

Assignment: Analyze a Published Research Study

Overview

This assignment includes 3 components: 1) A 3-5-page written analysis, composed collaboratively, 2) Planning and implementation of a class activity and discussion about your selected study's research methods, 3) An individual written reflection. Your group should turn in your final written analysis no later than one week after your in-class activity. This delay will allow you time to incorporate new insights that emerge from class discussion into your paper.

Relationship to Course Learning Goals

We will study a variety of different kinds of published studies to learn not just what they say about their subjects, but, more importantly for our purposes, how research studies are designed, carried out, and communicated to the discipline. We'll look to other studies as models you may follow in designing your own research.

For newcomers, reading research in literacy and composition may be a challenge initially, because it is typically composed for an audience of experts, not novices. This assignment is designed to help you learn to read complex research reports by providing specific criteria for evaluating studies.

Your Interest in & Understanding of the Subject

As a writing major, you will read lots of research across courses in the curriculum. Likewise, you will have multiple opportunities to design and carry out your own research. This assignment is intended to help you to read with greater purpose and understanding, not only in this course, but also in other courses as well. Likewise, it offers a heuristic for reading that you may find useful as you gather and study secondary sources that will inform your own research project in this course.

Purpose

The purpose of this assignment is to use writing to assess the design, methods, and reporting of a published research study.

Together with a small group of classmates, write an analysis of the study you select.

Then design a plan for leading an activity-based class discussion. One purpose of this activity is to prompt your classmates to draw connections between your study and other reading from the course, including research practices described in your textbook, *The Practice of Qualitative Research*.

Together with your group, schedule a meeting with your instructor at least a week

before your in-class activity to discuss your plans. In this meeting we will collaborate to design your activity.

Don't make the mistake of dividing up this group assignment into individual tasks. Everyone in the group is equally responsible for contributing to every part of the assignment. The goal is to develop your insights collaboratively. You can expect to meet together with all group members present multiple times in order to complete this assignment successfully. A shared Google Doc is recommended to facilitate your work.

Your written analysis should address the seven areas of concern detailed in Driscoll and Perdue's (2012) "Theory, Lore, and More: An Analysis of RAD Research in *The Writing Center Journal*, 1980-2009." Follow the model of Driscoll and Perdue, detailed on pages 21-23, to analyze your focal study in order to make an argument about the extent to which it either does—or doesn't—exemplify the requirements of RAD research:

- **Background & Significance:** In what ways does the researcher situate the study within the context of the field and previous literature, identify the gap addressed by the study, and provide references to recent scholarship?
- **Study Design & Data Collection:** In what ways does the researcher identify research questions or hypotheses, describe data collection, justify methodological choices, and explain how those choices relate to study objectives? In what ways does the study address and control for bias? Is the design sufficiently detailed so that the study could be reliably replicated in a new context?
- **Selection of Participants and/or Texts:** In what ways does the researcher describe and justify the selection and/or sampling of participants and/or texts?
- **Method of Analysis:** In what ways does the researcher describe the method of analyzing data? In what ways does it fit the study's design? How are categories of analysis and operational definitions presented and described? What evidence does the study provide that analysis was done in a systematic manner? Could the method of analysis be reliably replicated in a new context?
- **Presentation of Results:** In what ways does the researcher present the results? In what ways are they supplemented with graphics, excerpts from texts, interviews, or other evidence? In what ways are results presented to separate them from discussion/opinions of the researcher?
- **Discussion & Implications:** In what ways does the researcher describe how the results of the research contribute to the field's understanding of the issue and how the current study informs, complicates, or extends previous work? How does the researcher address implications and broader applications of the results?
- **Limitations & Future Work:** In what ways does the researcher give suggestions

for future work that they or others may pursue relating to the study results? How does the researcher acknowledge biases and study limitations?

As you'll see, much good and influential research in our discipline isn't RAD. You may find, then, that the study you select doesn't match the criteria set forth by Driscoll and Perdue. Here are some additional questions to consider as you develop your analysis:

- How do the authors of this study understand what counts as *research* in literacy and composition?
- What does the particular research paradigm afford and/or constrain?
- What does this research methodology reveal about evolving and sometimes competing values, assumptions, and beliefs concerning the production of disciplinary knowledge? With what consequences?
- After leading class discussion about your study, what new and different understandings emerged as a result?

Audience

The audience for this assignment includes your classmate and instructor. You'll assign the class to read your study in advance of leading class discussion about it. But you should assume that your classmates will have a range of familiarity: Some will have read with care. Others may not have read at all. With that in mind, you'll need to design a class activity that will engage all of your classmates and help them to learn something new about research methods in our discipline, regardless of their level of preparation.

Genre Conventions & Form

The written portion of this assignment should follow either MLA or APA conventions.

The activity portion of this assignment may take many forms. Be creative. Avoid lecturing at us. Instead, design an activity, including writing-to-learn, which engages the class in conversation.

Written reflection: Each group member should turn in a brief written reflection, which discusses your individual contributions to the group and how your group worked together. Explain what new you learned or thought about as a result of reading this study together as a group and presenting it to the class.

Assessment

Your group will receive two grades for this assignment, one for the collaborative written analysis and individual reflections, another for the in-class activity and discussion.