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Ethnography, discourse analysis, and the radical critique of interviews

This paper will examine the relationship between ethnography and discourse analysis. It will begin by acknowledging the considerable variation in kinds of work that come under each of those headings. The main focus, though, will be on similarities and tensions between these approaches. What has been described as the 'recent radical critique of interviews' will be used as one way of exploring the conflicting orientations of some kinds of ethnography and discourse analysis. This critique is founded on arguments that can be detected to some extent within ethnography, but that have strongly motivated several kinds of discourse analysis. It will be suggested in the final part of the paper that there are good reasons to qualify the arguments built into the radical critique, and that the value of discourse analytic practice is best understood from within a broadly ethnographic orientation.