

世新大學九十七學年度碩士班招生考試試題卷

第 1 頁共計 頁

系所組別	考試科目
社會心理學系	英文

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篇名：Qualitative Research in Sociology in Germany and the US (2005)

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(總共100分)

1. Introduction

The label "qualitative research" is used as an umbrella term for a series of approaches to research in the social sciences. These are also known as hermeneutic(詮釋的), reconstructive or interpretative approaches. Under this label, these approaches, methods and the results obtained by using them are attracting increasing attention not only in sociology, but also in education, psychology and health sciences. Hardly any handbook is published today that does not have a chapter on qualitative research methods. In sociology, the interest in qualitative research can be traced back to different theoretical traditions—from Max Weber's *verstehende* (瞭解；理解) sociology, to symbolic interactionism and structuralist approaches. Major fields of research—like health and illness—focus on the analysis of biographies, of everyday and institutional communications, of organizations and open fields. Qualitative research has always had strong links to applied fields in its research questions and approaches. In the scientific associations of sociology for example, it is anchored in different divisions and areas (for example in the sociology of language and knowledge, in biographical research, medical and family sociology, to name just a few).

2. A Brief History of Qualitative Research

Here, only a brief overview of the history of qualitative research can be given. The use of qualitative methods has long traditions in psychology as well as in social sciences. In psychology, Wilhelm Wundt (1928) used methods of description and *verstehen* (瞭解；理解) in his folk psychology alongside the experimental methods of his general psychology. Roughly at the same time, an argument between a more monographic (論題式的) conception of science, which was oriented towards induction (歸納) and case studies, and an empirical and statistical approach began in German sociology. In American sociology, biographical methods, case studies, and descriptive methods were central for a long time (until the 1940s). This can be demonstrated by the importance of Thomas and Znaniecki's study *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* (1918-20) and more generally with the influence of the Chicago School of sociology.

During the further establishment of both sciences, however, increasingly "hard", experimental, standardizing and quantifying approaches have asserted themselves against "soft", understanding, open and qualitative-descriptive strategies. It was not until the 1960s that in American sociology the critique of standardized, quantifying social research became relevant again. This critique was taken up in the 1970s in German discussions. Finally, this led to a renaissance of qualitative research in the social sciences and also (with some delay) in psychology. The developments and discussions in the USA and in Germany not only took place at different times but also are marked by differing phases.