

PAI 705

McPeak

Lecture 10

Field Research / Qualitative research.

Alternation of induction and deduction.

It can provide a comprehensive perspective.

Study of attitudes and behaviors best understood in their natural setting.

Experiments and surveys in contrast are artificial settings in which we observe and record.

Study of change over time rather than deconstructing after the fact; you see it and record it as it evolves without knowing for sure where it is going.

Babbie quotes Lofland et al. as what kinds of settings are good for this kind of approach.

- Practices; trying to observe people in their natural setting and record how they do things. How do they milk a goat; how do they tie a rope; what do the kids play with.
- Episodes; events that are –sort of – discrete in nature, illness, crime, march madness
- Encounters; a social interaction between or amongst people. Meeting, debate, interview,

- Roles and social types; the social order of a middle school, the behavior of incoming cohorts in orientation, a Maxwell Faculty meeting.
- Social and personal relationships; mother-son relationships, mentoring relationships, bridge playing groups
- Groups and cliques; athletic teams, goths, economists.
- Organizations; Hospitals, schools, churches
- Settlements and habitats; village, town, grazing area, fishing area, neighborhoods
- Social worlds; the 1%, the 99%, Wall Street
- Subcultures and lifestyles; the ruling class, mods, rockers.

Roles of the observer.

Participant observer.

- Complete (genuine) participant. Member of the motorcycle gang.
- Not a genuine participant but allowed access as an observer. Childhood friend of gang members who is allowed to hang around with them to write a dissertation.
- Pretend to be a genuine participant. Act as if you are trying to join the gang to learn information about the gang and the process of joining.

Ethics of deception are an issue here.

Why we might be deceptive?

Reactivity:

- They might throw you out.
- They might change behavior knowing you are observing and recording to present a different kind of behavior than their unguarded behavior.
- The social process you seek to observe will be radically changed if you are known to be researching it.

Why might we have problems researching while being a participant?

- We are a member of the social interaction, and by participating change it from what would have happened in our absence.
- You also are not 'objective' and have social connections with the people you are trying to observe as units of observation (or their interactions as your unit of observation).
- They are doing illegal stuff and you are part of it.

Roles as ‘the Martian’ and ‘the Convert’. Outside observer compared to active participant.

Emic perspective, taking on the point of view of those being studied (anthropology). More the convert role.

Etic perspective, maintaining a distance from the native point of view to maintain objectivity. More the Martian role.

Can you fully understand behavior without seeing it from the point of view of the people – emic? Can you ever really understand the emic view being from a different culture and not from the community and context?

- Witchcraft accusations and lightning strikes.
- Case studies of sorcerers.

Another issue is that with this kind of research, you have intense prolonged social contact with people you may not really enjoy being around.

Need to divide ‘who I am researching’ from ‘who I want to be around’ in a way that is not the case with survey research.

Qualitative Field Research Paradigms.

- Naturalism. Positivist assumption that the truth is out there to be observed and recorded. Chicago school – the sociology department at Chicago went out to observe and record local neighborhoods and communities.
 - Street Corner Society (1943). Study of an Italian American neighborhood.
 - Find key informants and have them tell their stories. Studs Terkel. StoryCorps.
 - Related to the idea of an ethnography; a study that focuses on detailed and accurate description rather than explanation. Finely textured study in detail of how life is lived.
 - Duneier warns against the ‘ethnographic fallacy’.
 - Overgeneralization and oversimplification of the patterns of living.
 - There are patterns within groups, but there is also diversity.
 - Need to be wary that what you see as the ‘group practice’ is actually only one way it is done out of many.

Ethnomethodology.

- Reality is socially constructed rather than out there to be discovered. Descriptions of the world are not of it as it is, but as they make sense of it.
- Trying to make sense of the perceptions of the world that shape the reports of your informants.
- One way as we talked about earlier in the class is to 'break the rules' to see how people react.
- 'Breaching experiments'. Understanding methods through which understanding occurs by violating the rules.
- Grounded theory. Glaser and Strauss. Sociology.
 - An inductive approach to the study of social life that attempts to generate a theory from reviewing and refining the patterns seen in ongoing observations.
 - Guidelines:
 - Think comparatively. Compare numerous incidents to avoid over interpreting initial observations.
 - Obtain multiple viewpoints. Both in terms of different people on the same question but also using different approaches to observing the object in question.
 - Periodically step back. Frame as data come in, but keep checking the frame as data come in

to see if the frame needs revision based on the added information you now have.

- Maintain an attitude of skepticism. Your interpretations are best understood as provisional not definitive. They are all open to revision or to be discarded.
- Follow the research procedures. Keep to the basic concepts which are sampling, asking questions, and making comparisons.
- Different from traditional research approaches where you initially review the literature to find out what is already known and what is to be discovered.
- They would argue against this approach. Concern over preconceptions and blinding yourself to new discoveries.
- Systematic coding is central to this approach.

Case Studies.

Focus on a single instance of some social phenomenon.

Often used to be descriptive, but exploratory and explanatory uses are possible.

From the Lund article in Human Organization, it is important to spend time thinking about: of what is this a case?

He describes a case as follows. "A case is an edited chunk out of empirical reality where certain features are marked out, emphasized, and privileged while others recede into the background. As such, a case is not 'natural' but a mental, or analytical, construct aimed at organizing knowledge about reality in some manageable way." (p. 224)

Think about contents of a case from the very specific to the very general.

Think about the contents of a case from the concrete to more abstract.

Specific: Limited. Particular. Singular.

General: Common. Pervasive. Widespread.

Concrete: Actual. Real. Tangible.

Abstract: Conceptual. Ideal. Intangible.

His specific illustration:

	Concrete	Abstract
Specific	Land Reform Event Land Conflict Event	Recognition of a property right. Institutional competition over jurisdiction
General	Post-colonial societies Re-invention of custom	State formation through rights and authority

Mixed methods use of cases. An article exploring the concept of pastoral poverty (Development and Change, 2008)

Bonaya (50 years old) and his wife, Sala (36 years old), have no formal education, nor do any of their five children. During 2000–2002 they earned a combined average total income of only US\$ 0.29/daily and had per capita TLUs of only 2.01. The latter was less than half the animal wealth that the household held in 1999. By June 2001 Sala had begun to sell milk and firewood in NH town regularly to make up for declining pastoral incomes, but earned very little cash from these businesses. However, with few non-pastoral options in this remote, arid location, there were few other activities. The family is less mobile than during the late 1990s and now resides for long periods of time near town, so Sala can do her petty trade and the household can receive food aid. The latter accounted for about one-third of total household income July 2000 – December 2001. In addition, the household's animals now are often combined with a clanmate's herd and that person moves them when needed. Bonaya's family is no longer fully nomadic and with the need to sell additional animals just to meet subsistence needs, their pastoral livelihood is vulnerable and prospects for the future are bleak.⁸

From Risk and Change in an African Rural Economy (2012)

Kira Robine is a female household head who resides in Kargi and represents a “combining” household. She is 60 years old and her husband has not been in the area for at least five years (we are unclear whether or not she is divorced). She has two young children living at home, an elder daughter who works for wages in the Marsabit area, and a son living in Marsabit to attend secondary school. Her household’s per capita livestock holdings are about 4.5 TLU (mainly cattle and goats) and she hires a herder to look after her cattle. Prior to the 1999–2000 drought she had about 35 percent more cattle and goats. Although Kargi is a good area for camels, they require considerable labor so Kira concentrates on goats and cattle. She receives some occasional remittances from a clansman who works outside the area, food aid when conditions are poor in the area, and does petty trading to supplement the household’s livestock-based income. In addition, she actively sells animals; livestock sales comprise about 30 percent of her household income. During the drought, she sold 12 goats because “there was no relief food and the drought was severe.” To finance her son’s education, she maintains a bank account in Marsabit town. Kira’s household is not wealthy but it is a good example of a female-headed household that successfully is combining pastoralism with cash-earning activities.

(Field notes, January 15, 2002, translation by Hussein A. Mahmoud)

Institutional Ethnography.

Dorothy Smith (1978). Personal experiences of individuals are used to reveal power relationships and other characteristics of the institutions in which they operate.

Linking the micro-level of personal experiences with the macro-level of institutions.

Participatory Action Research.

The people being studied are being given power over the research agenda, and are using the research towards a purpose. The goal is not positivist, but is normative, or transformational.

GO TO POWER POINT ON PRA

Qualitative Interviewing.

- BEFORE THE ENCOUNTER
 - Thematising – what do you need to make sure you cover
 - Designing – what is the process to accomplish what you are trying to accomplish
- THE ENCOUNTER
 - Interviewing – actually sitting down in real time and talking to people with a purpose
- AFTER THE ENCOUNTER
 - Transcribing (and possibly translating) – turning verbal interactions into written scripts.
 - Analyzing – interrogating these scripts to draw our larger meanings and messages.
 - Verifying – making sure these interpretations are valid and reliable.
 - Reporting – Writing things up and summarizing to explain to people what you have found.

Focus Groups.

- Good Things:
 - It is socially oriented, so you get interactive discourse.
 - You get multiple points of view in one session.
 - You can get synergy in discussion that one person elaborates on what another brings up.
 - It is flexible so can elaborate on a topic that needs further explanation.

- It is valid in that it can self-correct and hone in.
- It is fast.
- It is cheap.
- It is like a process that leads to decisions in reality; discussion, deliberation, decisions.
- However:
 - It can spin out of control in a way responses to a survey can't.
 - The outcome is a mass of things people said rather than a bunch of 'yes – no' binary outcomes.
 - It actually takes skill to moderate (and potentially translate).
 - Groups have a life of their own that you need to account for in comparison.
 - People are problematic to get together and talk.
 - It is the illusion of discussion if dominated by one person.
 - There is all this background context that you might not know about that is playing out in front of you.
 - You need the right environment.

- Techniques:
 - Nominal group technique. Break into groups. Have them each brainstorm on a topic and prioritize. Report back.
 - DACUM (development of a curriculum). Have people doing a job get together and describe what their job consists of, and use this to design the training for future trainees for this job.
 - Critical Incident Technique. Identify important events. Describe these events as fully as possible. Could be selected by the group endogenously or could be selected from exogenous events.
 - SWOT. Strengths. Weaknesses. Opportunities. Threats.
 - Community resource inventory.
 - Brainstorming / Whiteboarding
 - Straw Polls.

- Pay attention to the recording aspect of these kinds of approaches. Often you want to divide up tasks to have one person concentrate on the facilitation and another concentrate on the recording.
- Pay attention to translating. Respect the eloquence of the people you have interviewed.

RANGELAND CONDITION AND WATER AVAILABILITY

Please tell me about the condition of rangelands in your dheda. (*e.g., erosion and gullying*).

- Has the condition of your rangeland improved or worsened in the past 5 years (availability, degradation, productivity)?
- Please describe the improvements and also the problems and how these affect different livestock species in your area (cattle, camels, sheep, and goats).
- Why do you think it has improved/worsened?
- Please describe the quality and availability of water for your livestock (ponds, wells and running water)

In our Rera we have a rangeland.

That we have is extremely busy because of large number of cattle.

So we don't have.

In the days of rainy season we make a rangeland in this side and in that side.

We make rangeland like this.