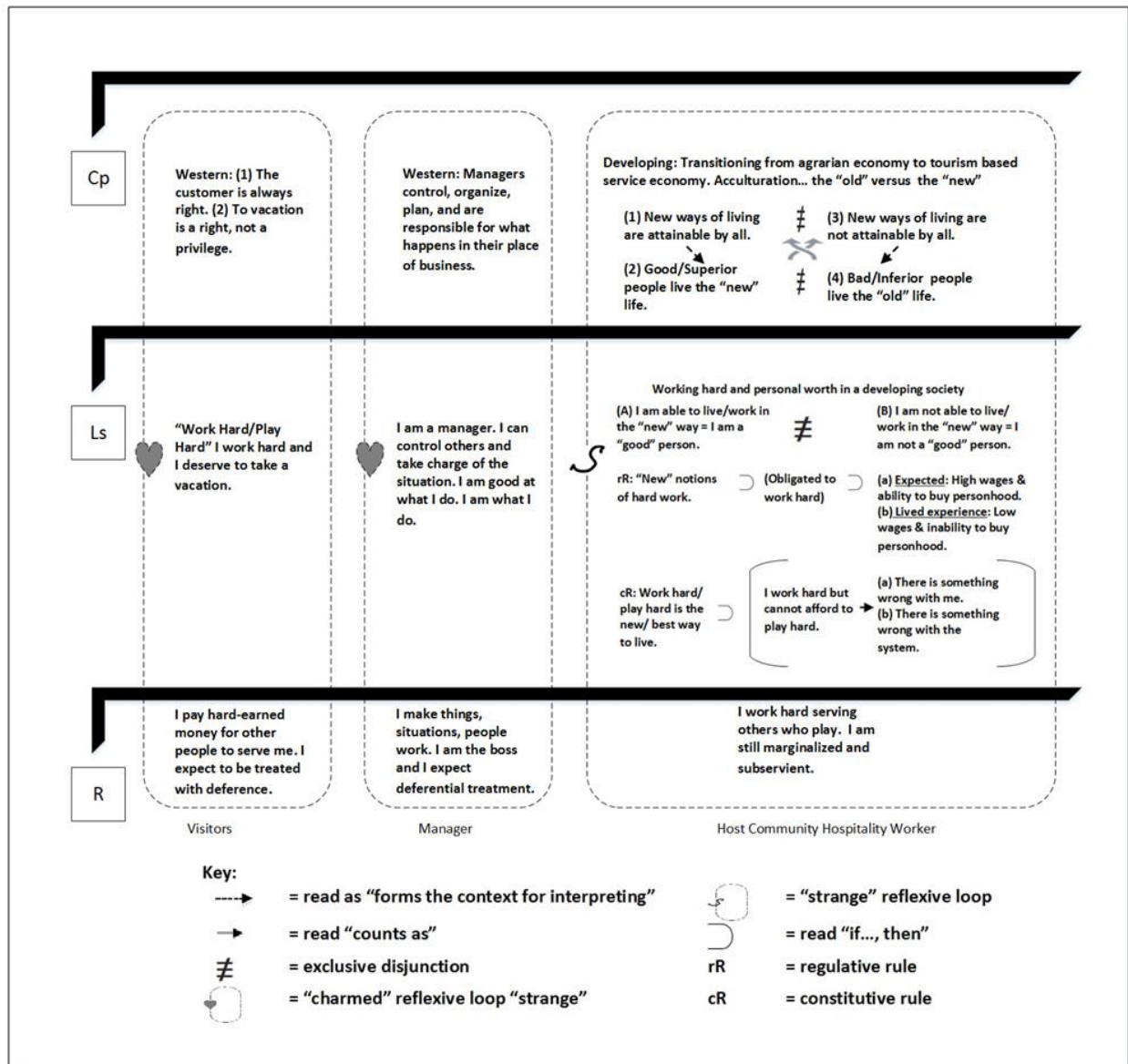
The hostess is then confronted by the manager who demands to know why she did not seat the visitors at the better table in the first place and chides her for not knowing any better than to make guests angry and to cause a scene in the restaurant. The hostess is upset and confused and tries to explain that she was following company policy and that at all times was polite to the customer, the manager disregards the explanation and says that if something like this incident happens again she will be fired. He then tells her to take a break, cool down, and come back ready to do her job.

At this point she is also angry and resentful and tells a co-worker who is her friend that she feels she is not appreciated for her hard work and is belittled for trying to be a good employee who follows company policy. She says that she is angry that her boss treats her as stupid/ incompetent for following company policy, ignores her side of the story, and threatens to fire her without good reason. She is also resentful of the visitors and says that if the visitors had not been so demanding, the incident would never have happened and that tourists are changing everything and that the promise of a better life due to tourism just has not happened for her and the people she knows.

A CMM analysis and visual mapping of the episode (see Figure 2) reveals that the visitors belong to the Cp of western society and enjoy a level of affluence that affords them the many extras of life. If they can afford to buy "it" (whatever that might be), they can have "it." They are accustomed to buying services and expect to get what they pay for. Personhood in this culture is reduced to consumption practices (i.e., you are what you buy and/or can afford to buy). To vacation is a right, not a privilege. Their Ls is constructed from the notion that both hard work and the pursuit of happiness (usually a leisure activity) make them who they are and is languaged in the every-day saying - "work hard, play hard." There is even a two-pronged ethical dimension of worthiness: (1) those who work hard deserve to play hard and (2) those who spend hard-earned money deserve to receive deferential treatment. Because they believe they deserve these ways of living in the world, they develop expectations that others will recognize their right to live in this deserved manner. In addition, persons define themselves in terms of what they buy and/or can afford to buy and how they are treated in the buying process. Rs are coordinated in a complementary one up/one down fashion (a relationship complimentary promulgated by Bateson & Ruesch, 1951). People with financial means pay other people to serve them. People with little financial means must take jobs that require them to serve other people. The ethical dimension of worthiness is present at this level as well. Those who spend hard-earned money for goods or services believe that they deserve

deferential treatment from those who sell them the good or service. All three of the primary hierarchical levels of meaning of the visitors are reflexive and form a "charmed" loop as the meaning of one level can be exchanged for another level without changing the structure of meaning in the others.

Figure 2: CMM Analysis of the Vignette Episode of the Service Encounter in a Developing Country: Western Visitors, Expatriate Manger, and Host Country Hospitality Worker



The expatriate manager also belongs to the Cp of western society. Managers are expected to plan, organize, direct, and control. Particular value is placed on their ability to control both situations and people. They enjoy a level of affluence that affords them the many extras of life and, like the visitors, they are accustomed to buying services and having paid vacation leave.

Similarly, their Ls is constructed from the notion that both hard work and the pursuit of happiness make them who they are. In addition, managers define themselves in terms of what or whom they control, what they buy and/or can afford to buy, and how they are treated in the controlling and buying processes. Here, as well, Rs are coordinated in a complementary one up/one down fashion in which they hold the one up position. Managers are responsible for making sure that their employees adhere to the notion that those who spend hard-earned money deserve to receive deferential treatment (i.e., "the customer is always right"). All three of the primary hierarchical levels of meaning of the manager are reflexive and form a "charmed" loop as the meaning of one level can be exchanged for another level without changing the structure of meaning in the others.

The host community member has noticeably different hierarchical levels of meaning. She belongs to the Cp of a developing society - a society that had its beginnings firmly rooted in communal village life. Previously, many of the members of the society participated directly in the "old" way of life (i.e., growing a few crops, fishing, basket-weaving, and trading with others for items of necessity). Today, the people of this society experience a radically changed way of living in the world. They are no longer self and community sufficient. This process of change (acculturation) did not occur at one particular point in time; instead, it occurred gradually at first and then began to accelerate, as tourism became the primary export for the country. During the acceleration period, people from developed western cultures came to their country, purchased all the choice land, and began to build western-style resort complexes to service the growing demand for new tourist destinations by western tourists. The host community member is faced with two conflicting value systems and ways of living and is denied full access or choice to live fully in the "old" system or in the "new" system. At the Ls level, she encounters the same problems. "New" is considered better or superior to the "old." Simple lives of community inter-action, such as sharing, living off the land, and living by the skills of their hands are now replaced by consumerism. People who were once valued for their resourcefulness, hard work, and skill are now valued for how much money they have/earn or what commodities they can buy. While the "new system posits the notion that everyone who works hard will earn money that can be spent to gain personhood, the lived experience proves otherwise. The hostess does not have the "new skills" needed to live the "new" life. Instead, she is employed in a service job that demands much interaction with visitors, pays poorly, and has little opportunity for advancement. In her situation, hard work does not equal money enough to buy personhood. Although primary hierarchical levels of meaning of the hostess are reflexive, they form a "strange" loop as the meaning of one level cannot be exchanged for another level without changing the structure of the meanings in the others. These "strange" loops inherent in the life of the hostess present social problems of substantial consequence. Adopting the belief that the "new way of living is attainable by all" and that "good/superior people live the new life," obligates the hostess to practice "new" ways of living in the world. While "working hard and trying to buy personhood," the hostess comes to realize that lived experiences and the expectations of "living the new life" form an exclusive disjunction - "new ways of living are not attainable by all."

Relationships pose an additional problem, as they too are coordinated in a complementary one up/one down fashion; only, she is the one on the bottom. Host community members, such as this hostess, are reminded on a daily basis that the only jobs that they are qualified to do involve serving other people. They are told that they are fortunate to have these jobs (i.e., to be employed) and that without tourists they would not have jobs and then they would be/have nothing. They are also lead

to believe that they have personal choice in how they live their lives. In the reality of the lived experience, they have few options and live lives that resemble paid servitude. In addition, racial and class issues influence this oppressive one up/one down situation. Episodes of interaction with visitors and/or in combination with managers of western owned and operated businesses (re)create resentment of others (i.e., visitors, the businesses that service visitors, and the value system that these visitors and visitor businesses bring with them) as well as feelings of personal worthlessness.

This brief CMM analysis demonstrates how meaning-making in human interactions is hierarchically contextualized and how these interactions (re)create cultural patterns, perceptions of self, and relationships with others. In addition, it provides a simplistic example of the visual mapping that CMM uses in both the analytical phase of analysis as well as presentation of findings.

Conclusions and Recommendations

CMM is a pragmatic and critical analytical tool that can offer tourism researchers a new way to examine complex socially constructed human interactions. In addition, it can be used in tandem with other methods of analysis for the purpose of mixed-method triangulation within the interpretive/constructivist and interpretive/critical paradigms. For example, critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995) and CMM analysis of turn taking in speech acts could be combined to examine the discourse and interactions that occur during meetings in which tourism policy or development issues are discussed. Likewise, CMM analysis at the episodic level could be used as another way to examine field notes and narratives (both textual and visual) in ethnographic, autoethnography, and performance ethnography. In applied types of research such as stakeholder analysis, CMM could be paired with traditional methods to examine issues of relationships. Lastly, CMM could be used with other perspectives, such as actor-network-theory (Latour, 2005) in order to examine texts and their contexts and/or relationship(s) to other texts, contexts, and relationships as well as their relationship to individuals and/or groups of individuals and broader cultural patterns.

Methodological Contribution

This paper contributes to the discussion of emergent qualitative research methods for critically focused tourism research by introducing a well-respected critical method of analysis from the social sciences and suggesting ways in which it can be used in same-paradigm based mix-methods triangulation.

References

- Airey, D., Tribe, J., Benckendorff, P., & Xiao, H. (2015). The managerial gaze: The long tail of tourism education and research. *Journal of Travel Research, 54*(2), 139-151.
- Ateljevic, I., Pritchard, A., & Morgan, N. (Eds.). (2011). *The critical turn in tourism studies: Innovative research methodologies*. London: Routledge.
- Bateson, G. & Ruesch, J. (1951). *Communication: The Social Matrix of Society*. New York: Norton.
- Craig, R. T. (1999). Communication theory as a field. *Communication Theory, 9*(2), 119-161.

- Craig, R. T. (2007). Pragmatism in the field of communication theory. *Communication Theory*, 17(2), 125-145.
- Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language*. New York: Longman.
- Hall, C. M. (1994). *Tourism and politics: Policy, power and place*. Chichester: John Wiley.
- Hollinshead, K. (1999). Surveillance of the worlds of tourism: Foucault and the eye-of-power. *Tourism Management*, 20(1), 7-23.
- Latour, B. (2005). *Reassembling the social: An introduction to actor-network-theory*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Moufakkir, O., & Reisinger, Y. (Eds). (2013). *The host gaze in global tourism*. Wallingford: CABI.
- Nash, D. (1989). Tourism as a form of imperialism. In V. L. Smith (Ed.), *Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism* (pp. 37-52). Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Pearce, W. B., & Cronen V. E. (1980). *Communication action and meaning*. New York: Praeger.
- Riley, R. W., & Love, L. L. (2000). The state of qualitative tourism research. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 27(1): 164-187.
- Tribe, J. (2008). Tourism: A critical business. *Journal of Travel Research*, 46(3), 245-255.
- Tribe, J., Xiao, H., & Chambers, D. (2012). The reflexive journal: Inside the black box. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 39(1), 7-35.
- Urry, J. (1990). *The tourist gaze: Leisure and travel in contemporary society*. London: SAGE.
- Urry, J., & Larsen, J. (2011). *The tourist gaze 3.0*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Wilson, E., & Hollinshead, K. (2015). Qualitative tourism research: Opportunities in the emergent soft sciences. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 54, 30-47.