Service Science Workshop on Qualitative Methods in Organizations

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Module 2.1: Appreciating Paradigms and Styles in Qualitative Field Research

Module 2.1.1: Appreciating Paradigms

Overview

- Understanding paradigm differences is important for doing and understanding qualitative research

- The logic of the paradigm affects all parts of the research

- Matching your questions to the appropriate paradigms is an important 1st step in doing research

Some Examples

- **What questions**
  - What factors cause people to adopt patterns of transportation use?
  - What factors are associated with positive and negative experiences of commuting?
- **How questions**
  - How do people make the decision to adopt patterns of transportation use?
  - How does the practice of commuting affect the meaning of commuting?

Two important paradigms

- **Positivist**
  - Deductive
  - Hypothesis testing
  - Variance models
  - Causal relations
  - What questions

- **Interpretive**
  - Inductive
  - Meaning-oriented
  - Process models
  - Causal mechanisms
  - How questions

For more on paradigms, see Mohr, 1982; Lin, 1998, Yanow, 2006.

Either paradigm can be quantitative or qualitative

	Positivist	Interpretive
Quantitative	Common: Use numbers to test hypotheses	Rare: Use numbers to create explanations
Qualitative	Common: Use non-numerical data to test hypotheses	Common: Use non-numerical data to create explanations

Research Sequences

- **Positivist**
  1. Theorize (formulate question and hypotheses)
  2. Gather data (operationalize variables)
  3. Analyze data (test hypotheses)
  4. Write findings

- **Interpretive**
  1. Gather data (follows some but not extensive theorizing)
  2. Analyze data (develop categories)
  3. Theorize (establish significance and relevance of categories
  4. Write findings

Ontological Differences

- Some scholars believe that one paradigm is right and the other is wrong
- This belief is based on a commitment to different ontologies
  - Positivist ontology: one reality that research *discovers*
  - Interpretive ontology: multiple, socially constructed realities that research *explains*
- Ontological differences may be a matter of abstraction, "granularity" or time

Combining Paradigms

- **The paradigm has to fit the question**
- **Interaction of two paradigms strengthens both**
  - **Sequential combining** (Lin, 1998)
    - Positivist research can precede interpretive
      - Find statistical correlation, then explore processes and culturally embedded understandings that underlie correlation
    - Interpretive research can precede positivist
      - Find processes/series of understandings that relate one phenomenon with another, then find out how widespread the relationship is
  - **Embedded combining** (Roth and Mehta, 2002)
    - Positivist analysis informed by contextualized understanding
    - Interpretive data gathering informed by positivist inquiry

Module 2.1.2: Appreciating Styles of Ethnography*

What are the characteristics of ethnography?

- **Sustained direct observation of and interaction with people as they go about their everyday lives**
  - Attention to context
  - Attention to socially constructed character of action and meaning

- **Different "styles" of ethnography accent these characteristics to various degrees**
  - Styles point in different directions with respect to policy and defining service issues/problems

Dimensions of Ethnographic Styles

- Focus
  - Primary phenomena to be understood
  - Culture: whole societies, codes, constructed meanings
  - Behaviors: selected types, forms, and patterns
  - Forms of power: relations of domination, representation

- Interpretive Level
  - How deeply one engages those being studied
  - From face and diagnostic to empathetic to reflexive/revelatory

- Fieldwork Images
  - How one collects data in the field
  - From "Veranda" models to immersion to auto-ethnography

Ethnographic Styles

Style	Focus	Interpretive Level	Fieldwork Image	Exemplars
Holistic	Whole Culture	Face Diagnostic	"Veranda" model	Bronislaw Malinowski Margaret Mead
Formalist	Patterns Codes	Diagnostic	"Hunt and peck" Passing	Erving Goffman Harold Garfinkel
Constructionist	Meaning	Empathetic	Immersion	Clifford Geertz Diane Vaughan
Critical	Relations of domination	Revelatory	Resister Observer	Dorothy Smith Michael Burawoy
Postmodern	Expanded field	Reflexive	Facilitator Auto-ethnographer	James Clifford George Marcus

Closing Thoughts on Ethnographic Styles

- Most styles do not disappear, but wax and wane historically
    - Many scholars mix styles

- How styles can point to different ways of conceptualizing service problems and dynamics
    - Holistic: Service contexts as whole cultures (e.g., What kinds of train station "cultures" are there?)
    - Constructionist: Meanings of service to users and providers (e.g., How do riders come to understand their experiences on trains? How do riders understand changes in transportation services?)
    - Critical: Power and service (i.e., How is social power exercised by riders and officials on trains? How does social inequality manifest itself on trains?)

- Selecting a style is a function of:
    - Academic training and context
    - Goals of research
    - Audiences one wishes to reach
    - Personal temperament

Module 2.2: Ways of Knowing in the Field

Module 2.2.1: Discussion of Observational Exercise

Discussion Questions

- What did you see in your observational exercise?

- What did you look at? Why?

- How did you position yourself in the field as observers?

- How did people respond to you, if at all?

- What did you find interesting?

- What did you choose to include in your fieldnotes?

Module 2.2.2: Participant Observation

Why Engage in Participant Observation?

- **Enables direct access to people's daily routines**
  - Opens up settings, processes, and events that would otherwise be closed

- **Facilitates direct experience**
  - Experience "near" vs. experience "distant" research
  - Practical, emotional, and moral knowledge

- **Builds in a longitudinal component**
  - Gets at the "how" of social life, which we often miss in so much of social science because we jump to the "why" first

Challenges of Participant Observation

- Access and Rapport
  - On access, see Morrill et al (1999) and Feldman et al (2003)
  - On rapport, see Snow and Morrill (2005)

- Strategies for accomplishing it

- Sampling what you observe

- Representing what you observe

Strategies of Participant Observation

- Dual role of "participant" and "observer"
  - Suspension of the "natural attitude" (Schutz 1967)

- How you position yourself in the field determines what you can observe

- Structural positioning (Adler and Adler 1987; Snow and Morrill 2005):

Membership

Peripheral ⟷ Complete
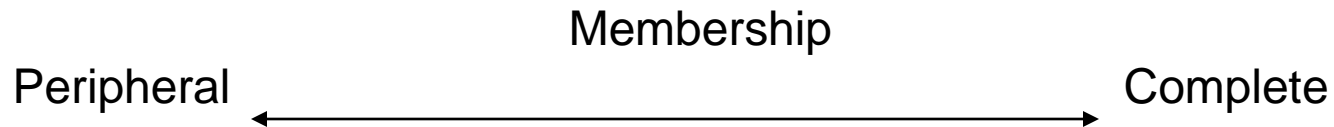
- Examples of role identities in the field (Snow et al 1986):
  - "Buddy researcher"
  - "Controlled skeptic"
  - "Credentialed expert"

- Can use different mixes of positioning and identities in the field depending upon research questions, field conditions, and where you are in your project

What Should You Observe in the Field?
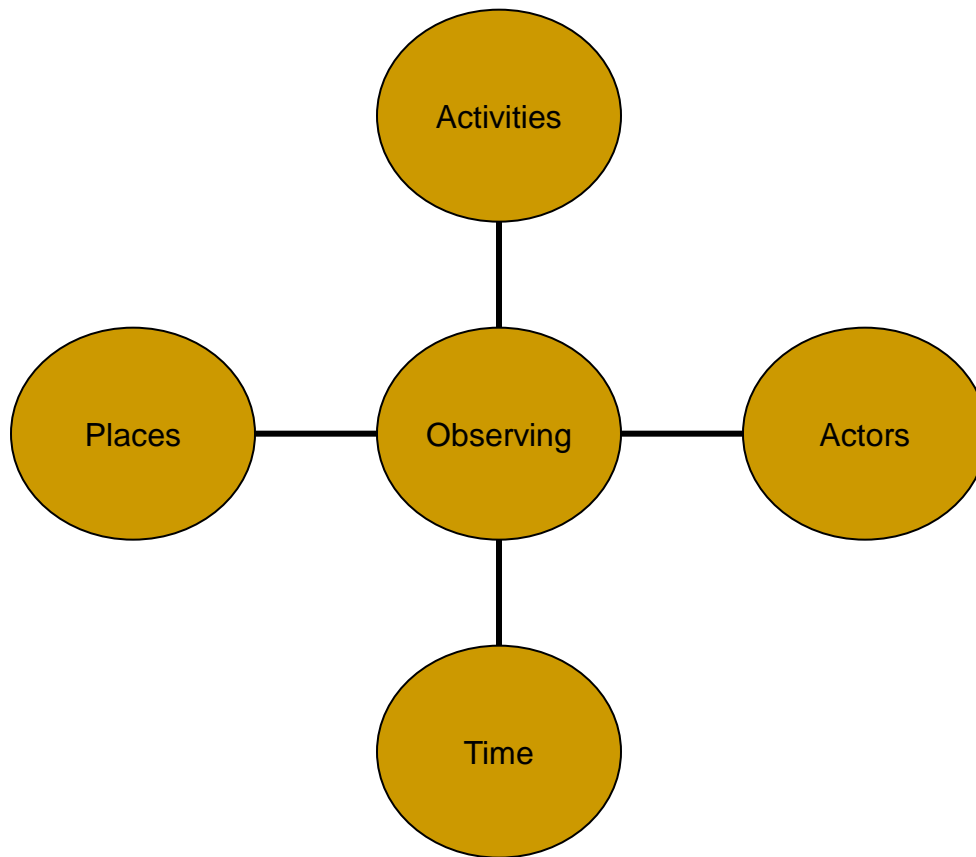
Sampling Strategies

- Random sampling not as useful for qualitative fieldwork

- Purposive sampling
  - Niche/maximum variation (ecological mapping)
  - Typical cases
  - Extreme or deviant cases

- Opportunistic/convenience sampling

- Snowball Sampling

- Theoretical sampling

On purposive sampling, see Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Lofland et al (2005).

Final Tips on Fieldnotes

- **Multiple kinds of fieldnotes**
  - Observational notes
  - Analytic/theoretical notes
  - Methodological notes
  - Reminders

- **Process of recording notes:**
  - Mental jottings → written jottings → elaborated fieldnotes
    - Written jottings are phrases, words, fragments of quotes that you write down that will jog your memory and help you elaborate into a full fieldnote later
    - The question of paraphrasing vs. taped communication
    - For each hour in the field, plan at two yours typing the notes later
    - Important to type elaborated fieldnotes as soon as you can once you're out of the field

- **The importance of organization and retrieval**

For more on writing fieldnotes, see Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (1995).
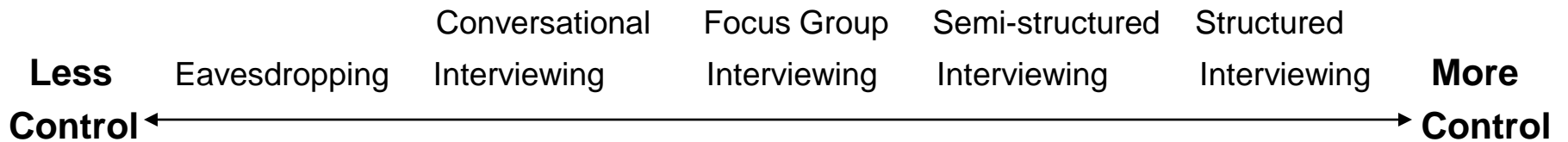
Module 2.2.3: Interviewing

Why Engage in Interviewing?

- To tap into talk as a data source
  - But: Talk does not simply "reflect" social reality

- To understand how informants make sense of their actions
  - Find out what's important to informants

- To give voice to informants
  - Important in writing up fieldwork

- To build rapport with informants

- To have individuals construct their personal biographies and place them in historical contexts (extends context)

Interviewing Control Continuum

		Conversational	Focus Group	Semi-structured	Structured	
Less	Eavesdropping	Interviewing	Interviewing	Interviewing	Interviewing	**More**
Control	←				→	**Control**

- ## Strategies entail different:
  - ❑ Degrees of interviewer *control*
  - ❑ Mixes of perspectives "of" vs. "in" action
  - ❑ Costs (social and material)
  - ❑ Timing within the fieldwork process

Designing Semi-Structured Interviews

- Begin by thinking about what will make sense to the informant

- Structure
    - Best to begin with more descriptive questions and the move to more abstract concerns
    - Fewer questions that cover major themes

- Kinds of questions
    - Descriptive: who, when, what, where, how
    - Structural: descriptions of groups, activities, organizations
    - Contrast: differences between groups, activities, organizations

- Tape Recording
    - If you do so, remain engaged by taking notes

Conducting Semi-Structured Interviews

- "Active" interview should mimic a good conversation with reasonable "give and take" (Heyl 2001)

- Be flexible with respect to ordering of questions and paying attention to cues from informant
  - Cover themes, but not necessarily in predetermined order
  - Interviewing by comment when appropriate

- Limit "yes" and "no" questions

- Importance of nonverbal feedback to informant

For more on interviewing, see Morrill (1995: 229-256).

Sampling Informants

- Be conscious of the information yield from different types of informants (Snow et al 1986):
    - ❑ Veteran
    - ❑ Neophyte/rookie/novice
    - ❑ "True believer"
    - ❑ "Heretic"

- Functions of different informants
    - ❑ Surrogate census taker
    - ❑ Observer's observer
    - ❑ Typical perspective
    - ❑ Atypical perspective

Interview Exercise

- During lunch break, pick a person to interview and a different person you can interview regarding your field observations from the previous afternoon. Each interview should last approximately 10-12 minutes.

- Structure your interview around these themes and questions:
    - Where did you go for your observations?
    - What was going on in the setting?
    - What kinds of service was being given and/or received?
    - Did you observe any trouble in the service processes you identified?

Discussion of Interview Exercise

- How did you structure your interview?

- What kinds of tactics facilitated and/or constrained the flow of conversation?

- How did it feel to be interviewed?

- What did you learn about yourself as an interviewer? As an informant?

Module 2.3: Analysis and Outputs

Role of Analysis

- Two processes of analysis
  - Doubt generation (finding interesting questions)
  - Uncertainty resolution (developing answers)
- Both processes important for positivist and interpretive research
- Processes take place at different stages of positivist and interpretive research

For more on doubt as a generative process see Locke, Golden-Biddle and Feldman, 2008.

Positivist Analysis

- Doubt generation takes place in the analysis of previous studies and the development of hypotheses

- Uncertainty resolution takes place after data gathering
  - Hypothesis testing
  - Focus on similarity/ centrality
  - Control for context
  - Data reduction through category creation

Interpretive Analysis

- **Doubt Generation takes place after data are gathered**
  - Disrupt order of data
  - Develop hunches through coding and memoing
  - Expand connections within data through heuristics and meta-theories
- **Uncertainty resolution takes place at later stages of analysis**
  - Develop holistic, contextual explanations
  - Support explanations through "triangulation"

Analysis Techniques

- Coding (Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 1995; Spradley, 1979)
  - Activities, actors, places, times
  - Meanings (e.g., all the ways of talking about…)
- Memoing (Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 1995)
  - Discussion of ideas generated through coding
- Thought experiments (Abbott, 2004; Feldman, 1995)
  - Heuristics (e.g., lists, reversals)
  - Meta-theories (e.g., semiotics, ethnomethodology, dramaturgy, deconstruction)

Importance of Writing in Analysis and Producing Outputs

- **Multiple moments of writing in qualitative fieldwork:**
  - Field jottings → fieldnotes ←→ data analysis ←→analytic memos ←→ write-ups
  - Fieldworkers "write" back and forth across fieldwork, fieldnotes, data analyses, memos, and write-ups
  - There are intensive, recursive relationships between the later four stages that involve interpretation and translation, and in effect, figuring out the story and "theorized storyline" (Golden-Biddle and Locke 2007)

- **Some pragmatic things to remember:**
  - Importance of fieldnote excerpts and informant voices
  - Importance of "seeing" the argument in the data: how do you know?
  - Importance of being able to recount how you constructed your interpretations

Materials beyond the "text"

- **Traditional focus on "text"**
  - But: Talk does not simply "reflect" social reality

- **The "textual turn"**
  - Deconstruction, production, author and authority

- **The role of other media?**
  - Photographs, video, audio, digital multimedia, designs, artifacts

- **Four "modes"**
  - For the researcher
  - With the researcher
  - From the participants
  - For the broader audience

For the researcher

- Documentation and scene-setting
  - Prompting the memory
  - Putting you back "in the moment"
  - Documentation for later analysis

- Analysis proceeds in much the same way

- But, dangers:
  - Cameras do lie (or at least, mislead)
  - Instruments distance you from the setting
    - In the moment – "oh, I don't need to watch this carefully, I'll get it from video"
  - Instruments intervene in your participation
    - For good and for ill

With the researcher

- **Using materials as part of your interviewing**
  - E.g. Photo elicitation in interviews/focus groups

- **Provoking responses**
  - A/V materials are concrete
  - A/V materials place people in the scene
  - A/V materials encourage interpretation
    - (which is often your object of study)

From the participants

- Having participants themselves generate materials

- Photos, audio recordings, video recordings…

- Literally the "member's point of view"
  - Access to actions, objects, events, places that you cannot directly see

- Examining the process of selection and framing
  - As always, the central question is, "why specifically *this*"?
  - Focus *not* on material as record
  - Focus *instead* on act of communication

For more on "cultural probes," see Gaver et al (1999), Boehner et al (2007)
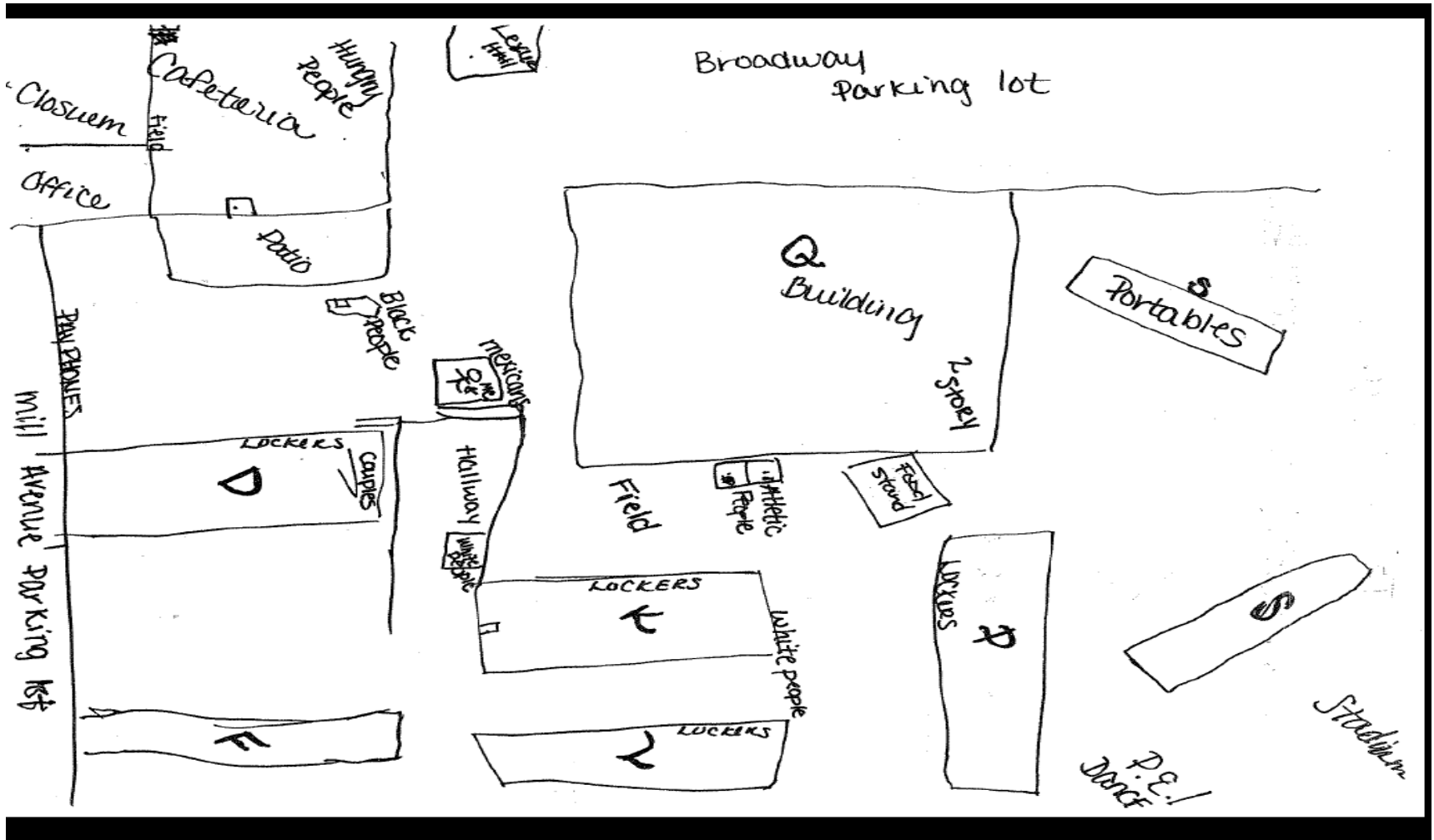
Participant-Generated Materials: Text + Photograph*

"Confined Diversity"

When I consider my reasons for taking this picture, many things come to mind. Such things as the difference in shapes, the contrasts of each color thus illustrating the diversity that is our school. As well as the total view and feeling that I get when looking down upon the buckets in the truck just as I was looking down on the hundreds of students that attend our school. Another way I look at this picture is as we the students are the buckets, every one of us is different in shape and color but the same in one small way. The fence in front of us and the building behind us refers to the faculty, staff, and the security guards keeping the students confined to the school premises only allowing particular students off the premises, thus illustrating the new closed campus rule the students have had to conform to this year.

*Materials produced by a high school student to represent changes in rules and space at her school.

Source: Morrill and Musheno (forthcoming).

Participant-Generated Materials: Drawing

Drawing produced by a student of the physical layout and distribution of social groups on his high school campus.

Source: Morrill and Musheno (forthcoming).

Participant-Generated Materials: Drawing

Drawing produced by a student of his high school campus.

Source: Morrill and Musheno (forthcoming).

For the Broader Audience

- Alternative forms of presentation

- Reaching different audiences
  - Including, importantly, the participants themselves!

- Conveying different messages

- Integrating different voices
  - Explicit about multiple points of view
  - Bringing them together to compare and contrast

- Dangers of curation
  - Still implies point of view in juxtaposition, captioning, selection, organization

Visual Practice and Visual Culture

Sources: Pink (2001)

Visual Practice and Visual Culture

Media in Qualitative Research

- ## The role of aesthetics
  - Not just creativity, not just "prettiness"
  - The valuing of experience
  - The emotional, affective fabric of everyday life

- ## Ways of communicating
  - "Engaging" in output as well as conduct of research

Module 2.4: Acting Upon Qualitative Field Research

Expansions of Qualitative Research

- **New areas of application**
  - Economics
  - Information technology and product design
  - Organizational consulting
  - Public services

- **How to communicate qualitative research?**
  - Making it "actionable"

Communicating Qualitative Research

- **Qualitative research is inherently compelling**
  - Stories, examples, narratives
    - Doesn't look like data to some, but context matters
  - Advantages and disadvantages
    - Drawing people in
    - Making the theoretical contributions clear

- **Generalization**
  - Juxtaposition, not abstraction

For more on communicating see Golden-Biddle and Locke, 1993, 2007; Locke and Golden-Biddle, 1997; Richardson, 1994.

Affective Computing

- "Veiled sentiments" (Abu-Lughod)
  - Emotional performance amongst the Bedouin
    - Code of modesty/reserve, code of honor

- "Unnatural Emotions" (Lutz)
  - Emotion as a cultural category
    - E.g. "song" as justifiable anger

- Emotion as enactment

For more details, see Boehner et al (2005).

Mobile Computing

- **A technological perspective**
  - Connectivity, power, access, context-sensitivity

- **A social perspective**
  - Migration, pilgrimage, tourism, globalization, locality, identity

- **How qualitative research gives us access?**

Mobile Computing

- "Excluded Spaces" (Munn)
  - Spatial experience of indigenous Australians
    - Spatial interdictions
    - Places where there is "no room"
- "Purity and Exile" (Malkki)
  - Narratives of nationality and identity
  - Refugee status as a form of moral purity
- Non-instrumental accounts of mobility

For more details, see Brewer and Dourish (2008).

Shaping Agendas through QR

- **Forms of generalization**
  - Abstraction
    - Moving away from the details
    - Postulating generic categories
  - Juxtaposition
    - Highlighting connections
    - Reframing questions

Shaping Agendas through QR

- The power of QR lies it is specificities
  - The connection to real people and real scenes
  - "the self as an instrument of knowing" (Ortner)

- But at the same time…
  - Ethnographic research frames encounters
    - Between which actors?
  - Encounters between qualitative research and other settings, domains, and topics

For more on ethnographic generalization, see Dourish (2007).

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