

The Bean Threads Summary
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The “Bean Threads” began July 18, 1995 with a posting to the QUALRS-L list by Dr. Rebecca Clemente, who was at that time a faculty member at Ball State University (BSU) in Muncie, Indiana. The initial puns and analogies were a collaborative effort by Dr. Clemente and her spouse Dr. Robert Blomeyer, who was also on the BSU faculty at that time.

The Bean Thread was developed by Drs. Clemente and Blomeyer in an effort to provide a heuristic or metaphorical device that might be used in education research classes to support the understanding of basic qualitative and quantitative research concepts. It also has possible application supporting students’ professional knowledge about traditionally educational research “genres” and their acknowledged proponents.

After the initial posting, various colleagues in The U.S, and Australia sent contributions to the *Bean Thread* as private mail to Rebecca and Robert. Some of this material is previously unpublished and of sufficient quality to suggest that their professional publication is long overdue.

This annotated summary of bean threads is offered under the assumption that instructional use of this intellectual property is supported and encouraged by all the contributing authors. Clemente and Blomeyer hereby grant blanket permission for the reprint of their *bean threads* for educational purposes.

We strongly encourage our colleagues to request permission to reprint or adapt these materials from the respective contributors. Republication of the *Bean Threads* should cite the original authors and sources noted herein. We also hope that you will send us threads that you create to expand and support our work.

(Note: Because of some spelling and punctuation errors, the following *threads* may differ slightly from the originally published versions.)

Comparisons of Quantitative and Qualitative Assumptions

Quantitative-

Hypothesis: All beans are alike.

Null Hypothesis: No beans are different.

Description of the method: First you count the beans then you tell how many. (Blomeyer & Clemente, 1995a)

Qualitative-

Research Questions: What is a bean? What does it mean to be a bean? Description of method: First you figure out what a bean is. Then you examine it in the field. Then you write a 200-page report. (Blomeyer & Clemente, 1995a)

Qualitative Research Genres

Case study: Portray the bean as seen by other beans, insects, and birds (or maybe the farmer). Then you write a 200 page report. (Blomeyer & Clemente, 1995a)

Life history: Follow the bean around for 60 days and write a detailed account about everything it did. Then you write a 200 page report. (Blomeyer & Clemente, 1995a)

Ethnography: Camp out in the field. Researcher tries unsuccessfully to become a bean. Then you write a 200 page report. (Blomeyer & Clemente, 1995a)

Narrative: Bean tells its own story. Then you write a 200 page report. (Blomeyer & Clemente, 1995a)

Blitzkrieg Ethnography: Researcher dashes into field at a high rate of speed, stomps around for 10 or 15 minutes. Runs out of the field and immediately writes a 200-page paper. (Blomeyer & Clemente, 1995a)

Action research: A few beans study themselves. Elicit the help of the UFW (United Farm Workers Union). Organize the other beans and finally declare the bean field independent from the rest of the farm. (Blomeyer & Clemente, 1995a)

Ethnology: Five or six successive generations of researchers return to the same field annually and try unsuccessfully to become a bean. When viewed longitudinally the results show conclusively that although the researchers gained an increased understanding of beans the researcher cannot become a bean. Then you write a 200 page report. (Blomeyer & Clemente, 1995a)

Connoisseurship: The researcher goes to the field, picks the beans, cooks a soup, and reports (in 200 pages) that the beans were delicious. (Blomeyer & Clemente, 1995a)

Critical Ethnography: The researcher goes into the field and does a thorough study of everything that is agonizing and painful about being a bean! Then the researcher writes a "vivid" account of these trials and inequities (200 agonizing and painful pages). When the study is released for publication, a group of readers become SO incensed by the injustice and tragedy experienced by the beans that they find the farm and burn down the farmer's house. In the process, the bean field accidentally catches fire and no more beans (V. Silenzio, personal communication, July, 19, 1995)!

Grounded Theory: What you get when beans are placed into a Waring® Blender. (V. Silenzio, personal communication, July, 19, 1995)

Post-Modern Research: First, you write 2000 pages deconstructing the meaning of the political relationship you would have with a bean if you were do empirical field research that you don't actually do because your deconstruction shows how pointless it would be because you could be certain of nothing. Never mind, your work is published just as you

wrote it (without punctuation) to the acclaim of those who don't understand it either. This plunges you into seeming terminal existential angst, but from which you emerge when you realize that your only certain understanding is understanding that you're uncertain. Whereupon you make a mint trading bean futures instead. (D. Tripp, personal communication, September 9, 1996)

Auto-ethnography: A bean elects to examine it's own life in it's bean culture. The bean chooses an expressive, narrative or performative method of writing and composes a 200 page report about itself. (H. Belle, personal communication, January 10, 2003)

Philosophical Traditions

Existentialism: Consider the issues of On Bean and Nothingness. Write 200 pages. (V. Silenzio, personal communication, July, 19, 1995).

Marxism: Release the beans from the oppressive bounds of their containers. Write 200 pages. (V. Silenzio, personal communication, July, 19, 1995).

Scholasticism: Consider the relationship to the Supreme Bean and issue a 200 Bull. (V. Silenzio, personal communication, July, 19, 1995).

Humanism: After considering human potential and achievement a group of beans decides they have no particular value on the planet. They offer a 200 page report debating methods by which they can deify humanity e.g. offering themselves for sacrifice. (H. Belle, personal communication, January 10, 2003)

Fatalism: Beans agree that what will happen, will happen and nothing they can do will make any difference. Acknowledging the import of fatalism they elect not to write a report but throw the 200 pages to the wind. (H. Belle, personal communication, January 10, 2003)

Reference

Blomeyer, R., & Clemente, R. (1995a). A perspective (?) on research :-). Retrieved January 9, 2003 from Archives of Qualrs-L@Listserv.Uga.Edu
<http://listserv.uga.edu/archives/qualrs-l.html>