

# Analysis of Qualitative Data: Fieldwork (Ethnography)

There are several ways of collecting qualitative data; fieldwork (ethnography) is one of them.

# QI RD v Qt RD

- In Qt RD the idea is to make a bet in advance how things will pan out. We establish a specific set of hypotheses and collect numerical data to test them, using the Hypothetico-Deductive Method
- In QI RD the idea is to find out more about something that is not well known. It may be exotic or it may simply never have been looked at in that way before.
- Ethnomethodology is a “theory” and a “method” but most of all an “approach” or “Middle Range Theory” that emphasizes the “method” of life.

# Ethnographic Fieldwork

- In both soc. & anthro. we do ethnographic fieldwork to collect qualitative data.
- Fieldwork is a general term that includes participant observation & interviewing.
- The key to gathering qualitative data is immersion and “empathy” (*Verstehen*)
- We study the “exotic” (e.g. the deviant)
- We also study the familiar as if it were exotic, viewing “*the familiar as unfamiliar*”.

# Historical-Comparative Sociology (CHS)

- Another QI RD besides Fieldwork is CHS
- Unlike the ethnographer in the field, the CHS cannot go and visit the “site”
- CHS is dependent on historical information, which is used for sociological generalizations
- Max Weber’s “Ideal Type Models” (ITMs)
- John Stuart Mill’s “Method of Comparison”

# Participant Observation

- PO can be either very intensive so that the PO goes “native” or can just involve a very low level of participation
- Observation can also be non-participatory
- PO and just O can be used in Fieldwork or can be separate from Ethnography
- When not in the context of Fieldwork the O or PO may go into the field for very brief periods of time and have very specific goals (e.g. studying Seniors who go on cruises, or Junior Hockey)

# Notes & Coding

- Several kinds of notes: data, analytic, chronological events, personal, maps, charts, “archives”, audio tapes, VHS, etc.
- Different ways of coding: open, closed, axial, selective (e.g. pay special attention to one key idea), outcroppings, surface events, spatial, chronological, etc.
- Narratives – can be constructed a posteriori on the basis of open-ended interviews or a priori as “archetypical scenarios” which constitute working hypotheses about “lives”

# John Stuart Mills (1806-1873)

- Method of Agreement: What is common across cases? How do they agree?
- Positive Cases
- Method of Difference: What is different among cases? How do they differ?
- Negative Cases
- E.g. Theda Skocpol's study of Revolutions in France (1789), Russia (1917) and China (1932) as well as England, Prussia, Japan
- Russia in 1905 was different from 1917 in terms of the cause of the Revolution

# Domain Analysis (DA)

- “Domains” are organizing concepts used at the emic level by “insiders”
- The researcher lists those terms and then establishes the “semantic” (logical) relationship (e.g. “is a kind of” “is used to”)
- Then a “covering label” is applied (e.g. a jail inmate, a heavy drinker)
- This is a qualitative form of “factor analysis” where the labels are “factors”

# Event-Structure Analysis (ESA)

- Key events are isolated and then organized according to temporal sequence
- E.g. Lynching of David Harris – chronology
- Bare-bones map or skeleton, researcher must add contextual details
- Central concern is still with human meaning and the use of “significant symbols” or “signs” (e.g. Black v. White as cultural symbols of morphological race).

# Software for Qualitative Data Analysis

- Software often includes “cross-tabulation” since the underlying logic of measures of association is not restricted to Qt RD
- Text Retrieval = keywords (e.g. boat)
- Code-and-Retrieve programs = assign codes (not in the data) and then match them up with the actual ql data
- Code-based Theory-building = does some of the work of mixing and matching; if-then statements can be tested out over many cases
- NUDIST is a widely used ql data analysis sys.

# Examples of Sociological Ethnographic Fieldwork

- **Whyte**, William Foote. 1981 [1943]. “Tony Beano’s Party” Pp. 180-81 in Street Corner Society: the Social Structure of an Italian Slum. 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. Rev. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. This is not a “slum” today; the “party” is a “**narrative**” reconstruction.
- **Prus**, Robert C. and C. R. D. Sharper. 1991 [1977]. Road Hustler: Grifting, Magic, and the Thief Subculture. U.S.: Richard Kaufman and Alan Greenberg Publishers.
- “**The Double Steer**” involves a “target” or “sucker” who may be a “legit man” or another “hustler”. The target is “cooled out” to preserve friendly relations.

# Bakker's fieldwork and Maps

- One way of keeping notes is to draw maps. The whole “group” (e.g. village) can get involved.
- In his work among the resettled populations of Southeast Sulawesi, Bakker found map making a good way to start collecting qualitative information.
- One specific example is follow-up questions on houses located further away from the water source, in the hills. They were inhabited by people with leprosy who were afraid to come out into the open & did not go to get treatment.

# Hypothesis Testing versus Pattern Discernment

- Hypothesis testing is part of the Hypothetico-Deductive Method.
- You must state your research hypotheses and null hypotheses in advance.
- To do that you must draw on a body of research that helps to clarify which variables are important enough to test.
- In QI RD you are not deducing hypotheses; you are instead inducing patterns in terms of qualitatively important distinctions and words.
- “Grounded Theory” is one aspect of QI RD.