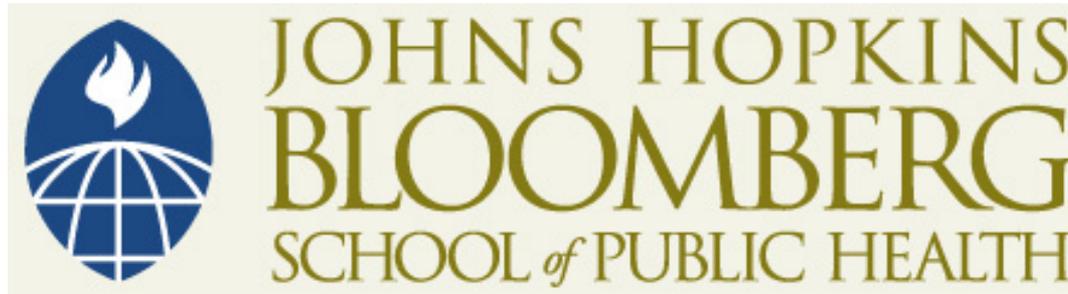


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Case Study & Narrative Analysis

Qualitative Data Analysis
Class Session 4

Case-based Research

- Cases may be people, organizations/ institutions, events/occurrences
- Data may be varied (IDIs, record review, PO or DO)
- Emphasizes depth over breadth, foregrounds context, is often longitudinal
- Long history in natural, medical & social science as well as history & law (not always qualitative)
- Intensive investigation of cases can help us identify phenomena, themes, concepts, or principles from which theory can be developed or practice improved
- Can also be used to support a theory by showing how it plays out in real life

Types of cases

- The extreme (or anomalous) case
 - Describes a very unusual person or situation in order to better understand it. Examining an anomaly also provides opportunity to interrogate what is normative.
 - A case of maternal infanticide in the U.S. and how it is treated by legal system & media. What does this say about cultural norms around motherhood?
- The paradigmatic case
 - Exemplifies certain overarching principles or helps illustrate patterns that may be common
 - The case of soccer “hooliganism” between competing teams at the 1994 World Cup. Overarching themes of nationalism and how national identity is culturally constructed and reinforced through fan activism at sporting events.
- The critical case
 - Chosen specifically in order to develop or test a theory
 - We chose to focus on energy use at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (SPH) in order to explore the research question: how and why is it that in the time of global warming such an educated and socially aware group of people can consume so much energy?

Writing Case Studies

- Balance of description to analysis favors description (60/40 or 70/30)
- Begin with context of the case: what are the issues at play?
- Next, write a rich, thick description of the case
 - If it's an event, what happened (blow by blow), who were the actors, what was their interaction, witness accounts, perceptions
 - If it's a person, who is it? What is their background, history? What information is to be analyzed?
 - If it's an organization, what is its function? How does it operate? Who works there and why? How was it formed?
- Next, describe within case themes
- Next, describe across case themes: similarities/differences (if you have multiple cases)
- Finally, make assertions & generalizations from the case (form a theory, test a theory, and/or make recommendations)

What is Narrative Analysis?

- A type of case-centered research
- Focused on close readings of stories told by participants
- Seeks to understand human experience and/or social phenomena through the form and content of stories analyzed as textual units

- What is a narrative?
 - Relating of experiences or events with temporal and spatial orientation
- What do narratives do?
 - Narratives can help construct individual or group identity, persuade, rationalize, make an argument, teach a lesson, remember, mobilize, offer perspective, entertain, cope with or make sense of disturbing events/misfortune.....what else?
- Did you encounter narratives in your research?

The narrative turn

- Why has narrative become so hot?
 - Postmodernist emphasis on reflexivity, positioning the “self”, understanding identity
 - Social theory begins to emphasize individual agency over social structure
 - Therapeutic culture, understanding the self
 - Rise of oral history as remedy to systemic exclusion of marginalized populations in conventional history

Theme and Structure

- Narrative analysis attends to one or both.
- What is said (themes)
 - Example of how people with rheumatoid arthritis explain why/how they developed this disease
- How it is told (structure)
 - Chronology
 - Epiphanies & events—how ordered?
 - Plot
 - Characters, setting, problem, action, resolution—how described?
 - Example of Vonnie Lee

Another example

I conducted ethnographic fieldwork at the Cristo Rey Jesuit high school in downtown Baltimore. A charter school in its first year, CRJ is dedicated to providing a college preparatory education to children from families with limited incomes. I had multiple meetings with various members of the administration and staff, which drew my interest to the “narrative” Cristo Rey projects about itself and the effect this has on the activities of the institution (Ted Alcorn).