

SKILLS FOR THE FIELD / INTRODUCTION TO FIELDWORK

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Lecture 3

Medical Questionnaires

Last week's challenge:

- To find two anthropological source that touch on each of the following themes:
 - 'reflexivity'
 - 'ethnography'
 - 'participant observation'
 - 'field'
 - 'ethics'
- Take note of the bibliographic references
- Bring to the next class
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Interviews and Informants

REMINDER

Skanda Vale Check List

Skanda Vale will be wet, cold, and probably damp.

You NEED to bring /wear warm clothes, i.e. jumpers, gloves, hats

Some of the rituals take place outside

We are likely to be working outside

Bring waterproof trousers and sturdy shoes

Wellies are useful



Important: Skanda Vale field trip

- You need to bring bedding (duvet/sleeping bag and pillows/blankets etc)

Different Methods of Interviewing

- In-depth to semi-structured interviews
- Focus group interviews
- Surveys
- Collecting life-histories
- (Should be noted that it is possible to ask ethnographic questions via questionnaires)

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Conducting Ethnographic Fieldwork

- Why do it?
- Complexity of human experience
- Wanting to hear from people directly about how they interpret their experiences

Questions to think about when conducting an interview

- What do you need to say at the outset?
- How do you order your questions? (introduction, warm-up, body-text, 'lead-out', closure).
- How do you end an interview?
- How do you prompt for responses?
- How do you keep the interviewee on track?
- How do you record data?
- What should happen immediately following the interview?

Fieldnotes

- Are fieldnotes what ethnographers write before ethnography? (Sanjek 1990: xi)
- Mnemonic devices?
- Create our own documents via fieldnotes (Sanjek 1990: xii)
- Running accounts of events
- Texts
- Reports
- Impression

Ethnographic Interview

- "The ethnographic interview is one strategy to get people to talk about what they know" (Spradely 1979: 9)
- Based on the assumption that knowledge of all cultures is valuable. (Spradely 1979: 10)

Conducting Ethnographic Interviews

- Spradley, J. 1979
- "Ethnography is the work of describing a culture"
- Seeking to understand meanings of actions and events of other peoples
- Understand another way of life/point of view
- Learning from people not studying people

Ethnographers recognise and value

- Regularities and varieties in human social behaviour
- Cultural description
- Cross-cultural comparison

Informants

- Ethnographer can begin with 'informant-expressed needs' (Spradely 1979: 14)
- "Different languages create and express different realities" (Spradely 1979: 17)
- "Work with informants to produce a cultural description" (Spradley 1979: 25)

Informants

- Sources of information
- Teachers for the ethnographers
- "Informants are engaged by the ethnographer to speak in their own language or dialect" (Spradely 1979: 25)
- Need to understand your role/position/motive
- Therefore, there needs to transparency in your research motives

'Respondents' or 'informants'?

- Both answer questions and appear to give information about their culture (Spradely 1979: 31)
- Respondents respond to surveys, questionnaires, or queries presented by an investigator
- The questions and language often arise out of the social scientist's culture
- Ethnography relies on the language of the informant and question's arise out of the informants culture (Spradely 1979: 31)

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Informants

- Informants and ethnographers can have different even conflicting values
- Always a wide range of choices
- "Off the record"
- The informants rights
- Have the right to remain anonymous
- Ensure your work accessible to your informants

Relationships with your informants

- Initiate, develop and maintain a productive relationship
- Careful planning and sensitivity
- The ethnographer needs a 'cluster' of interpersonal skills: asking questions, listening to answers, expressing verbal interest, showing interest by verbal and nonverbal means.

Structured Interviews

- Same questions asked to all
- 'Yes / No' answers
- No scope for varying the questions
- Inflexible
- Researcher-led
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Open Ended Interviews

- Unstructured
- Deviation from the point
- Unexpected outcomes
- Flexible
- Participant-led
- Researcher's input changes according to the interview
- Different power dynamic
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Ethnographic Interviews

- A technique that combines immersive observation and directed one-on-one interviews
- Might involve different interview approaches as a means of talking to people (s)

Avoid the following when interviewing

- Long questions
- Leading or patronising questions
- Apparent bias in questions
- Threatening questions
- Too complex a question

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