



This writing guide was downloaded from the Writing@CSU website at Colorado State University on April 28, 2024 at 3:50 AM. You can view the guide at <https://writing.colostate.edu/guides/guide.cfm?guideid=63>. Copyright information and a citation can be found at the end of this document.

Writing@CSU Writing Guide

Conducting Ethnographic Studies, Observational Research, and Narrative Inquiry

Qualitative observational research describes and classifies various cultural, racial and/or sociological groups by employing interpretive and naturalistic approaches. It is both observational and narrative in nature and relies less on the experimental elements normally associated with scientific research (reliability, validity and generalizability). Connelly and Clandinin (1990) suggest that qualitative inquiry relies more on apparency, verisimilitude and transferability. On the other hand, Lincoln and Guba (1985) emphasize the importance of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability in qualitative studies. Because the field of qualitative research is still evolving, the criteria and terminology for its evaluation are not yet agreed upon.

What is agreed upon is that qualitative observational research is a systematic inquiry into the nature or qualities of observable group behaviors in order to learn what it means to be a member of that group. The researcher's job, rather than to describe a stable entity, is to give continually updated accounts of observations on multiple levels of group interactions that occur on both a temporal and continuous basis simultaneously.

Thus, this type of research attempts to identify and explain complex social structures within the study group. Typically, qualitative research methodologies are combined with each other in order to provide comparative results. A triangulation of methods (also called multiple methods), where three or more methodologies are

used and the results compared against each other, is common and can provide a more complete understanding of the behavior of the study group.

Qualitative study lends itself to thick narrative description, and it may be intensive given the complexity of group interactions. It takes place on site, in the group's natural environment, and attempts to be non-manipulative of group behaviors. The purpose is to aim for objectivity, while it must take into account the views of the participants.

This guide attempts to acknowledge the broad categories of qualitative observational research. First, qualitative observational research is broken down into its most common approaches, including types of this research method, themes that guide researchers' study designs and other, secondary approaches. Next, a Methods section introduces steps and methods used in qualitative observational research, employing multiple methods and computer software for this field of research. Then, a Commentary section includes some of the advantages and disadvantages to qualitative observational research, a look at the ongoing qualitative vs. quantitative discussion and some of the ethical considerations of this form of research.

Types of Qualitative Observational Research

Qualitative observational research consists of over 30 different approaches which often overlap and whose distinctions are subtle. The type of approach used depends on the research question and/or the discipline the researcher belongs to. For instance, anthropologists commonly employ ethnomethodology and ethnography, while sociologists often use symbolic interaction and philosophers frequently use concept analysis (Marshall & Rossman 1995). This overview discusses five approaches frequently used in English studies and two others, phenomenology and kinesiology, that may prove useful to some researcher.

Ethnography

Ethnography is a long term investigation of a group (often a culture) that is based on immersion and, optimally, participation in that group. Ethnography provides a detailed exploration of group activity and may include literature about and/or by the

group. It is an approach which employs multiple methodologies to arrive at a theoretically comprehensive understanding of a group or culture. The issue for the observer is how the particulars in a given situation are interrelated. In other words, ethnography attempts to explain the Web of interdependence of group behaviors and interactions.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is the process of gathering information for the purpose of research through storytelling. The researcher then writes a narrative of the experience. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) note that, "Humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and collectively, lead storied lives. Thus, the study of narrative is the study of the ways humans experience the world." In other words, people's lives consist of stories.

Field notes, interviews, journals, letters, autobiographies, and orally told stories are all methods of narrative inquiry. For example, a researcher might do a study on the way in which fourth grade girls define their social roles in school. A researcher might look at such things as notes and journal entries, and might also interview the girls and spend time observing them. After this, the researcher would then construct her own narrative of the study, using such conventions as scene and plot. As Connelly and Clandinin also note, "Research is a collaborative document, a mutually constructed story out of the lives of both researcher and participant."

Narrative inquiry is appropriate to many social science fields. The entire field of study is often used in disciplines such as literary theory, history, anthropology, drama, art, film, theology, philosophy, psychology, linguistics, education, politics, nutrition, medicine, and even aspects of evolutionary biological science.

Short Term Observation

Short term observational studies list or present findings of short term qualitative study based on recorded observation. Observation in the studied group's natural setting is a key aspect of qualitative research. The terms group and culture are used in a loose sense here because for the researcher, a group or culture may include populations such as an individual classroom of students, a set of

employees in the workplace, or residents of similar geographical or cultural areas or backgrounds. Short term observational studies differ from ethnographies in that they focus more narrowly on specified categories of group behaviors. This type of research functions well as a means of fleshing out quantitative research that would otherwise do little more than list numerical data. Types of short term observational research run the spectrum from crossing the boundary into quantitative research to a very nearly ethnographic approach. Regardless of the group or culture under study, the observer/researcher studies a set of individuals in their natural setting as opposed to a clinical setting, hence this type of research is known as fieldwork.

Traditionally, the period of observation for a qualitative observational study has been from six months to two years or more (Fetterman 1989). Today, it is generally acceptable to study groups for less than six months, provided that the researcher triangulates the research methods. The more time spent in the field the more likely your results will be viewed as credible by the academic community.

Ethnomethodology

According to Coulon (1995), "ethnomethodology is the empirical study of methods that individuals use to give sense to and...to accomplish their daily actions: communicating, making decisions, and reasoning" (p. 15). This approach is actually a form of ethnography, which specifically studies activities of group members to see how they make sense of their surroundings. Usually an ethnomethodologist will see or hear things in a group that participants are not consciously aware of. For instance, in *Ways with Words*, Heath (1983) notices that in the Black community of Trackton, children learn how to become fast thinkers when playfully interacting with adults and other children. The participants may not be aware of this teaching and learning process, but Heath asserts that the learned wittiness of the children pays off when they have to defend themselves.

Grounded Theory

In this approach, researchers are responsible for developing other theories that emerge from observing a group. The theories are "grounded" in the group's

observable experiences, but researchers add their own insight into why those experiences exist. In essence, grounded theory attempts to "reach a theory or conceptual understanding through step wise, inductive process" (Banning 1995).

Phenomenology

This approach, most often used by psychologists, seeks to explain the "structure and essence of the experiences" of a group of people (Banning 1995). A phenomenologist is concerned with understanding certain group behaviors from that group's point of view. For instance, a researcher might notice that in a certain group, all girls wear pink socks on Tuesdays. A true phenomenologist would not assume that pink is the girls' favorite color and Tuesdays are their favorite day to wear them. Instead, that researcher would try to find out what significance this phenomenon has. Phenomenological inquiry requires that researchers go through a series of steps in which they try to eliminate their own assumptions and biases, examine the phenomenon without presuppositions, and describe the "deep structure" of the phenomenon based on internal themes that are discovered (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Phenomenology does greatly overlap with ethnography, but, as Bruyn (1970), points out, some phenomenologists assert that they "study symbolic meanings as they constitute themselves in human consciousness" (p. 286).

Kinesics

Kinesic analysis examines what is communicated through body movement. This approach is based on the assumption that all human beings, although they may be unaware of it, act and react to situations nonverbally as well as verbally. Kinesics can be especially useful when employed in conjunction with other qualitative methods such as interviews and narratives to triangulate data. Kinesics must be used thoughtfully and carefully, as movements and gestures can be easily misinterpreted and presenting findings without giving context renders the data useless (Marshall & Rossman, 1995).

Characteristics of Qualitative Observational Research

Qualitative observational research can be characterized by at least ten overlapping themes that researchers should be aware of when collecting and analyzing data. In *Qualitative Evaluation Methods*, Patton (1980) discusses these characteristics to help researchers design studies. These characteristics are explained below using examples relating to Black English Vernacular (BEV) and the African American rhetorical tradition. All of the examples below are based on Balester's 1993 text, *Cultural divide: A study of African-American college-level writers*.

Naturalistic Inquiry

Qualitative observational research is naturalistic because it studies a group in its natural setting. Patton explains, "Naturalistic inquiry is thus contrasted to experimental research where the investigator attempts to completely control the condition of the study" (p. 42). For example, if you wanted to study college students who were speakers of BEV, you would not conduct your research in a predominantly Caucasian college or university.

Inductive analysis

This characteristic is prevalent in qualitative research because it allows the observer to become immersed in a group. The researcher starts with answers, but forms questions throughout the research process. Hypotheses and theories can continuously change depending on what the observer wants to know. For instance, an observer might realize that the purpose of many of BEV speech acts is to build up the reputation of the speaker. Thus, the observer's job is to find out why. This could lead to further research into the rhetorical strategies and purposes of BEV.

Holistic perspective

Patton states, "[A] holistic approach assumes that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts" (p. 40). In other words, almost every action or communication must be taken as a part of the whole phenomenon of a certain community or culture. However, this characteristic of qualitative observational research can be bothersome because it can lead researchers into taking every little action into consideration when writing a narrative. For instance, a researcher might notice that

many speakers of BEV employ a particular rhetorical strategy in their writing. However, this phenomenon might not have anything to do with BEV and its traditions or strategies. It might be linked to something else in their lives.

Personal contact and insight

The researcher is responsible for becoming a part of a group to get a more in-depth study. However, the researcher also has to be aware of biases (both good and bad). For example, researchers who do not consider BEV a legitimate form of discourse should be aware of and acknowledge that bias before studying BEV. In contrast, a researcher who speaks BEV might ignore some negative implications of this discourse.

Dynamic systems

Qualitative observational research is not concerned with having straightforward, right or wrong answers. In addition, change in a study is common because the researcher is not concerned with finding only one answer. For example, a researcher could gain a different perspective on BEV by observing and interviewing a wide range of BEV speakers; the researcher could study both male and female speakers and speakers from different educational and geographical locations.

Unique case orientation

Researchers must remember that every study is special and deserves in-depth attention. This is especially necessary for doing cultural comparisons. For instance, a researcher may believe that "Jive" (a way of talking in the 1970s) and BEV are the same because they both derive from African-American culture. This is untrue, and BEV should be considered a unique form of discourse, with its own history, conventions, and uses/contexts.

Context sensitivity

Researchers must realize the different variables, such as values and beliefs, that influence cultural behaviors. For example, knowing that the rhetorical strategies of

BEV--signifying, running it down, putting down, putting on, etc.--are context specific, a researcher might examine what values and beliefs influence this context specificity.

Empathic neutrality

Ideally, researchers should be non-judgmental when compiling findings. Because complete neutrality is impossible, this characteristic is a controversial aspect of qualitative research. For instance, it would be difficult for a researcher not to judge students who completely stop speaking BEV upon coming to college, since BEV has strong roots in African-American culture and is strongly tied to speakers' identities. This example might illustrate the difficulties in remaining completely neutral.

Design flexibility

Researchers can continue to do research on other topics or questions that emerge from the initial research. Some topics that could emerge from studying college students who are speakers of BEV are student composing processes, their academic success, or their assimilation or accommodation to academic discourse.

Qualitative data

This is a detailed description of why a culture is the way it is. Triangulation, or the use of many data gathering methods, such as field notes, interviews, writing samples, and other data helps determine the cultural phenomenon of a group. For example, a researcher could collect personal letters from different BEV speakers to find a common bond that is inherent in all their personal letters. The researcher could then interview the participants about their letter writing to get diverse points of view.

Summary

In sum, the qualitative observational researcher must attempt to maintain a non-judgmental bias throughout the study. The researcher's goal is to observe and describe group patterns, similarities, and differences as they occur. Preconceptions or expectations of an individual or group's behavior interferes with the researcher's

ability to tell the group or culture's story in a fair and accurate manner. In addition, preconceived expectations preclude the researcher from observing subtle nuances of character and speech that may be important to understand group behaviors or interactions. While absolute objectivity is impossible, it is paramount that researchers enter the field or study group with an open a mind, an awareness of their own biases, and a commitment to detach from those biases as much as possible while observing and representing the group.

Methods of Qualitative Observational Research

Qualitative observational research involves more than simply going out into the field and observing a given group or culture. Researchers must also consider such issues as their role, their research question, the theory driving their inquiry, how they will collect and analyze information, and how they will report their results. In this section, we address these issues in detail. We also consider the use of multiple methodologies for collecting information and the role of computer software in qualitative observational research.

Steps and Methods used in Qualitative Observational Research

Qualitative observational research involves more than simply going out into the field and observing a given group or culture. Researchers must also consider the following:

Observer's role

As Connelly and Clandinin (1990) point out, in all instances, qualitative observational research involves formulating a thoughtful and well-understood relationship between the researcher and research participants. It is essential for the researcher to determine what role(s) to play to ensure facilitation of the study and acceptance by the participants in the study group or culture. Some possibilities include observing-participant, participant-observer and neutral observer.

The observer's role is to record group interactions and behaviors as objectively as possible using various qualitative inquiry tools. Observing-participants already have a position in the society/community before taking on the role of observer. They

must also examine their own subjectivity and consider that participating in the group might lead to sympathetic or antagonistic interpretations of group behaviors. Participant-observers, on the other hand, attempt to become part of community and to adopt roles as participants, but come to the study with their own culture or community inscriptions. They attempt to participate fully and take on participant roles, but must be careful to behave in a consistent manner as part of the setting so as not to cause significant changes in the community itself. Although neutral observers do not participate in the group they are studying, they still need to be aware of any presumptions they may hold that would influence their findings and what influence the act of observing the participants may have on their behavior.

It is the observer's responsibility to let readers of the research report know not only the role played in the research, but also the point of view of the observer.

Defining the research question

Unlike most scientific research methods, qualitative observational inquiry does not require the researcher to define a precise set of issues in the initial phases; these issues often emerge from the study over time. While some qualitative inquiries may begin with a set of questions, it is common for theories about group behavior and interactions to emerge as a result of the observer's exploratory work (emergent design). And, those theories may identify relevant questions for further research.

The goal of qualitative observational research is to define and answer a specific research problem or question, but this problem or question may or may not be defined at the time when the researcher first begins the study. Some researchers like to enter the field with a specific research problem already in mind. While such researchers still want to let events unfold as freely as possible once in the field, they believe that by defining the research problem in advance they are better able to observe the study group or culture and identify specific patterns of behavior.

Other qualitative observational researchers like to enter the field first and let the research questions or problems identify themselves. These researchers believe that entering the field with a specifically defined research question may bias their observations, and they may fail to notice relationships or behavior patterns that are important in understanding the study group or culture. Whatever approach is taken

in determining the research question, the observer does need to be clear about the purpose, scope, and focus of the study and identify the subjects and the context in which they will be studied.

Identifying the theory that drives the inquiry

The qualitative observational researcher must determine what underlying theory or model should inform the research. This may mean replicating or building on an earlier study, or it may mean formulating a new model or theory by which to conduct the study. Either way, the theory or model chosen will help the researcher determine how to structure the study (i.e., whether to study participants in the classroom only or to study them outside of the classroom as well, and how and when to use interviews).

Selecting qualitative research tools

Selecting how and when data will be collected is an essential step in designing qualitative observational research studies. One of the primary tools of ethnographic study is the use of field notes. Observers may simply begin with a blank notebook and write down everything that goes on. Others may use audio and/or video tapes. Some observers begin with a list of categories of behavior to be noted. This works best when the research question is already defined; however, categories should be flexible and modifiable throughout the study.

The goals of note taking are to help ensure validity of the data collection and interpretation processes, to check data with members of context if possible, to weigh the evidence, and to check for researcher and subjects' effects on both patterned and outlying data.

Another useful tool, journal records, may be made by participants, researchers or practitioners. These records are collected through participant observation in a shared practical setting.

Written dialogue between researcher and participants is also used in narrative inquiry as a way of offering and responding to tentative narrative interpretations (Clandinin, 1986). Researchers may look at autobiographical and biographical

writing, as well as documents such as plans, newsletters, course materials and student products, rules, laws, architecture, picturing, metaphors, poetry, clothing, foods, rituals, physical setting, and implements such as musical instruments, artifacts, logs--in short, anything within the context of the studied group that speaks of their experience.

Unstructured interviews may be used to collect data; personal stories tell us something of how group members perceive and experience their conditions. Structured interviews permit more focused information gathering, but may overlook aspects of the group that an unstructured interview might reveal. To facilitate truthful responses, the interview should be informal or conversational in nature. Interviewees may be selected with intent to uncover specific information or to gain a cross section of group members (for instance, both high achievers and those having difficulty with the material).

Researchers may need to use "stimulation recall" to prompt interviewees or participants in informal discussion concerning specific events. Another method, "simulation response," presents hypothetical situations to obtain responses from members of the community. While these methods are often helpful, they are not infallible. Members may inhibit access to information by concealing aspects of their lives or by telling researchers what they think they want to hear.

Analyzing and reporting data

The final steps to be taken by the qualitative observational researcher are analyzing the data and writing the research report. The researcher's work culminates in synthesizing and interpreting the data into an understandable and enlightening piece of writing. But, despite the fact that these steps mark the culmination of the researcher's work, it should not be assumed that they are reserved for the end of the study. Instead, it is common for the researcher to analyze data and write parts of the final report throughout the research process. In analyzing descriptive data, the researcher reviews what was witnessed and recorded, and synthesizes it with the observations and words of the participants themselves.

The observer begins with reading a situation as a text, applying as many critical techniques as possible without violating the sanctity of the text. It is important to

avoid picking and choosing instances of behavior out of context. Analysis may reveal convergent data, metaphors that run throughout a language, culture, or group (thematic analysis). Key terms or key metaphors may be unpacked and examined for their significance and interrelationships among other aspects of group dynamics (content analysis). Dominant plots in the literature, films, and the text of daily life of the group aid in analysis of the data as a whole.

Writing the research report

The analyzing and writing stages of research also mark the point where researchers wed their stories with the stories of research participants. This marriage represents the ultimate goal of qualitative research: to produce a text that in the end provides a clearer understanding of the group or culture's behavior, and by doing so helps us better understand our own individual or group behaviors.

Often, the research report is written as an ethnography or a narrative. However, these two forms are not the only options for presenting qualitative observational research findings. Increasingly, the scope of qualitative observational research reporting is broadening to include elements of other genres, such as self-narratives, fiction, and performance texts (Alvermann, et al. 1996).

What researchers choose to include or exclude from the final text can have a tremendous effect on how their results are interpreted by others. Alvermann, et al. propose that conscientious qualitative researchers might pose the following questions when writing up their findings:

- How much information needs to be included in the text about theories that may have guided the research, disciplinary biases, personal hunches that were followed, etc.?
- Should I include my original research question and its changing forms as I conducted my research?
- How much background information about the topic and description of research processes do readers need to understand my findings?
- How much description of myself needs to be included to reveal possible biases or perspectives (gender, ethnicity, age, academic/social theories adhered to, etc.)?
- How can I ensure the report is interesting without compromising credibility?

- How can I fairly and accurately report my findings within the length limitations of where it will appear (journal, paper presentation, etc.)?
- Are the representations of myself and the studied group fair? Is it clear that these are mere representations or have I presented them as definite factual evidence?

Researchers who take the time to confront these possible problems will produce fairer, clearer reports of their research. Even when the report takes the form of a narrative, researchers must be sure that their "telling of the story" gives readers an accurate and complete picture of the research.

It is important to note that the order of presentation is not indicative of an essential or set pattern. Although some elements in the researcher's decision-making process will necessarily precede others (i.e., the determination of the researcher's role before data collection), most of the steps outlined below will significantly overlap and recur throughout the research process.

Employing Multiple Methods

It is important to underscore that one cannot point to a single clear definition of a qualitative study. Oftentimes researchers triangulate data by combining different types of qualitative approaches and even including quantitative elements. For example, Doheny-Farina (1985) conducted a study of the collaborative writing process in a new software company. He visited the company for three to five days a week over eight months. His visits ranged from one to eight hours. His key informants were the company's top five executives, two middle managers, and two outside consults. He took 400 pages of field notes of three types: observational, theoretical, and methodological. He tape-recorded meetings, and he also conducted 30 open-ended and discourse-based interviews.

Doheny-Farina analyzed the data by reviewing it chronologically and developing a coding scheme as he reviewed. From the data he discovered a major theme and sub-theme. His analysis describes the writing of the company's business plan within its organizational context.

Essentially, his data showed that the organizational context shaped the writing of the business plan while the writing of the business plan shaped the organizational context.

Although the article Doheny-Farina wrote about his study starts out much like a traditional research report, it reports its results as a story with a chronology and a discussion of themes. He also offers theoretical, pedagogical, and research implications. He concludes by allowing that he is offering a model that is not necessarily generalizable but nonetheless valuable.

Computer Software for Qualitative Research

Qualitative observational research, by nature, involves the compilation of massive amounts of data. Because of this, many researchers have begun using computer software to help them organize and make sense of the volumes of information. There are many reasons for using computers in qualitative research, but according to Richards and Richards (1993), "Computers [offer] to address each of the obvious barriers to qualitative analysis by manual methods--limitations on size, flexibility and complexity of data records, and systems of theorizing about data." The authors also argue that using computers for qualitative research can give studies more credibility and status because of the association between computers and "hard" data. Research software can also help the researcher to analyze data that was previously too unwieldy for study. Finally, computers greatly speed up the process of retrieving and exploring data. In their text *Computer Programs for Qualitative Analysis*, Weitzman and Miles (1995), cite a list of the ways computer software can help the qualitative researcher (p. 5):

- Making notes in the field
- Writing up or transcribing field notes
- Editing: correcting, extending, or revising field notes
- Coding: attaching keywords or tags to segments of text to permit later retrieval
- Storage: keeping text in an organized database
- Search and retrieval: locating relevant segments of texts and making them available for inspection
- Data "linking": connecting relevant data segments to each other, forming categories, clusters, or networks of information

- Memoing: writing reflective commentaries on some aspect of the data as a basis for deeper understanding
- Content analysis: counting frequencies, sequence, or locations of words and phrases
- Data display: placing selected or reduced data in a condensed organized format, such as a matrix or network, for inspection
- Conclusion-drawing and verification: aiding the analyst in interpreting displayed data and testing findings
- Theory-building: developing systematic, conceptually coherent explanations of findings; testing hypotheses
- Graphic mapping: creating diagrams that depict findings or theories
- Preparing interim and final reports

Before choosing software for a qualitative study, researchers should not only be familiar with the types of software available, but they should also be well versed in the particular program functions and features they need. Flexibility and user friendliness are two more considerations addressed by Weitzman and Miles. They explain that before choosing software, researchers should find out if the software is designed to do what they need, and if not, can the software be adapted to meet the needs of a particular study. In addition, researchers should consider how complicated the software is to learn and use. Researchers should also find out if the software comes with a manual, has on-screen help, and/or has a technical support phone number.

Commentary on Ethnography, Observational Research, and Narrative Inquiry

Advantages of Qualitative Observational Research

Qualitative observational research, especially ethnographies, can:

- Account for the complexity of group behaviors
- Reveal interrelationships among multifaceted dimensions of group interactions
- Provide context for behaviors

Narrative inquiry, especially ethnographic, can:

- Reveal qualities of group experience in a way that other forms of research cannot
- Help determine questions and types of follow-up research

Observational study can:

- Reveal descriptions of behaviors in context by stepping outside the group
- Allow qualitative researchers to identify recurring patterns of behavior that participants may be unable to recognize

Qualitative research expands the range of knowledge and understanding of the world beyond the researchers themselves. It often helps us see why something is the way it is, rather than just presenting a phenomenon. For instance, a quantitative study may find that students who are taught composition using a process method receive higher grades on papers than students taught using a product method. However, a qualitative study of composition instructors could reveal why many of them still use the product method even though they are aware of the benefits of the process method.

Disadvantages of Qualitative Observational Research

- Researcher bias can bias the design of a study.
- Researcher bias can enter into data collection.
- Sources or subjects may not all be equally credible.
- Some subjects may be previously influenced and affect the outcome of the study.
- Background information may be missing.
- Study group may not be representative of the larger population.
- Analysis of observations can be biased.
- Any group that is studied is altered to some degree by the very presence of the researcher. Therefore, any data collected is somewhat skewed. (Heisenburg Uncertainty Principle)
- It takes time to build trust with participants that facilitates full and honest self-representation. Short term observational studies are at a particular disadvantage where trust building is concerned.

Ethnographic studies

- The quality of the data alone is problematic. (Lauer and Asher) (1988): Ethnographic research is time consuming, potentially expensive, and requires a well trained researcher
- Too little data can lead to false assumptions about behavior patterns. Conversely, a large quantity of data may not be effectively be processed
- Data Collector's first impressions can bias collection

Narrative Inquiries

- Narrative inquiries do not lend themselves well to replicability and are not generalizable.
- Narrative Inquiries are considered unreliable by experimentalists. However, ethnographies can be assessed and compared for certain variables to yield testable explanations; this is as close as ethnographic research gets to being empirical in nature.
- Qualitative research is neither prescriptive nor definite. While it provides significant data about groups or cultures and prompts new research questions, narrative studies do not attempt to answer questions, nor are they predictive of future behaviors.

The Qualitative/Quantitative Debate

In Miles and Huberman's 1994 book *Qualitative Data Analysis*, quantitative researcher Fred Kerlinger is quoted as saying, "There's no such thing as qualitative data. Everything is either 1 or 0" (p. 40). To this another researcher, D. T. Campbell, asserts, "All research ultimately has a qualitative grounding" (p. 40). This back and forth banter among qualitative and quantitative researchers is "essentially unproductive," according to Miles and Huberman. They and many other researchers agree that these two research methods need each other more often than not. But, because qualitative data typically involves words and quantitative data involves numbers, there are some researchers who feel that one is better (or more scientific) than the other. Another major difference between the two is that qualitative research is inductive and quantitative research is deductive. In qualitative research, a hypothesis is not needed to begin research. However, all quantitative research requires a hypothesis before research can begin.

Another major difference between qualitative and quantitative research deals with the underlying assumptions about the role of the researcher. In quantitative research, the researcher is ideally an objective observer who neither participates in nor influences what is being studied. In qualitative research, however, it is thought that the researcher can learn the most by participating and/or being immersed in a research situation. These basic underlying assumptions of both methodologies guide and sequence the types of data collection methods employed.

Although there are clear differences between qualitative and quantitative approaches, some researchers maintain that the choice between using qualitative or quantitative approaches actually has less to do with methodologies than it does with positioning oneself within a particular discipline or research tradition. The difficulty in choosing a method is compounded by the fact that research is often affiliated with universities and other institutions. The findings of research projects often guide important decisions about specific practices and policies. Choices about which approach to use may reflect the interests of those conducting or benefiting from the research and the purposes for which the findings will be applied. Decisions about which kind of research method to use may also be based on the researcher's own experience and preference, the population being researched, the proposed audience for findings, time, money and other resources available (Hathaway, 1995).

Some researchers believe that qualitative and quantitative methodologies cannot be combined because the assumptions underlying each tradition are so vastly different. Other researchers think they can be used in combination only by alternating between methods; qualitative research is appropriate to answer certain kinds of questions in certain conditions and quantitative is right for others. And some researchers think that both qualitative and quantitative methods can be used simultaneously to answer a research question.

To a certain extent, researchers on all sides of the debate are correct; each approach has its drawbacks. Quantitative research often "forces" responses or people into categories that might not "fit" in order to make meaning. Qualitative research, on the other hand, sometimes focuses too closely on individual results and fails to make connections to larger situations or possible causes of the results. Rather than discounting either approach for its drawbacks, researchers should find

the most effective ways to incorporate elements of both to ensure that their studies are as accurate and thorough as possible.

It is important for researchers to realize that qualitative and quantitative methods can be used in conjunction with each other. In a study of computer-assisted writing classrooms, Snyder (1995) employed both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The study was constructed according to guidelines for quantitative studies; the computer classroom was the "treatment" group and the traditional pen and paper classroom was the "control" group. Both classes contained subjects with the same characteristics from the population sampled. Both classes followed the same lesson plan and were taught by the same teacher in the same semester. The only variable used was the absence or presence of the computers. Although Snyder set this study up as an "experiment," she used many qualitative approaches to supplement her findings. She observed both classrooms on a regular basis as a participant-observer and conducted several interviews with the teacher both during and after the semester. However, there were problems in using this approach. The strict adherence to the same syllabus and lesson plans for both classes and the restricted access of the control group to the computers may have put some students at a disadvantage. Snyder also notes that in retrospect she should have used case studies of the students to further develop her findings. Although her study had certain flaws, Snyder insists that researchers can simultaneously employ qualitative and quantitative methods if studies are planned carefully and carried out conscientiously.

Newkirk (1991) argues for qualitative research in English education from a political point of view. He says that not only can teachers more readily identify with and accept such particularized studies, but also the work of observing-participants, who report classroom "lore," gives practitioners a voice in the conversations informing their discipline. In addition, he asserts that experimental research tends to support the hierarchical structure of education policy, which discounts the experience of practitioners by privileging the alleged objectivity and generalizability of experimental designs and removing research from context. Additionally, Newkirk points out that "ethnographic...research works from fundamentally different

assumptions about knowledge." Essentially, ethnography's epistemological orientation is phenomenological (observation based) while experimental research's is ontological (investigates the metaphysical or essential nature of something).

Ethical Considerations in Ethnography, Observational Research, and Narrative Inquiry

Ethical issues should always be considered when undertaking data analysis. Because the nature of qualitative observational research requires observation and interaction with groups, it is understandable why certain ethical issues may arise. Miles and Huberman (1994) list several issues that researchers should consider when analyzing data. They caution researchers to be aware of these and other issues before, during, and after the research had been conducted. Some of the issues involve the following:

- Informed consent (Do participants have full knowledge of what is involved?)
- Harm and risk (Can the study hurt participants?)
- Honesty and trust (Is the researcher being truthful in presenting data?)
- Privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity (Will the study intrude too much into group behaviors?)
- Intervention and advocacy (What should researchers do if participants display harmful or illegal behavior?)

Related Links

The following is a list of Internet links that are related to the field of qualitative observational research methods.

The Association of Qualitative Research Practitioners

<http://www.aqrp.co.uk/>

Nova Southeastern University's School of Social and Systematic Studies (go to their Homepage and do a search on Qualitative Research)

<http://www.nova.edu/>

ISWorld Net page for research and scholarship

<http://www.umich.edu/~isworld/reshome.html>

Annotated Bibliography

Alvermann, D., O'Brien, D., & Dillon, D. (1996). On writing qualitative research. *Reading research quarterly*, 31(1), 114-120.

This article presents a "conversation" among the authors about issues in writing qualitative research reports. They address potential problems researchers may face when reporting their findings and discuss how theory and methodology shape qualitative research write-ups.

Anderson, G. L. (1994). The cultural politics of qualitative research in education: Confirming and contesting the canon. *Educational Theory*, 44, 225-237.

This article looks at different approaches to qualitative field research. It is also a critical review of the *Handbook of qualitative research in education*.

Andreas, D. (1992). Ethnography of Biography: Student Teachers Reflecting on 'Life-Stories' of Experienced Teachers. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (San Francisco, CA, April 20-24).

Explores the use of ethnographic biography as a source of information and reflection for student teachers.

Balester, V. M. (1993). *Cultural divide: A study of African-American college-level writers*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook.

This book is based on research Balester conducted on the spoken and written texts of African-American students. For her study, Balester did case studies of eight African-American students, looking specifically at the students' attitudes toward their own language and the language of academia.

Banning, J. (1995, Sept. 19). Qualitative research. Personal interview with professor at Colorado State University, Fort Collins.

Dr. Banning, a professor in the School of Education at Colorado State University, discusses in detail the workshop he and colleague Jeff Gliner conducted on qualitative research.

Bishop, W. (1992). I-Witnessing in Composition: Turning Ethnographic Data into Narratives. *Rhetoric Review*; v11 n1 p147-58 Fall.

Discusses problems with reconciling ethnographic research with positivistic methods.

Blair, K. (1995). Ethnography and the Internet: Research into Electronic Discourse Communities. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (46th, Washington, DC, March 23-25, 1995).

Pros of electronic ethnography.

Borman, K. M. (1986). Ethnographic and qualitative research design and why it doesn't work. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 30, 43-57.

Borman identifies the characteristics of qualitative research and its weaknesses, then offers solutions.

Brophy, J. (Nov. 1995). Thoughts on the qualitative quantitative debate. Chicago, IL: National Council for the Social Studies. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 392 734)

The focus of this paper is on the goals of both qualitative and quantitative research and developing effective studies for the classroom. Brophy asserts that qualitative and quantitative methods are simply "tools" and should be evaluated from the standpoint of what questions they can answer best.

Bruyn, S. T. (1970). The new empiricists: The participant observer and phenomenologist. In W. J. Filstead (Ed.), *Qualitative methodology: Firsthand involvement with the social world*. Chicago: Markham, 283-287.

This article discusses the importance of phenomenology to qualitative research.

Bullock, R. (1995). Classroom Research in Graduate Methods Courses. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (46th, Washington, DC, March 23-25, 1995).

Examines first year graduate student-teachers and why they are distrustful of narrative or ethnographic research as opposed to empirical research.

Burroughs-Lange, S. G., & Lange, J. (1993). *Denuded data! Grounded theory using the NUDIST computer analysis program: In researching the challenge to teacher self-efficacy posed by students with learning disabilities in Australian education*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Atlanta, GA. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 364 193)

The authors evaluate the use of the NUDIST (Non-numerical, Unstructured Data Indexing, Searching and Theorising) computer program to organize coded, qualitative data. NUDIST was used in the authors' study to develop a theoretical understanding of the challenge that students with learning disabilities pose to neophyte teachers' newly-formed images of effectiveness.

Collier, J., & Collier, M. (1986). *Visual anthropology: Photography as a research method*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

This work discusses the benefits and possibilities of including photography in anthropological and ethnographic research. The book includes sections on the role of the photographer in documenting a culture or group, how photographs function in the interviewing process,

analyzing images, and the psychological significance of photography and visual images in conveying meaning.

Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher*, 19 (5), 2-14.

This article is a theoretical work on conducting narrative inquiry that focuses on the issues of transferability and generalizability in this field of research.

Coulon, A. (1995). *Ethnomethodology* (J. Coulon & J. Katz, Trans.). London: Sage.

This text covers the history and issues related to ethnomethodology.

Cross, G. (1994). Ethnographic Research in Business and Technical Writing: Between Extremes and Margins. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*; v8 n1 p118-34 Jan.

Explores the phenomenal context, the site's cultural context, the research community context, and the researcher's interior context in business and technical writing.

Doheny-Farina, S. (1986). Writing in an emerging organization: An ethnographic study. *Written Communication*, 3, 158-85.

This article, gleaned from the author's doctoral dissertation, discusses his study of collaborative writing among executives at a new software firm. His methods included participant-observations, open-ended interviews, and Discourse-Based interviews.

Doheny-Farina, S. & Odell, L. (1985). Ethnographic research on writing: assumptions and methodology. In L. Odell & D. Goswami (Ed.), *Writing in nonacademic settings*. New York: Guilford, 503-535.

With a caution that researchers in English need to understand ethnography's basis in anthropology, this article outlines theoretical

assumptions, methodologies, and the uses and limitations of ethnographic research.

Dyson, A. Haas. (1984). Learning to write/learning to do school: Emergent writers' interpretations of school literacy tasks. *Research in the Teaching of English, 18*, . 233-264.

This article is the report of an ethnographic study of kindergarten children which examined the relationship between their learning to write and their adapting to the culture of school. Data was collected several times per week over a fourteen week period. The researcher was a participant-observer who selected three case study children during the first phase of observation and studied them in context.

Ember, C. R., & Ember, M. (1973). *Anthropology*. New York: Appleton, Century, Crofts.

Fetterman, D. M. (1989). *Ethnography: Step by step*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

As the title suggests, this is a how-to book on ethnographies and ethnographic research. The book answers the question: what is ethnographic research and outlines a step by step approach to conducting this type of research. Chapter subjects include methods and techniques of ethnographic fieldwork, equipment needed for ethnographic research, how to analyze your findings, the writing process, and ethics in ethnographic research.

Fielding, N. G., & Lee, R. M. (Ed.). (1991). *Using computers in qualitative research*. London: Sage.

This anthology contains 11 essays on computers and qualitative research. The topics include general information about types of qualitative research and software, implications for research, and qualitative knowledge and computing. This text provides valuable

information on both the positive and negative aspects of using computers for qualitative research.

Filstead, W. J. (Ed.). (1970). *Qualitative methodology: Firsthand involvement with the social world*. Chicago: Markham.

This text is a collection of essays on qualitative methodologies.

Firestone, W. A. & Dawson, J. A. (June 1981). To ethnograph or not to ethnograph? Varieties of qualitative research in education. Philadelphia, PA: Research for Better Schools, Inc. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 222 985)

This paper addresses the advantages and disadvantages of using ethnographic studies and outlines six criteria for successfully using ethnographies in education studies. The authors also discuss five ways in which qualitative approaches can vary in terms of data collection.

Fitch, K. (1994). Criteria for Evidence in Qualitative Research. *Western Journal of Communication*; v58 n1 p32-38 Win.

Contributions and limitations of conversation analysis and postmodernism toward the enterprise of ethnographic research. Criteria for qualitative data as evidence for claims about social life and for a qualitative study to count as evidence.

Flake, C. (1992). Ethnography for Teacher Education: An Innovative Elementary School Social Studies Program in South Carolina. *Social Studies*; v83 n6 p253-57 Nov-Dec 1992.

Describes a teacher education program that utilizes an internship that includes an ethnographic research project. Explains that the teacher intern is required to conduct an in-depth analysis of the social studies being taught in their school as contrasted to that described in their textbooks. Includes resulting suggestions for improvement in the curriculum.

Gilbert, R. (1992). Text and context in qualitative educational research: Discourse analysis and the problem of contextual explanation. *Linguistics and Education, 4*, 37-57.

This article discusses methods of improving qualitative research in education.

Gilmore, D.D. (1991, Fall). Subjectivity and subjugation: Fieldwork in the stratified community. *Human Organization, 215*.

This article outlines an anthropologist's efforts to maintain scholarly neutrality in an agricultural town in Franco Spain where class conflict was severe.

Greenberg, J. H. (1954). A quantitative approach to the morphological typology of language. In R. F. Spencer (Ed.). *Method and perspective in anthropology*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

The author compares and contrasts typological methods of languages against the genetic-historical method.

Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (1983). *Ethnography: Principles in practice*. London: Taveston.

This work deals with what ethnographic research is, what its strengths and weaknesses are, and how to go about conducting the research for your own project.

Hammersley, M. (1990). *Reading ethnographic research: A critical guide*. New York: Longman.

This book is a how-to manual on ethnographic research emphasizing understanding within unspoken contexts.

Hasselkus, B. R. (1995). Beyond ethnography: Expanding our understanding and criteria for qualitative research. *Occupational Therapy Journal of Research, 15*, 75-84.

Hasselkus discusses the different methods of qualitative research.

Hathaway, R. (1995). Assumptions underlying quantitative and qualitative research: Implications for institutional research. *Research in higher education*, 36 (5), 535-562.

Hathaway says that the choice between using qualitative or quantitative approaches is less about methodology and more about aligning oneself with particular theoretical and academic traditions. He concluded that the two approaches address questions in very different ways, each one having its own advantages and drawbacks.

Heath, S. B. (1983). *Ways with words: Language, life, and work in communities and classrooms*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Heath studies two communities; one Black and one White, to analyze the citizens' language development.

Heath, S. B. (1993). The Madness(es) of Reading and Writing Ethnography. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*; v24 n3 p256-68 Sep.

Describes how these reactions have led the author to see things in the work that she had not seen before. Strengths and weaknesses of the book she identifies have implications for the conduct of future ethnographic research.

Hinsley, C. M. (1981). *Savages and scientists: The Smithsonian Institution and the development of American anthropology*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press.

Hornberger, N. (1995). Ethnography in Linguistic Perspective: Understanding School Processes. *Language and Education*; v9 n4 p233-48.

Perspectives and methodologies that sociolinguistics brings to ethnographic research in schools. Methodological contributions arising from linguistics that interactional sociolinguistics and microethnography

share, such as the use of naturally occurring language data, the consultation of native intuition, and discourse analysis.

This short Web site briefly describes qualitative research and gives an example of how it can be used to supplement quantitative studies in health care.

***Journal of Contemporary Ethnography (formerly Urban Life).* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.**

This is a quarterly publication containing recent ethnographic studies and what's new in ethnography. This publication is a good source of information on and examples of how other researchers are conducting their own ethnographic studies

Kamil, M. L., Langer, J. A., & Shanahan, T. (1985). Ethnographic methodologies. *Understanding research in reading and writing.* Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 71-91.

The chapter defines ethnographic research, examines its theoretical underpinnings, and contrasts it with experimental research. It includes an extended example from Heath's "Questioning at Home and at School: A Comparative Study."

Kirk, J. & Miller, M. (1986). *Reliability and validity in qualitative research.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

This book investigates how reliability and validity in qualitative research help to evaluate the objectivity of particular studies. The authors assert that given the true meaning of validity, many studies, including "scientific" ones, are not really valid. Also included are guidelines for maintaining reliability in qualitative studies.

Lancy, D. E. (1993). *Qualitative research in education.* White Plains, NY: Longman.

This text explores the many issues of qualitative research.

Lauer, J. M., & Asher, J. W. (1988). *Ethnographies. Composition research: Empirical designs*. New York: Oxford University Press, 39-53.

This chapter provides an overview of ethnographic research applied to English. It includes examples from two studies, Florio and Clark's "The function of writing in an elementary classroom" and Lemke and Bridwell's "Assessing writing ability--an ethnographic study of consultant-teacher relationships."

Lawless, E.J. (1992, Summer). I was afraid someone like you...an outsider... would misunderstand: Negotiating interpretive differences between ethnographers and subjects. *Journal of American Folklore*, 302.

This article looks at the role of the ethnographer in the collection of field research and writing. A new approach called "reciprocal ethnography" allows for interaction with the ethnographer.

Lazerfeld, P. F. (1972). *Qualitative analysis: Historical and critical essays*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

This text deals with the issues of qualitative research.

LeCompte, M. D., Millroy, W. L., & Preissle, J. (Ed.). (1992). *The handbook of qualitative research in education*. San Diego: Academic Press.

This anthology contains 18 essays on qualitative research in education. The topics range from the future of qualitative research to issues of validity and subjectivity in qualitative research. This text is a good source for those interested in current theories about and research on qualitative research itself.

Lier, L. (1988). *The classroom and the language learner*. New York: Longman.

The author argues for collecting and interpreting of classroom data (L-2 learning) in the presence of only limited knowledge of the process of teaching and learning in second language classrooms. This book sets out

to define problems of classroom research within second language acquisition study and within social science. And, it offers a well documented guide for conducting research in the context of the classroom.

Lincoln, Y.S., & Guba, E.G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

This text outlines the positivist and naturalist research paradigms.

Linstead, S. (1993, Jan.). From postmodern anthropology to deconstructive ethnography. *Human Relations*, 97.

This article studies the effects of ethnography and postmodern influences on organizations. Derridian deconstruction theory is applied in order to get a new angle on social interactions within organizations.

Manwar, A., Johnson, B. D., & Dunlap, E. (1994). Qualitative data analysis with hypertext: A case of New York City crack dealers. *Qualitative Sociology*, 17, 283-292.

The authors describe some of the problems of data management and analysis faced by a team of ethnographers researching cocaine and crack distribution in New York City. The researchers used FolioVIEWS, a hypertext software program, which proved to be more effective than other available programs in solving management and analytical problems.

Marshall, C. & Rossman, G. (1995). *Designing qualitative research*. (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

This book explains different types of qualitative studies and provides thorough instruction on how to design, conduct and evaluate a qualitative study. It also includes helpful information on managing time, personnel and financial resources for qualitative research.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

This text covers data analysis issues related to qualitative research.

Minnich, R. G. (Ed.). (1987). *Aspects of Polish folk culture*. Bergen, Norway: Department of Social Anthropology, University of Bergen.

This text is a good source of examples for work done in the field of ethnography dealing with culture and literature. The work is a compilation of ethnographic studies by different authors done on topics ranging from the role played by gifts in Polish weddings to the role of art in Polish society. Through the reports included in this work, Minnich draws a clearer picture of Polish folk culture.

Minnis, J. R. (1985). *Ethnography, case study, grounded theory, and distance education research*. *Distance Education*, 6, 189-198.

Minnis explores the possibility of expanding the research base through the use of accepted qualitative methodologies.

Moore, S. (1993). *Interpreting audiences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

This text characterizes features of ethnography as a method of cultural investigation. It provides a discussion of the opposing, alternative perspectives on various forms of media reception and how ethnographic practice best equips researchers to map the media's varied uses and meanings for particular social subjects in particular cultural contexts.

Mortensen, P. & Kirsch, G., Eds. (1996). *Ethics and Representation in Qualitative Studies of Literacy*. Urbana, IL: ERIC.

Fourteen essays address questions faced by qualitative researchers today: how to represent others and themselves in research narratives; how to address ethical dilemmas in research-participant relations; and how to deal with various rhetorical, institutional, and historical constraints on research.

Narayan, K. (1989). *Storytellers, saints, scoundrels: Folk narrative in Hindu religious teaching*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

The author relates hindu stories and their significance to education, both moral and religious.

Newkirk, T. (1991). The politics of composition research: The conspiracy against experience. In R. Bullock & J. Trimbur (Eds.), *The politics of writing instruction: Postsecondary*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 119-135.

The author argues for the importance of ethnographic research in English education from a political perspective. He cites its key strengths over experimental research--particularity, involvement of the researcher, underlying ideology--the very characteristics which experimentalists criticize. Newkirk asserts that ethnographic research empowers practitioners.

Patton, M. Q. (1992). Ethnography and research: A qualitative view. *Topics in Language Disorders*, 12, 1-14.

This article describes the functions of ethnography in the fields of education and communication disorders.

Patton, M. Q. (1980). *Qualitative evaluation methods*. Beverly Hills: Sage.

This book is an in depth study of qualitative research from conceptual issues to data analysis.

Rice-Lively. (1994). *Wired Warp and Woof: An Ethnographic Study of a Networking Class*. *Internet Research*; v4 n4 p20-35 Win.

Describes an ethnographic study of the electronic community comprised of masters and doctoral students involved in a seminar on networking. Ethnographic research facilitated observation and description of the

networked learning community. The exploration of the cultural meaning of class events led to enhanced understanding of online education and the applicability of ethnographic research.

Richards, L., & Richards, T. (1993). Qualitative computing: promises, problems, and implications for research process. *Qualitative data analysis resources Home Page*. [On-line]. Available WWW: address <http://www.qsr.com.au/ftp/papers/qualprobs.txt>.

Based on their experience with qualitative research software, the authors examine both the positive and negative aspects of this technology.

Rosen, M. (1991, Jan.). Coming to terms with the field: Understanding and doing organizational ethnography. *Journal of Management Studies*, 1.

Ethnography is not well understood or applied as a methodology for studying organization culture. This article highlights problems and offers tools for effective research in this arena.

Sanday, P. R. (1979). The ethnographic paradigms(s). *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 24, 527-538.

Three styles of ethnography are examined: holistic, semiotic, and behavioristic.

Saville-Troike, M. (1989). *The ethnography of communication* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

This text is a synthesis of the field of ethnography of communication, which studies the norms of communicative conduct in different communities and deals with methods for studying these norms.

Schmid, T. (1992). Classroom-Based Ethnography: A Research Pedagogy. *Teaching Sociology*; v20 n1 p28-35 Jan.

Discusses difficulties of classroom-based research and obstacles to conducting classroom-based ethnographic research. Identifies temporal obstacles, personnel, safety, and traditional classroom orientation. Suggests experiential approaches for fieldwork instructors such as individual projects, a choice of group projects, or a single designated class project. Describes a cooperative project on homelessness.

Shanahan, T., Ed. *Teachers Thinking, Teachers Knowing: Reflections on Literacy and Language Education*. Urbana, IL: ERIC.

Thirteen essays share the insights of leading scholars and teacher-researchers regarding the re-emergence of teacher education as a central focus in the field of English education. Discusses methods of supporting teacher development such as the study of cases, teacher groups, ethnographic research in the classroom and community, and teacher lore.

Smith, G.W. (1990, Nov.) Political activist as ethnographer. *Social Problems*, 629.

Two studies that use Dorothy E. Smith's reflexive materialist method of sociology are presented; the studies examine the social organization of ruling regimes with an aim toward changing them.

Snyder, I. (1995). Multiple perspectives in literacy research: Integrating the quantitative and qualitative. *Language and Education*, 9 (1), 45-59.

This article explains a study in which the author employed quantitative and qualitative methods simultaneously to compare computer composition classrooms and traditional classrooms. Although there were

some problems with integrating both approaches, Snyder says they can be used together if researchers plan carefully and use their methods thoughtfully.

Tallerico, M. (1992). Computer technology for qualitative research: Hope and humbug. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 30 (2), 32-40.

The author describes how computer technology offers new options for the qualitative researcher in education. Tallerico also identifies both the potential benefits and limitations of research software, drawing on a study of local educational governance. She also describes the ETHNOGRAPH, a data analysis program.

Tesch, R. (1991). Software for qualitative researchers: Analysis needs and program capabilities. In N. G. Fielding & R. M. Lee (Ed.), *Using computers in qualitative research*. London: Sage, 16-37.

Tesch begins by explaining the different types of qualitative research. She goes on to define the general categories of computer software available to qualitative researchers and gives advice on what functions and features to look for when choosing software.

Thornton, S. & Garrett, K. (1995). Ethnography as a Bridge to Multicultural Practice. *Journal of Social Work Education*; v31 n1 p67-74 Win.

Ethnographic research method taught as a way of studying different cultural groups in a social work curriculum.

Turner, E. (1992). *Experiencing ritual: A new interpretation of African healing*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

This text reports an anthropology, the story of a "visible spirit" from among the Ndembu of Zambia. This work gives an account of the ethnographer's experience living with the Ndembu and attempting to parallel Ndembu life.

Van Maanen, J. (1979). The fact of fiction in organizational ethnography. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 24, 539-550.

Van Maanen discusses the need to distinguish whether the point of view reported is that of informant or of researcher.

Van Maanen, J. (1988). *Tales of the field*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

In this book, the author provides an informal introduction to ethnography addressed to fieldworkers of sociology or anthropology.

Weitzman, E. A., & Miles, M. B. (1995). *Computer programs for qualitative data analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Weitzman and Miles discuss the different functions of qualitative research software. They also categorize the software currently available and explain and review each program. This text provides valuable information for any researcher who is choosing software for qualitative research.

Wu, R. (1994). Writing In and Writing Out: Some Reflections on the Researcher's Dual Role in Ethnographic Research. Paper presented at the Annual Penn State Conference on Rhetoric and Composition (University Park, PA, July 13-16).

Proposes "a more fluid, process-oriented definition of the ethnographer's role based on feminist standpoint theories to acknowledge the complexity of multicultural observers and observed."

Zaharlick, A. (1992). Ethnography in anthropology and its value for education. *Theory into Practice*, 31, 116-125.

This article examines the role of ethnography in anthropology.

Citation: Please adapt for your documentation style.

Constable, Rolly, Marla Cowell, Sarita Zornek Crawford, David Golden, Jake Hartvigsen, Kathryn Morgan, Anne Mudgett, Kris Parrish, Laura Thomas, Erika Yolanda Thompson, Rosie Turner, & Mike Palmquist. (2005). *Ethnography, Observational Research, and Narrative Inquiry*. *Writing@CSU*. Colorado State University. <https://writing.colostate.edu/guides/guide.cfm?guideid=63>

Copyright Information

[Copyright © 1994-2024 Colorado State University](#) and/or [this site's authors, developers, and contributors](#). Some material displayed on this site is used with permission.