

# ***The Characteristics of Introductory Research Methods Courses in Mass Communication Doctoral Programs***

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*This study assesses the content of introductory research methods courses in mass communication doctoral programs in the United States. Directors of thirty-two graduate programs were surveyed about their doctoral programs' requirements for research methods. Syllabi for forty-three required introductory research methods courses were collected. An extensive list of variables for each was analyzed and compared. Requirements in research methods training have become fairly common across doctoral programs. Although quantitative methods instruction, emphasizing design and analysis skills, is still most prevalent, non-quantitative methods courses, focusing on qualitative methods and philosophical and historical theories, are offered and often required in many doctoral programs.*

Good tools make for good work. Even if a craftsman came up with the most ingenious design in the world, he could not complete it without the help of the right instruments. So is the case with research. If due attention is not paid to methods, scholars run the risk of not fulfilling on great ideas.

Research methods instruction has long been a vital component of journalism and mass communication graduate education. Although research methods are still considered just a means to an end by some academics, most scholars and professors have come to realize the importance of these "means." With the expansion of

doctoral programs and the emergence of new research paradigms, is there any consensus about what doctoral students should know about research methods? Previous studies have explored the epistemological frictions among various methodological approaches.<sup>1</sup> Some kept tabs on methods used in academic publications.<sup>2</sup> Some examined research methods instruction in undergraduate programs.<sup>3</sup> This study builds on prior research by focusing on introductory research methods courses required for doctoral-level students in journalism and mass communication programs by examining the syllabi of the primary

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methods courses offered at most U.S. doctoral programs.

### **Literature Review**

The field of journalism and mass communication has always been interdisciplinary as it has borrowed both theory and methods from other contiguous fields, such as sociology, psychology, and political science. This was clearly shown more than twenty years ago when Paisley found that the published articles in communication journals contained more citations from non-communication journals (especially social scientific ones) than communication journal citations.<sup>4</sup>

Sociology is usually regarded as the parent of journalism and mass communication research in terms of perspective, theory, and methodology. Sociologists, however, still debate the discipline's underlying paradigms, thus allowing scholars to adopt different perspectives and research methodologies.<sup>5</sup> It is generally agreed, however, that quantitative methodology has been on the rise since the 1940s and continues to play an important role in sociology today.<sup>6</sup> A similar trend of the dominance of quantitative methods has been observed in psychology and political science as well.<sup>7</sup>

The interdisciplinary nature of journalism and mass communication research has always allowed a multiplicity of research perspectives, but has also contributed to clashes between different schools of thought. Today, the "quantitative" school and "qualitative" school are the most common referral points of social scientific and interpretative humanistic approaches. Social behavioral quantitative methods have become more widely used by mass

communication researchers since the early 1950s, although humanistic methods and viewpoints had almost exclusively dominated the field previously.<sup>8</sup> Since the 1970s, qualitative methods began to regain adherents and use.<sup>9</sup> With the emergence of critical and cultural studies, the field's methodological diversity has grown.<sup>10</sup> Potter et al. described three mass media research paradigms: social science, interpretative, and critical studies.<sup>11</sup> As Cooper and colleagues observed, "the terms highlight the intellectual dilemmas that stem from a differential set of foundational assumptions that often induce a heated debate within the research community."<sup>12</sup>

Some possible explanations for these debates come from the developmental trajectory of almost any scientific discipline. In its initial development, a discipline typically will rely primarily on qualitative data, which offers a descriptive or rudimentary understanding of a social phenomenon. Qualitative methodologies are useful for delineating what people have experienced, but not as effective for assessing extent or mechanisms. Consequently, as the discipline matures, research gradually shifts toward quantitative methodology. Researchers are expected to both develop new verified knowledge and to assess what they know or think they know at that time.<sup>13</sup> Ultimately, the discipline should acquire an integrated body of research methods that allows a wider spectrum of exploration with precision as well as depth.

A stream of journalism and mass communication research has investigated the use of different methods in academic publications. Cooper et al. coded mass media research articles

published between 1965 and 1989 and found that although the majority used quantitative methods, use of qualitative methods had been increasing since the 1970s.<sup>14</sup> Trumbo replicated their study, examining articles published between 1990 and 2000, and found that the use of mixed methods had increased significantly.<sup>15</sup> Weaver noted the trend of combining multiple research methods in the 1980s and predicted that this kind of approach would increase in popularity.<sup>16</sup>

These studies raise the question of how and what doctoral students, the future generation of journalism and mass communication researchers, are being taught about research methods. Common sense suggests that scholars' or researchers' training and coursework in graduate school should influence their future academic endeavors. The research methods education for doctoral students, however, remains an area in which little systematic research has been done.

The published articles regarding research methods instruction have focused mostly on undergraduates, who typically are taught research methods as a part of professional practice. For example, journalism majors learn how to conduct a poll or interpret a poll's result for a news story; advertising majors learn how to target effective advertising campaigns toward the right population; public relations majors learn how to understand the public's perception of their client. Some studies involved conducting surveys to examine the importance of undergraduate-level methods instruction,<sup>17</sup> some provided suggestions for effective research method instruction,<sup>18</sup> and some explored research methods instruction

for students of particular sub-disciplines such as journalism,<sup>19</sup> advertising, and public relations.<sup>20</sup> Others focused on the status of qualitative communication research methods<sup>21</sup> and research methods coursework for students specializing in business and technical communication, intercultural communication, organization communication, and small group communication.<sup>22</sup>

This study's intent was assessing the required introductory-level research methods for mass communication doctoral students. An introductory research methods course refers to one that doctoral students are usually required to take in the early stages of coursework. Introductory research methods courses offer a glimpse at a doctoral program's general take on how scholars should be trained to conduct research. Specifically, this study sought to determine the following by surveying directors of graduate studies and collecting required introductory doctoral course syllabi: whether any specific research method(s) course(s) is (are) required, how they are taught, who teaches them, what is taught, what students are expected to do, and how students are evaluated.

## **Method**

The study focused on the doctoral programs listed in the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) 2005 *Directory*.<sup>23</sup> To be included in the study, the program had to be listed as having a doctoral program in one or more of the following areas: journalism, mass communication, mass media, communication studies, communication and public affairs,

media and information studies, intercultural communication, health communication, and/or communication and media arts. A total of 43 doctoral programs were identified.

In March 2006, a cover letter with survey questions was e-mailed to the directors and staff members of the graduate programs of the 43 identified programs. A week later, those who had not replied to that inquiry were sent a follow-up cover letter and survey questions.<sup>24</sup> The syllabi of 43 required introductory methods courses from 25 doctoral programs (58.1% of the Ph.D. programs contacted) were collected either directly from the graduate advisors' e-mail responses or from the instructors, whose e-mail addresses were provided by graduate program directors and staff members.

By April 1, 2006, directors and staff members of graduate studies from 36 of 43 programs had replied to e-mail inquiries, for a response rate of 83.7%. Among the 36 directors, two refused to participate in this study because they did not think their programs should be considered "journalism and mass communication" even though they were listed in the *AEJMC Directory*. One said that the program was in "rhetorical theories,"<sup>25</sup> and the other said that the program was in "human communication."<sup>26</sup> Two other programs were excluded: one had just started the doctoral program less than a year earlier, and no specific doctoral program requirements had been set yet; the other was currently redesigning its doctoral program, and the research methods requirement was still under discussion. Therefore, responses from a total of 32 programs (74.4% of all Ph.D. programs contacted) were included. See Table 1.

In response to the request for the required introductory research methods course syllabi, graduate studies directors and staff from 9 programs e-mailed them directly, and the rest provided the name(s) and e-mail address(es) of the methods instructor(s). Instructors from 16 of 23 doctoral programs e-mailed the requested syllabi. By May 1, 2006, 43 introductory research method syllabi from 25 doctoral programs had been collected for analysis.

Each syllabus was coded by title, duration of each meeting (hours), number of meetings per week, number of instruction weeks, instructors' gender, academic rank (assistant/associate/full professor),<sup>27</sup> textbooks, supplemental readings (format: electronic reserves/course packs; type: journal articles/book chapters), course objectives, range of topics, assignments/evaluation criteria, prerequisites (previous coursework/research experience/visual technology/computer literacy/academic writing skills), kind of ethics training (if any class session was exclusively devoted to research ethics; if Institutional Review Board was covered in instruction; if IRB training was required; if there were any detailed/general warnings against plagiarism), classroom etiquette expectations (detailed/general description), and recommended citation styles (APA/Turabian/Chicago/MLA).

Each syllabus was also coded in terms of the weight of instruction in three areas: quantitative, qualitative, critical/historical/rhetorical.<sup>28</sup> For example, if, during a fifteen-week instruction period, three weeks were devoted to qualitative methodology instruction while the rest were devoted to quantitative methodology, the course

**Table 1**  
**RESEARCH METHODS COURSE REQUIREMENTS IN 32 DOCTORAL PROGRAMS\***

**Years Ph.D. Program Existed** Mean= 29.2 (Range= 3-72)

<b>Average Program Length</b>	3.9 (With MA) (ME= 3.7, Range = 3-7)
	4.8 (Without MA) (ME= 5, Range = 4-6)

<b>Number of Required Methods Courses</b>	<b>Number of Programs</b>
0	1
1	10
2	17
3	4

Mean=1.8

<b>Methods Course Requirements</b>	<b>Number of Programs</b>
1 Quantitative + 1 Qualitative	12
1 Methods core + 1 or more methods course(s)	8
1 Quantitative	7
1 Core (1/3 Quan+1/3Qual+1/3 Critical/Historical)	2
1 Quantitative + 1 Qualitative + 1 Critical/Historical	2

\*Based on 32 graduate directors' responses.

would have a quantitative weight of 80%, a qualitative weight of 20%, and a critical/historical/rhetorical weight of 0%. Then, the weight of each method was adjusted by the number of courses under each program. For example, if a program required two introductory methods courses, one purely quantitative (100%, 0%, 0%) and one purely qualitative (0%, 100%, 0%), the weight of the three methods for this program would be 50%, 50%, 0%. Since the total sample size is small, Fisher's Exact Probability Test was used to explore relationships between kinds of classes and requirements.<sup>29</sup>

### **Results**

Almost all (31 of 32) of the programs included in the study require doctoral students to complete some

research methods courses. More than 70% of programs require students to take two or more courses covering quantitative and qualitative methods and beyond. Seven programs require only one quantitative method course; the remaining programs require a mixture. Students typically are given the option of taking the courses in any sequence, except eight programs require that a "core" methods course be taken before any other methods courses. Interestingly, quantitative courses are generally offered in the fall semester, while qualitative courses are generally offered in the spring semester, suggesting that quantitative methods typically will be taken first. No significant relationship was detected for the program's age and number of required courses or pattern of requirement.

**Table 2**  
**COURSE TITLES BY COURSE TYPE\***

Type	Course Title	#
<b>(Mostly) Quantitative</b>	Research Method(ology) in Mass (Media) Communication <sup>37</sup>	11
	Quantitative (social science) research methods (design)	7
	Statistical Application in Communication Research	1
	Quantitative data analysis	1
	Descriptive/Experimental Research in Communication	1
	Seminar in Empirical Research	1
	Introduction to Mass Communication Research	1
	Seminar in Mass Communication Research	1
	<b>Subtotal</b>	24 (56%)
<b>Qualitative</b>	Qualitative Method(ology) in Mass Communication (Research)	8
	Researching communication	1
	Humanistic research methods	1
	Interpretive Methodology in Communication Research	1
	<b>Subtotal</b>	11 (25%)
<b>Critical/Historical/ Rhetorical</b>	Historical/Critical Research (Methodology) in Communication	3
	Rhetorical criticism	1
	Seminar in Critical Research Methods	1
	<b>Subtotal</b>	5 (12%)
<b>Mixture</b>	Methods of (Mass) Communication Research	2
	Method of Inquiry	1
	<b>Subtotal</b>	3 (7%)
	<b>Total</b>	43 (100%)

\*Based on 43 collected syllabi.

**Introductory Research Methods Syllabi Analysis.** Of 43 syllabi analyzed, 5 types of courses were identified: 20 purely quantitative, 4 mostly quantitative (with an average of 87.2% quantitative methods instruction throughout the course),<sup>30</sup> 11 purely qualitative, 5 critical/historical/rhetorical, and 3 mixed courses of two or three methods. The first and second categories were combined into a (mostly) quantitative cate-

gory for ease of comparison (24 courses).

*Course Title, Contact Hours, Instructors, and Textbooks.* Course titles of the four course types are listed in Table 2. More than half of the (mostly) quantitative courses use general terms for research methods in mass communication (or mass media) without referring specifically to quantitative methods. The remainder use quantitative-related terms, such as "quantita-

**Table 3**  
CONTACT HOURS AND INSTRUCTORS' GENDER AND RANK

Type	Meeting Length (M Hrs. /week)	Average (M) Weekly Meetings	Instructor		Instructor Rank		
			Male	Female	Assist.	Assoc.	Full
(Mostly) Quantitative	2.3	1.6	17	7	5	7	12
Qualitative	2.2	1.5	4	7	5	4	2
Crit/Hist/Rhet	2.9	1.0	2	3	1	3	1
Mixture	1.3	2.3	2	1	1	1	1

tive," "statistical," "data analysis," "descriptive/experimental," "empirical," and "social science." Fewer than 10% of the qualitative methods courses use only general terms; more than 90% emphasize the course's focus on qualitative methods. Critical/historical/rhetorical methods courses' titles all emphasize the specific type of method. All "mixture" courses use general terms in their titles.

The number of contact hours and instructor characteristics are presented in Table 3. According to this collection of methods syllabi, the average required introductory methods course meets 2.3 hours for 1.5 times a week for an average of 14.6 weeks in a semester. Critical/historical/rhetorical courses have the longest class and the least frequent weekly meetings while mixed methods courses have the shortest class and the most frequent weekly meetings.

(Mostly) quantitative methods courses have the highest percentage of male instructors and qualitative methods courses have the highest percent-

age of female instructors. (Mostly) quantitative and critical/historical/rhetorical methods are taught by mostly tenured professors while qualitative methods are taught by mostly untenured ones.<sup>31</sup>

The most popular<sup>32</sup> textbooks in the (mostly) quantitative courses are Earl R. Babbie's *The Practice of Social Research* (used in seven programs); Guido H. Stempel, David H. Weaver, and G. Cleveland Wilhoit's *Mass Communication Research and Theory* (five); and Roger D. Wimmer and Joseph R. Dominick's *Mass Media Research* (five). The most popular textbook used in qualitative methods courses is Thomas R. Lindlof and Bryan C. Taylor's *Qualitative Communication Research Methods* (five). The critical/historical/rhetorical methods courses had no textbook in common. Almost 70% (30 out of 43) of the methods courses require additional readings either in the form of electronic reserves or course packs, which consist of journal articles (27 courses) and book chapters (25 courses).

**Table 4**  
**COURSE OBJECTIVES BY COURSE TYPE**

Course Type	Course Objectives	# of Syllabi
<b>(Mostly)</b>		
<b>Quantitative</b>	Acquire hands-on experience and practical skills	15
	Understand foundations of quantitative research methods	14
	Apply statistical programs in data analysis	13
	Evaluate published research	6
	Apply research methods to solve problems	5
	Learn key concepts	5
	Become intelligent consumers of mass media	3
	Learn the process of research publication	3
	Improve writing skills	3
	Participate in a class project	1
	Conceptualize a real project	1
	Develop an integrated literature review	1
<b>Qualitative</b>	Learn qualitative research skills	10
	Apply theory	7
	Understand theories shaping qualitative research	6
	Practice qualitative methods	6
	Develop critical thinking	4
	Understand philosophical and historical origin of qualitative methods	2
	Become thoughtful and ethical researchers	2
	Understand nature and purpose of qualitative research	1
	Evaluate published studies	1
	Make contribution to the field	1
	Improve writing skills	1
	Understand the limitations of qualitative research	1
	<b>Critical/ Historical/ Rhetorical</b>	Understand the persuasive power of media messages
Develop critical thinking		3
Improve communication and writing skills		2
Address historical events critically		2
Improve analytical skills		2
Understand cultural phenomena better		2
Gain access to research resources		1
Discover one's own orientation toward critical research		1
<b>Mixture</b>	Engage with different approaches	3
	Understand communication process	2
	Understand strengths and limitations of different methods	1
	Develop one's identity in research	1
	Evaluate published articles	1
Become an ethical researcher	1	



**Table 5**  
**TOPICS (SORTED BY FREQUENCY)**

(Mostly) Quantitative Topics	#	Qualitative Topics	#	Critical/Historical/Rhetorical Topics	#
Data analysis	28	Participant observation	9	Historical method	4
Measurement and concepts	25	Ethnography	9	Rhetorical criticism	3
Experiment	25	Stages of research	8	Critical method	2
Sampling	21	Interviews	8	Feminist criticism	2
Survey	21	Textual analysis	8	Generic criticism	2
Content analysis	19	Research report writing	6	Ideological criticism	2
Research design	12	Research ethics	6	Narrative criticism	2
Reliability and validity	12	Field application	5	Cluster criticism	1
Hypothesis testing	12	Qualitative res. History	5	Fantasy theme analysis	1
Research ethics	6	Focus groups	5	Metaphor criticism	1
Critique/evaluation of research	4	Reception analysis	4	Pedantic criticism	1
Publication of quan research	4	Oral history	3	Generative criticism	1
Application/operationalization	3	Historical research	3	Ethics	1
Criticism of social science	1	Case studies	2	Textual analysis	1
		Narrative analysis	2	Post-modernism	1
		Ideological criticism	2	Post-colonialism	1
		Industry analysis	2		
		Grounded theory	1		
		Social constructivism	1		
		Discourse analysis	1		
		Visual methods	1		
		Rhetorical method	1		
		Psychoanalytic method	1		
		Biographical method	1		
		Political criticism	1		
		Legal method	1		

*Course Objectives, Topics, Assignments/Evaluation Criteria.* Course objectives were determined by looking at the course overview and course objectives sections of the collected syllabi. Table 4 presents course objectives sorted by frequency. The major emphasis in quantitative methods courses was on practical skills, understanding of basic concepts and terms, and performing elementary statistical analyses. The qualitative and critical/historical/rhetorical courses tend to stress philosophical and historical theories related to the

methods, and to emphasize critical thinking.

To determine the content covered in the courses, schedules were reviewed, and similarities emerged. Table 5 lists content categories by frequency. Qualitative courses consist of more diversified content. "Criticism" serves as the dominant content for most of the Critical/Historical/Rhetorical topics. Qualitative and Critical/historical/rhetorical methods courses are quite similar. No course devoted any session to reviewing previous concepts. Three qualitative courses

and one mixture course have "field work" sessions, consisting of about 23% of course time. Only three courses, one from each category, included explicit application of the methods.

Table 6 shows that all three kinds of methods courses<sup>33</sup> put considerable emphasis on research papers or proposals—counting for 40% of the term grade for the quantitative, almost 50% for the qualitative, and more than 75% for the critical/historical/rhetorical courses. A full paper (in 21 courses) is a more popular assignment than a research proposal: only three (mostly) quantitative courses and four qualitative courses require only a proposal. Other than research papers, most points in quantitative methods courses are on exams, which assessed students' statistical knowledge, data analysis skills, homework problem-solving, and group projects. Qualitative methods courses stress reflexive and critical thinking.

Besides research papers and proposals, quantitative homework and exams are the most frequently used assignments in (mostly) quantitative courses; textual analysis, interviews, and observation are assigned in qualitative courses; and reflection papers and mini exercises and quizzes are used in critical/historical/rhetorical courses.

*Prerequisites, Ethics, Classroom Etiquette, and Citation Styles.* In accordance with the introductory nature of these courses, more than 90% either did not mention prerequisites or stated explicitly that no prior experience was needed. Nor did any syllabi list baseline expectations or competencies in visual technology, computer literacy, or academic writing

skills. Only three purely quantitative research methods courses required that one or two statistics courses be taken previously.

About one-third of the (mostly) quantitative and qualitative courses explicitly mentioned the topic of ethical treatment of human subjects. About one-fifth of (mostly) quantitative and 10% of qualitative courses explicitly mentioned the Institutional Review Board. Five professors made the IRB training completion certificate a requirement of the class.

More than 60% of course syllabi included discussions of academic integrity and classroom etiquette in separate sections. Academic integrity included professors' explicit statements about their expectation of original work with proper references. Classroom etiquette included the professors' explicit requirements for academic performance, such as attendance, punctuality, classroom manners, etc. Among professors whose syllabi mentioned these topics, 80% provided detailed and specific definitions and warnings with various plagiarism examples; 30% elaborated on expected professional behaviors.

About 80% of critical/historical/rhetorical courses, 70% of mixed courses, and 50% of both (mostly) quantitative and qualitative courses have specific citation requirements. Among them, *The American Psychological Association (APA)* is the most popular (91%), followed by *Turabian/Chicago* (30%), and *Modern Language Association (MLA)* (22%). The proportion did not add up to 100% because eight courses offer flexibility in choosing from two or more styles.

**Table 6**  
**STUDENT ASSIGNMENTS/EVALUATION CRITERIA**  
**(SORTED BY PERCENTAGE WEIGHT OF FINAL GRADE)**

(Mostly) Quantitative Assignment	# %	Qualitative Assignment	# %	Critical/Historical/Rhetorical Assignment	# %
Research paper/proposal	14 40	Research paper/proposal	11 48	Research paper	5 75
Exams	17 37	Reactions to readings	4 23	Take-home exam	1 20
Data analysis	5 28	Participation/attendance	9 20	Participation / attendance	2 15
Homework assignment	18 25	Paper critique	3 15	Reflection papers	3 10
Group project	3 22	Class presentation	2 13	Mini exercise and quiz	2 10
In-class quiz	7 17	Interview exercise	6 9	Library resources	1
Brief research proposal	5 15	Observation exercise	6 8	Speech analysis	1
Class research project	2 15	Textual analysis	7 7	Generic criticism	1
Class presentation	11 11	Ethnography	3 7		
Paper critique	7 11	Historiography	2 7		
Participation/attendance	13 8	Research question	2 7		
		Ideological criticism	1 7		

*Note:* The percentage weight was calculated only for those syllabi that provided the percentage of different assignments in final grade. For example, five critical/historical/rhetorical syllabi required a research paper, while only three listed a percentage weight for research papers. The 75% was calculated based on information from the three courses, i.e., the denominator for calculation was three instead of five.

## Discussion

This profile of requirements for research methods in U.S. doctoral education in mass communication shows that they are consistent with the general goal of doctoral-level methods instruction: to cultivate competent researchers who can carry out academic research by writing and publishing research.

That few courses required prerequisites reflects the mission and nature of doctoral education in journalism and mass communication: students are not expected to have knowledge either in practical media-related skills such as graphic design or video production that might be helpful in the research process, nor do they have to complete any specific courses before entering the introductory level methods course (although basic math competency typi-

cally is assumed for acceptance in graduate programs). That only purely quantitative courses require previous coursework might be because quantitative methods have a relatively more linear structural development; their concepts and statistics techniques are like building blocks—lacking fundamentals will limit more complicated design and analysis.

Quantitative methods courses compose about two-thirds (63.8%) of doctoral program methods instruction, qualitative methods are slightly more than one-quarter (28.7%), and critical/historical/rhetorical methods account for less than one-tenth of research instruction (7.5%). This ratio is close to what Potter and colleagues found in their 1993 analysis of mass communication articles published in eight communication journals: the

social science paradigm accounted for about 60% of studies, the interpretative paradigm was about 30%, and the critical paradigm was 6%.<sup>34</sup>

Course titles also seem to reflect the historical dominance of quantitative methods. More than half of quantitative courses did not include any quantitative or empirical adjective before the general term "research methods," suggesting that professors still think of quantitative methods as "the" methods with which to study mass communication. In contrast, almost all of the qualitative and critical/historical/rhetorical methods courses used a non-empirical adjective in their course titles, in an apparent attempt to distinguish themselves from quantitative research methods.

Another indication of the continued dominance of quantitative methods is that quantitative courses are more often offered in the fall semesters, typically when doctoral students enter programs, whereas qualitative courses are offered in the spring, typically when doctoral students have completed a quantitative course.<sup>35</sup>

That most quantitative courses are taught by tenured male professors while most other methods courses are taught frequently by untenured female professors may be due to a number of factors, including old stereotypes of male preference for quantitative ("scientific") and female preference for qualitative ("humanities") methods. It is more likely that the increasing presence of females in graduate programs who are being taught qualitative methods results in younger and female professors prepared to teach qualitative methods.<sup>36</sup>

That warnings against academic plagiarism are frequent (25 courses),

but relatively little attention is paid to the ethics of research with human subjects (9 courses) may be because few courses required research proposals that would be necessary for a formal IRB application. Given the increased importance of research ethics compliance for human subjects, further attention in introductory research methods courses may be warranted. It would be unfortunate if students are left with the impression that the IRB process is too daunting, resulting in opting for conducting secondary data analysis, textual analysis, or other kinds of analyses that do not require IRB approval.

### ***Limitations and Suggestions for Further Study***

This study is not without limitations and its findings raise a number of questions. One limitation is that only doctoral programs were included, and often master's programs include methods courses that may influence students' curriculum choices, Ph.D. program selection (if any), and subsequent research. Future research might benefit from surveying the field's current doctoral students to explore the research method(s) they have chosen for their careers, and then correlate their methods choices and training with early academic publications.

Reliance on graduate studies directors as respondents rather than the course instructors and/or doctoral students might have resulted in conjecture and even bias. It is not possible to tell from analyzing only syllabi without input from the course instructor what occurs in the classroom and over the course of the semester or quar-

ter. Some professors may feel like they have to provide instruction in some methods that they do not like or even approve of, or give short shrift to some with which they have less experience. Thus, some are endorsed more than others. Instructors and/or graduate students could be surveyed to obtain a more comprehensive picture of attitudes and classroom time. It would be valuable to see this study as a baseline from which we might observe future stability and change in graduate research methods instruction.

### Endnotes

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22. See Kim Sydow Campbell, "Research Methods Course Work for Students Specializing in Business and Technical Communication," *Journal of Business and Technical Communication* 14 (2, 2004): 223-41; Steven A. Beebe and Thompson Biggers, "The Status of the Introductory Intercultural Communication Course," *Communication Education* 35 (1986): 56-60; Cal W. Downs and Michael W. Larimer, "The Status of Organizational Communication in Speech Departments," *Speech Teacher* 23 (1974): 325-29; R. Wayne Pace and Robert F. Ross, "The Basic Course in Organizational Communication," *Communication Education* 32 (1983): 402-12; Dennis E. Warnemunde, "The Status of the Introductory Small Group Communication Course," *Communication Education* 35 (1986): 389-95.

23. See AEJMC Central Office Staff, *Journalism & Mass Communication Directory*, vol. 23 (Columbia, SC:

Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, 2005).

24. For the second round of e-mail inquiry, the author referred to the online National Communication association (NCA) Doctoral Database (<http://www.natcom.org/nca/index.asp?downloadid=180>) for an update of e-mail addresses. The author understood that the AEJMC records and NCA records were different but found that many programs were cross-listed with different e-mail contacts. The NCA database thus served as the best alternative source available. In fact, the second round of e-mail contacts based on NCA records contributed eleven more replies.

25. Anonymous graduate studies director I. "Re: A Research Method Instruction Study Asking for Your Input," (2006).

26. Anonymous graduate studies director II. "Re: A Research Method Instruction Study Asking for Your Input," (2006).

27. Most instructors list their academic ranks on their syllabi. For those who do not, the researcher looked up their ranks from their institutions' Web sites, which are usually but not always updated.

28. Critical, rhetorical, and historical methods are different from each other; reasons to combine them are the difference between qualitative methods and the three are more substantive than the difference among the three (this can be observed from Table 4 and Table 5.); the scarcity of courses in these three methods.

29. To conduct analysis in a four-fold table, the researcher divided several variables into two groups according to their means or according to their

nature. For example, the programs were divided into "old programs" and "new programs" with 30 (the average age of the programs) as the dividing line. They are also divided into "M.A. required" and "M.A. not required" according to their requirements. As for course types, they are divided into "(mostly) quantitative methods courses" and "non-quantitative methods courses." More details are available upon request.

30. This is calculated according to the course schedule. For example, if a fifteen-week course devotes two weeks to qualitative method instruction and the rest to quantitative method instruction, this course is considered 86.7% quantitative and 13.3% qualitative, in other words, a mostly quantitative course.

31. Details available upon request.

32. In determining the most popular textbooks used, the number of programs was counted instead of courses. For example, if a textbook was used in seven courses in five programs, the book was counted five times. Different editions of the same book were counted as one. Textbooks required in mixed methods courses were counted into the three major methods categories. Only textbooks used in more than four programs are mentioned here; a list of all books is available upon request.

33. Because it is impossible to determine the three mixed courses' percentage distribution in each of the

three methods (i.e., the students can choose to write a research paper or a proposal using any methods), those three courses are not included in the analysis of student evaluation tools reported in Table 5.

34. Potter, Cooper, and Dupagne, "The Three Paradigms," 329.

35. Notably, qualitative method instruction preceded quantitative method instruction in two of the three mixed method courses.

36. See Jane W. Loeb, "The Status of Female Faculty in the U.S.: Thirty-five Years with Equal Opportunity Legislation" *Management Revue* 17 (2006): 157-80; Dan Shaver, Carroll Glynn, Mary Ann Ferguson, Mary Alice Shaver, Rick Stephens, Wayne Wanta, David Weaver, and Chuck Whitney, "Status Report: Ph.D. Education in Mass Communication," 2005, <http://www.aejmc.org/pubs/phd/phdfinalreport.pdf> (March 12, 2007); Joan S. Stark, Malcolm A. Lowther, and Ann E. Austin, "Comparative Career Accomplishments of Two Decades of Women and Men Doctoral Graduates in Education," *Research in Higher Education* 22 (3, 1985): 219-49.

37. Media Communication Research Methods, Communication Research Methods, Research Methods in Journalism, and Research Methods in Communication Studies were also included in this category because they all emphasized the use of methods in (mass) communication research.



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