

Chapter 10

Qualitative Field Research

What topics are appropriate to field research?

- Things not easily quantifiable
- Places/situations that are difficult to accurately recreate in a lab
- Topics where you *need* the context of the situation
- Social processes over time

Which topics is not that good for field research?

- A. Attitudes and behaviors best understood in their natural settings
- B. Social processes over time
- C. Events taking place within a relatively limited area and time
- D. The effect watching a video in a laboratory in prejudice

Field research differs from other sorts of observation in the sense that:

- A. More highly refined
- B. Both a data-collecting activity and a theory-generating activity
- C. Involves more careful conceptualization and operationalization
- D. More dependent on using deduction to generate specific hypotheses for testing
- E. More reliable and valid

In comparison to surveys and experiments, field research has:

- A. High validity and high reliability
- B. High validity but low reliability
- C. Low validity but high reliability
- D. Low validity and low reliability
- E. None of the above

Role of Observer

- At the extreme, it's hoped to be a completely unobtrusive way to collect research in the field
- Does not want to interfere at all
- Presence should have no impact on environment/behavior of subjects

Some important issues...

- Deception
 - When/If/What you tell (More specifically, the problem of you being there).
- Reactivity
 - The problem that the subjects of social research may react to the fact of being studied, altering their behavior from what it would have been normally.

Continued...

- Staying Objective/Strict Participant
 - Etic Perspective
 - What do you give up with involvement?
- Going Native
 - Emic Perspective
 - Symbolic Realism

Ethical issues involving deception pertain particularly to:

- A. The complete observer role
- B. The complete participant role
- C. Naturalistic studies
- D. Participatory action research

The most serious ethical problems exist for which of the following?

- A. Complete participant
- B. Participant as observer
- C. Observers as participant
- D. Complete observer
- E. Ethnographer

“Going native”, according to your text, is associated with:

- A. Playing the complete observer role
- B. Doing any type of field research
- C. Doing qualitative interview
- D. Playing the complete participant role

Which one is most appropriate for asking questions during field research?

- A. Structured questionnaire
- B. Unstructured questionnaire
- C. Structured interviews
- D. Qualitative interviews
- E. Projective techniques

FIELD RESEARCH PARADIGMS

- Naturalism
 - Based on the assumption that an objective social reality exists and can be observed and reported accurately
 - Ethnography
 - A report on social life that focuses on detailed and accurate description rather than explanation
 - Associate with: Chicago School, “Cornerville” study

FIELD RESEARCH PARADIGMS

- Ethnomethodology
 - Focuses on the discovery of implicit, usually unspoken assumptions and agreements
 - Intentionally breaking social norms
 - You can't be objective of something you aren't outside of
 - Associate with: Garfinkel

FIELD RESEARCH PARADIGMS

- Grounded Theory
 - INDUCTIVE approach that attempts to generate a theory from the constant comparing of unfolding observations
 - Emphasis on research procedures, a bit positivistic
 - Associate with: Glaser and Strauss

FIELD RESEARCH PARADIGMS

- Case Study
 - In-depth examination of a single instance of some social phenomenon
 - Can serve a variety of functions
- Extended Case Study
 - Using case study observations are used to discover flaws in and to improve existing social theories
 - Associate with: Michael Burawoy

FIELD RESEARCH PARADIGMS

- Institutional Ethnography
 - The personal experiences of individuals are used to reveal power relationships and other characteristics of the institutions within which they operate
 - Helps identify/recognize oppressed subjects' experiences
 - Associate with: Dorothy Smith

FIELD RESEARCH PARADIGMS

- Participatory Action Research
 - The people being studied are given control over the purpose and procedures of the research
 - Researcher

CONDUCTING FIELD RESEARCH

- There's no fixed rule for how to go about it
 - Because you're dealing with people, more or less on their terms, field research is required to be fairly adaptive
 - Know what you're studying well enough to be able to constantly adapt and revise your method

CONDUCTING FIELD RESEARCH

- Qualitative Interviewing
 - Based on a set of topics to be discussed in-depth as opposed to standardized questionnaires.
 - Adaptation and flexibility are very necessary
 - Value free
 - It is a normal conversation, but it isn't

CONDUCTING FIELD RESEARCH

- Focus Groups

- A group of subjects interviewed together, presumably prompting a discussion. Perfect for market research.
- Also called group interviewing
- Group dynamics help the discussion move in a variety of different ways, many of which which the researcher might not have thought about.

CONDUCTING FIELD RESEARCH

- Recording Observations
 - Have a good idea of what you're studying so you know what to record, and HOW to record it
 - Be aware that this process will change once you start researching
 - Everybody can change

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Strengths
 - Studying smaller, context-specific behavior
 - Can be more in-depth
 - Relatively inexpensive
- Weaknesses
 - Doesn't speak for large populations
 - Validity
 - Depends on the researcher
 - Reliability
 - You're interpreting something very personal

Ethnography is something used in the naturalism tradition in the same way that breaking the rules is something used in:

- A. Ethnomethodology
- B. Grounded theory
- C. Case studies
- D. Extended case studies

Judy studies new mothers to learn how they coped with their new roles. She looked for patterns, themes, and common categories in her observations, following a systematic set of procedures. Which one?

- A. Ethnomethodology
- B. Grounded theory
- C. Case study
- D. Extended case study

Which approach was originally developed by Dorothy Smith, a scholar of women study, to better understand women's everyday experiences by discovering the power relations that shape those experiences, according to your text?

- A. Institutional ethnography
- B. Participatory action research
- C. Naturalism
- D. Focus groups

Gary did a study of delinquents in Riverside and wanted to understand delinquents as they make sense of their social worlds. He was particularly interested in the taken-for-granted expectations that delinquents followed. Which paradigm?

- A. Ethnomethodology
- B. Participatory action research
- C. Naturalism
- D. Grounded theory

John studied one family over several months to describe interaction patterns in the family. Which paradigm?

- A. Ethnography
- B. Naturalism
- C. Focus group
- D. Case study