

Seminar 7 – In the Field

The purpose of the week

This week looks at the nature of fieldwork and the different issues which can arise for a qualitative researcher in the field.

In the process we will look at observation as a qualitative method. We will also introduce Grounded Theory, which might be considered the most clearly recognised application of phenomenological theory. Finally, we will think about case studies, a particular form of ethnography. They lead us towards the concept of the 'unique case', in which all that matters is the nature of the person, event or phenomenon under investigation. Sometimes case studies can be sociological (such as studying a class of students, for example) or focused on just one individual: their hopes, feelings, fears and experiences. If, for example, one is studying an experience of divination, there would be no question of whether the event is objectively true or subjective and false. Instead, the researcher would be concerned to engage with the individual's experience. We began this exploration in Seminar 6 when we looked at autoethnography.

There will also be time for you to talk about your experiences of fieldwork in your own research project.

Tasks for this week

- Watch the lecture on Overview of Fieldwork Methods by Dr Dawn Collins.
- Watch the lecture on Observation in Research by Dr Dawn Collins.
- Watch the lecture on Fieldwork by Dr Jack Hunter.
- Watch the lecture on Grounded Theory and Case Studies by Carole Taylor.
- Do the required reading.

Required Reading:

Hennink, M. M., Hutter, I. & Bailey, A., *Qualitative Research methods*, (Los Angeles; London: SAGE, 2001/2020). Chapter 10. You can also review Chapter 9. This will step you through the process of grounded theory and help you learn how to handle large amounts of qualitative data.

Optional Reading

As with so much in the social sciences, the essence of Grounded Theory is quite simple (one allows data to shape hypotheses) but the literature on it by the experts is unnecessarily complex: don't allow the reading to put you off!

- Borgatti, Steve, 'Introduction to Grounded Theory', 22 April 2008; <http://www.analytictech.com/mb870/introtoGT.htm> Borgatti is Associate Professor, Dept. of Organization Studies, Boston College, and these are his notes, posted online.

- Glaser, Barney G., 'Constructivist Grounded Theory?', *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, Volume 3, No. 3, September 2002. <https://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/825/1793>

Glaser is one of the originators of Grounded Theory.

Stake, R. E. 'The Art of Case Study Research'. Available Moodle.

Tellis, Winston, 'Introduction to Case Study', *The Qualitative Report*, Volume 3, Number 2, July, 1997. <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol3/iss2/4/>

Tellis, Winston, 'Application of a Case Study Methodology', *The Qualitative Report*, Volume 3, Number 3, September, 1997. <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol3/iss3/1/>