

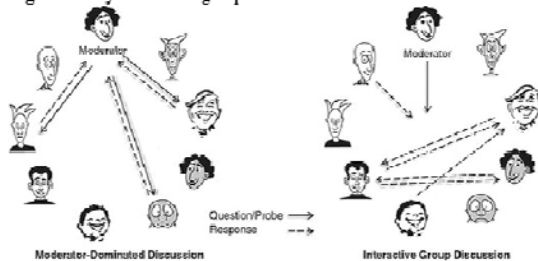
Criminology 321 / Week 10 Qualitative Interactive Methods cont'd



6. Moderator conducts session

- Usually two: note taker and moderator
- Characteristics of good moderator similar to interviewer: personable, curious/interested, neutral, listening/questioning, respectful; can think/respond quickly
- But also need group management skills

Figure 8.6 Styles of focus group moderation



Source: Adapted from Hennink (2007:178)

6. Moderator conducts session

- “A focus group is not an in-depth interview with multiple participants but an interactive discussion between participants” (p.158)
- Various probes mentioned in text that can be used with individuals or group as a whole to engage them, generate discussion
- Activities can also generate discussion, e.g., rank the issues; sort pictures; show and tell

Criminology 321
*** Observation * Ethnography**
*** Field Research**



Observation Defined

- “Observation is a research method that enables researchers to systematically observe and record people’s behaviour, actions and interactions.” (p.170)
- As qualitative approaches affirm, this is best done in context where “real life” behaviour happens

Observational Epistemology

- [E]thnographers typically make this major epistemological point: when they talk about *what people do* they are talking about *what they saw them do under the conditions in which they usually do it*, rather than making inferences from a more remote indicator such as the answer to a question given in the privacy of a conversation with a stranger. [my emphasis]

“The Epistemology of Qualitative Research”

Howard S. Becker

Observational Objectives

- Observation can be used to:
 - explore a new topic of research;
 - provide context to a study through observation of the social setting;
 - describe a specific place or social setting or people’s actions and interactions;
 - understand how people utilize spaces;
 - understand or explain people’s actions in context;
 - discover silent social norms and values;
 - complement other methods of data collection;
 - provide a contextual understanding to the findings of other research methods (e.g. in-depth interviews or surveys). (p.170)

Issues to Consider

- Numerous decisions along the way:
 - Access: gatekeepers, guides
 - Your role
 - What/when/where/who you will observe

Access, Gatekeepers, Guides



Your Role

- Your text distinguishes roles on a continuum of involvement, detachment:
 - Non-participant observation
 - Sometimes on its own; often a first step
 - But can we ever be complete “non-participants”?
 - Participant observation
 - Also known as “ethnography” or “field research”

THE FAR SIDE® By GARY LARSON



"So, you're a real gorilla, are you? Well, guess you wouldn't mind munchin' down a few beetle grubs, would you? ... In fact, we wanna see you chug 'em!"

Your Role

- Four levels of participant observation :
 - Passive participation
 - No interaction; merely observe and record
 - Moderate participation
 - Mixing participation and observation
 - Active participation
 - Doing what others do
 - Complete participation
 - Total involvement; often live on site; *not* “going native”

Observation/Ethnography/Field Research

- May begin with a focus on
 - particular groups – more emphasis on shared culture
 - particular settings – generally these are small and localized
 - particular events of significance
 - oneself (autoethnography)

How? Researchers need to...


- Develop close relationships with people they have not met before;
- Establish rapport; keep an open mind
- Spend a great deal of time in a study context; go “everywhere”
- Take detailed field notes; write down “everything”
- Learn to separate observation from interpretation
- Consider personal risk (e.g., if observing drug users, street gangs)

Understanding “Culture”

- What does “culture” imply?
 - **Community** – Membership. What are the bounds of the community; who is in/out?
 - **Shared rules** – What are the expectations? practices? rituals? traditions?
 - **Socialization** – How is behaviour shaped? rewarded? binged?
 - **Identity** – What does membership mean to them? Prestige? Stigmatization? Belonging?



Where to draw the line?



- “I did not get into the car with Mike because I wanted to learn firsthand about violence,” she wrote. “I got into the car because . . . I wanted Chuck’s killer to die.” Nor is she remorseful. “Looking back, I’m glad that I learned what it feels like to want a man to die – not simply to understand the desire for vengeance in others, but to feel it in my bones,” she explained. (p. 263). That might be a revelatory passage in a memoir, or a plot point in a sequel to *The Departed*, but it is an alarming confession from an ethnographer. (From book review by Steven Lubet)

Conflict Over Sociologist's Narrative Puts Spotlight on Ethnography



NATHAN MANNION FOR THE CHRONICLE

Alice Goffman's account of a Philadelphia neighborhood has set off a debate among sociologists about how she went about her research.

Ethnography

- An example: *Ross Kemp on Gangs*

