

PREFACE

With its grounding in the “guiding pillars of Access, Equity, Equality, Affordability and Accountability,” the New Education Policy (NEP 2020) envisions flexible curricular structures and creative combinations for studies across disciplines. Accordingly, the UGC has revised the CBCS with a new Curriculum and Credit Framework for Undergraduate Programmes (CCFUP) to further empower the flexible choice based credit system with a multidisciplinary approach and multiple/ lateral entry-exit options. It is held that this entire exercise shall leverage the potential of higher education in three-fold ways – learner’s personal enlightenment; her/his constructive public engagement; productive social contribution. Cumulatively therefore, all academic endeavours taken up under the NEP 2020 framework are aimed at synergising individual attainments towards the enhancement of our national goals.

In this epochal moment of a paradigmatic transformation in the higher education scenario, the role of an Open University is crucial, not just in terms of improving the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) but also in upholding the qualitative parameters. It is time to acknowledge that the implementation of the National Higher Education Qualifications Framework (NHEQF) and its syncing with the National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF) are best optimised in the arena of Open and Distance Learning that is truly seamless in its horizons. As one of the largest Open Universities in Eastern India that has been accredited with ‘A’ grade by NAAC in 2021, has ranked second among Open Universities in the NIRF in 2024, and attained the much required UGC 12B status, Netaji Subhas Open University is committed to both quantity and quality in its mission to spread higher education. It was therefore imperative upon us to embrace NEP 2020, bring in dynamic revisions to our Undergraduate syllabi, and formulate these Self Learning Materials anew. Our new offering is synchronised with the CCFUP in integrating domain specific knowledge with multidisciplinary fields, honing of skills that are relevant to each domain, enhancement of abilities, and of course deep-diving into Indian Knowledge Systems.

Self Learning Materials (SLM’s) are the mainstay of Student Support Services (SSS) of an Open University. It is with a futuristic thought that we now offer our learners the choice of print or e-slm’s. From our mandate of offering quality higher education in the mother tongue, and from the logistic viewpoint of balancing scholastic needs, we strive to bring out learning materials in Bengali and English. All our faculty members are constantly engaged in this academic exercise that combines subject specific academic research with educational pedagogy. We are privileged in that the expertise of academics across institutions on a national level also comes together to augment our own faculty strength in developing these learning materials. We look forward to proactive feedback from all stakeholders whose participatory zeal in the teaching-learning process based on these study materials will enable us to only get better. On the whole it has been a very challenging task, and I congratulate everyone in the preparation of these SLM’s.

I wish the venture all success.

Professor Indrajit Lahiri
Vice-Chancellor

NETAJI SUBHAS OPEN UNIVERSITY
Four Year Undergraduate Degree Programme
Under National Higher Education Qualifications Framework (NHEQF) &
Curriculum and Credit Framework for
Undergraduate Programmes
Course Type: Skill Enhancement Course (SEC)
Course Title: Quantitative Research Methods in Social Science
Course Code: NSE-SO-02

First Print: April, 2025

Printed in accordance with the regulations of the University Grant Commission -
Distance Education Bureau

SPW/I5/D/NETAJI 2025/NSE-SO-02/ 1ST Proof E-Copy 24.03.2025

NETAJI SUBHAS OPEN UNIVERSITY
Four Year Undergraduate Degree Programme
Under National Higher Education Qualifications Framework (NHEQF) &
Curriculum and Credit Framework for
Undergraduate Programmes
Course Type: Skill Enhancement Course (SEC)
Course Title: Quantitative Research Methods in Social Science
Course Code: NSE-SO-02

: Board of Studies:

: Members:

Professor Barnana Guha Thakurta Banerjee,
Director,
School of Social Sciences, NSOU

Dr. Kumkum Sarkar,
Associate Professor in Sociology, NSOU

Shri Ajit Kumar Mondal,
Associate Professor in Sociology, NSOU

Dr. Srabanti Choudhuri,
Assistant Professor in Sociology, NSOU

Shri Anupam Roy,
Assistant Professor in Sociology, NSOU

Retired Professor Sujata Sen,
Department of Sociology, Kalyani University

Professor Suhrita Saha,
Department of Sociology, Presidency University

Professor Piyali Sur,
Department of Sociology, Jadavpur University

Professor Soumyajit Patra,
Department of Sociology, Sidhu Kanho Birsu University

Course Writers

- Units 1-2:** Maitrayee Adak, MA, NET.
- Unit 3 & 18:** Dr. Subhrajit Chatterjee, Assistant Professor & HOD, Sociology, Kashipur Michael Madhusudan Mahavidyalaya, Purulia
- Units 4-5 & 31:** Dr Esha Chatterjee, Assistant Professor of Sociology, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Kalinga University, Raipur.
- Units 6-7:** Dr. Sathi Naik, SACT - 1, Department of Sociology, Women's Christian College, Kolkata.
- Units 8-10:** Dr. Soumitra Sarkar, SACT-I, Department of Sociology, Kabi Sukanta Mahavidyalaya, Bhadreswar, Hooghly.
- Units 11-12:** Dr. Arunima Dey, Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work, Centre for Distance and Online Education, Rabindra Bharati University.
- Unit 13:** Dr. Reshma Anjum, Associate Professor at Vidyasagar School of Social Work, Affiliated to Vidyasagar University.
- Unit-14 & Unit-15:** Dr. Tapas Pal, Post-Doctoral Fellow, Eudoxia Research University, USA.

Course Editor

Dr. Srabanti Choudhuri Assistant Professor, Discipline of Sociology, NSOU

Format Editor

Dr. Srabanti Choudhuri Assistant Professor, Discipline of Sociology, NSOU

Notification

All rights reserved. No part of this Self-Learning Material (SLM) may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from Netaji Subhas Open University.

Ananya Mitra

Registrar (Additional Charge)



Course Title: Quantitative Research Methods in Social Science

Course Code : NSE-SO-02

Unit 16	Doing qualitative research: Introduction to qualitative research	9
Unit 17	Qualitative research: Theories and practices of qualitative research	18
Unit-18	Ethics and politics of qualitative research	29
Unit 19	Methods of qualitative research: ethnography	52
Unit 20	Methods of qualitative research: case-study	67
Unit 21	Mixed Method Research in Sociology	76
Unit 22	Mixed Method Research: Theoretical Underpinnings, Application and Future Trends	97
Unit 23	Feminist Discourse: Women and Gender Studies.	111
Unit 24	Feminist Methods and Methodology	133
Unit 25	Understanding Data in Social Sciences	146
Unit 26	Data collection methods (I): Interviews	153
Unit 27	Data collection methods (II): Observation	162
Unit 28	Data collection methods (III): Documents	171
Unit 29	Reflexivity in qualitative research	179
Unit 30	Qualitative data analysis (I): Transcription and data management	190
Unit 31	Qualitative data analysis (II): Thematic analysis	203
Unit 32	Content Analysis and Narratives	218
Unit 33	Academic Writing and Research Report	220

SEC-02

Qualitative search methods in Social Science

A hand-drawn blue line that underlines the text "Qualitative search methods in Social Science". It starts with a horizontal segment under "Qualitative", then turns vertically down and then horizontally right to underline the rest of the phrase.

Unit 16 : Doing qualitative research: Introduction to qualitative research

Structure

- 16.1 Learning Objectives**
- 16.2 Introduction**
- 16.3 History of Qualitative Research**
- 16.4 Features of Qualitative Research**
- 16.5 Qualitative Research Design**
- 16.6 Conclusion**
- 16.7 Summary**
- 16.8 Questions**
- 16.9 References**
- 16.10 Suggested Readings**

16.1 Learning Objectives

- To learn the history and tradition of qualitative research
- To gather knowledge of qualitative research and its features
- To understand the significance of qualitative studies in social science research with a critical appreciation

16.2 Introduction: What is qualitative research?

Qualitative research is a popular method of research used in several social sciences like sociology, anthropology, psychology and the like. This type of research refers to ‘meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and description of things [Lune and Berge, 2017: 12]. It tries to understand people in their natural/ social settings and how they create meanings out of their social world. In many cases quantitative research methods like a survey research or experimental research which tries to seek the objective truth or knowledge might have their limitations while dealing with the complex social world of human beings. This is because of the highly subjective nature of our society. In such situations, researchers feel the need to adhere

to qualitative research. Qualitative research originated to serve the purpose of the colonizers in the western world to understand foreign cultures in other parts of the world [Denzin and Lincoln, 2007]. The field or ethnographic research forms a major basis of qualitative research whereby researchers try to study people's attitude, behavior, customs, rituals and other aspects of their social lives in their own natural habitat. This method has been widely used by anthropologists and sociologists. Qualitative research helps one to interpret the underlying intentions or motives of people's actions. It might also reveal what people think, feel, the different emotions they undergo in a particular situation or even their perceptions of their own reality.

Qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem [Creswell, J. 2009]. William F. Whyte's (1955) classic work on the street gangs in a city of eastern U.S.A in the 1940s or Goffman's (1961) study of psychiatric clinics and prisons [Flick, U et al. eds. 2004: 4] are some pioneering works in social science that was possible through qualitative research methods. Hence qualitative research is a broad arena which can help the researcher to have an in-depth understanding of any social phenomenon. Human society is a complex social world comprising of organizations, institutions, social groups, associations and communities. Likewise human relationships and interactions are also far more complex than one can imagine. A person may react very differently in two different situations. Qualitative research is helpful to decipher such meanings that people assign to their actions. It can help to analyze and understand the complexities of social life. Now let us look at the history of qualitative research.

16.3 History of qualitative research

The history of qualitative research dates back to the era of positivism which dominated social sciences at that point. Any social science research is based on epistemology (theory of knowledge) and methodology (procedures of undertaking research). Social sciences traditionally were dominated by the epistemology of positivism. The research method obtained by social sciences like sociology relied heavily on objectivity and positivist method of enquiry. Social reality was perceived to be an external force acting upon the individuals. The positivist approach was based on the assumption that 'there is a reality out there to be studied, captured, and understood...' [Guba, 1990; Denzin and Lincoln, 2007:15]. The positivist and objective knowledge were considered to be scientific knowledge. Positivists believed that social phenomena can also be studied in the similar method followed by the natural sciences.

Positivism can be traced in the writings of early classical sociologists like August Comte who was also the founding father of sociology. Comte, a French philosopher of the 19th century believed that social sciences in order to be scientific must follow the methods of the natural sciences and this should be the positivist method. Positivism as the foundational paradigm was based upon objective knowledge. The post positivist phase represented thinking after positivism which challenged the traditional notion of the absolute truth of knowledge [Philips and Burbules, 2000; Creswell, 2009]. The post positivist phase was that of blurred genres [Denzin and Lincoln, 2007] which created the need for a more interpretive and critical theory. Soon the researchers felt the need for a more subjective understanding of social reality.

Qualitative research was based on the new interpretive method used in studies like hermeneutics, structuralism, semiotics, phenomenology, cultural studies and also feminism [ibid:4]. At one point of time there was a phase of crisis of representation as Denzin and Lincoln noted whereby humanities and social sciences collaborated together leading to multiple research practices under the umbrella of qualitative research. In 'Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials' (2007) Denzin and Lincoln drew a trajectory of the history of qualitative research in eight phases. Each of these phases reflect specific historical moments and helps one to understand the evolution of qualitative research. However, each of the phases are not water tight but are a general form of evolution of qualitative research.

The first phase is referred to as the traditional period beginning from the 1900s and ending around the 1950s. This long period although was the period of scientific positivism, it was also a period of colonialism. During this phase researchers from the west looked forward to study the mysterious unknown cultures of the east which were also the 'Other' cultures. Works of Bronislaw Malinowski and Radcliffe Brown on several tribal groups of Asia and Africa paved the way for ethnographic studies. Malinowski, Radcliffe Brown, Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson's ethnographic works are still studied by scholars of anthropology and sociology.

The next phase of qualitative research was the modernist period which left behind the phase of the lone ethnographer [Denzin and Lincoln, 2007] to more of a participant observer. Several new theories originated like ethnomethodology, phenomenology, feminism and critical theory which broadened qualitative research. The modernist phase also saw the emergence of the grounded theory approach of Glaser and Strauss (1967). The third phase was the phase of blurred genres (1970-1986) featuring several major theoretical methods and paradigms like symbolic interactionism, phenomenology, ethnomethodology, critical theory, neo-Marxism, structuralism, feminism and even racial/ethnic paradigms. Qualitative research incorporated multiple techniques of data

collection as well [ibid: 23]. During this phase Clifford Geertz's *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973) saw the use of 'thick description' for particular events, rituals and customs [ibid].

The blurred genre indicated a blurring of distinction between social sciences and humanities in their theories and methods of analysis. The fourth phase was the Crisis of Representation from the mid-1980s. In this phase several works of research focused on gender, class and race. Qualitative research also came to be questioned for issues of validity and reliability [ibid]. In the next four phases ethnographic research and the researcher's position became further questionable.

The representational crisis was a major criticism on ethnographic research and the role of the researcher. It was believed that the researcher was responsible for creating the social context in which lived experiences were captured. The legitimization crisis followed the representational crisis on grounds of validity, reliability and generalizability check [ibid]. Traditional ethnographic methods were replaced by other methods like action and participatory research.

16.4 Features of qualitative research

Qualitative research has several characteristics or features that make it a distinctive field of study. These add to the many reasons of choosing qualitative research for studying social phenomenon.

- a. First and foremost, qualitative research is never bounded by any one research method but follows a multiple methodological practice. There is no particular theoretical paradigm for qualitative research neither does any particular mode of study seek the use of qualitative methods. Techniques like semiotics, narratives, content analysis, ethnography, interview method, psychoanalysis are all parts of qualitative research. "Qualitative research is an interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary and sometimes counter disciplinary field. It crosscuts the humanities and the social and physical sciences [Nelson et al. 1992; ibid:10].
- b. Due to its interdisciplinary characteristic and multiple methodologies, qualitative research is used popularly across different social science disciplines like sociology, anthropology, psychology, political science, gender studies along with several professional fields like education, nursing, marketing, communication studies, urban planning etc. [Yin, 2016].
- c. Qualitative research will enable the researcher to locate people's experiences in their real world without subjecting them to any controlled environment. Qualitative

researchers collect data in the field at the site where participants experience the issue or problem under study. Researchers always want to study people act and react in their natural settings [Creswell, 2009: 175]. Qualitative research can study everyday life situations of the people through their diaries, journals, photographs, blogs and vlogs among others.

- d. Qualitative research never undermines the social, political, economic or other contexts within which a social event or phenomenon takes place [ibid]. This type of research can be easily incorporated to study specific individual behaviour through case studies, small group behaviour or interactional forms or even mundane everyday life situations.
- e. Another unique feature of qualitative research is that it tries to locate multiple realities and not just one objective reality [ibid]. “Qualitative research is an iterative process in which improved understanding within the scientific community is achieved by making new significant distinctions resulting from getting closer to the phenomenon being studied” [Aspers and Corte 2019; Gautam and Gautam, 2005: 151].
- f. Qualitative researchers use the particularist idiographic method [Denzin and Lincoln, 2007]. Those who engage in this form of enquiry support a way of looking at research that honors an inductive style, a focus on individual meaning, and the importance of rendering complexity of a situation [Creswell, 2007; 2009]. Inductive data analysis is yet another feature of qualitative research which tries to work on the patterns, themes and categories from the bottom up by organizing the data into increasingly more abstract units of information [ibid].
- g. Qualitative research is known to focus on particularity rather than generalizability [Greene & Caracelli, 1997; Creswell, 2009: 193]. Qualitative researchers also focus on thick descriptions which gives a detailed account of the shared experiences of individuals and also the field situation [ibid].
- h. Role of the researcher in qualitative research is very vital. Researcher is highly instrumental in collecting data. The researcher collects data through examining documents, observing behaviour or interviewing participants [Creswell, 2009: 175]. The researcher also undertakes several ethical issues while identifying the social, cultural, economic and status of the respondents under study. Gaining entry to a research site and the ethical issues that might arise are also elements of the researcher’s role [ibid]. Entry into research sites is usually gained through a

gatekeeper who is an individual who has access to the field or can establish connections between the researcher and the field.

16.5 Qualitative Research Design

Any type of research will follow a research design. Research designs are blue prints of a research that helps the researcher to progress based on the preconceived steps of research. It provides the researcher with a definite plan of action and also helps to steer the research in a proper planned method. Every research has a specific research design. Research designs for qualitative research are different from that of quantitative research. Qualitative researches are mostly exploratory in nature where the researcher's objective is to explore the field situation in quest for new source of knowledge and information about people's behaviour and practices. In case of exploratory researches, the research design should follow a specific sampling procedure. Sampling is the method by which the researcher chooses the respondents or the population for his study. In most qualitative researches sampling method is mainly purposive in nature or depends on the judgement of the researcher. At times availability of respondents also becomes a major concern for the researcher especially while dealing with sensitive research issues like prostitution, juvenile delinquency, victims of rape or domestic violence and the like. The objectives of qualitative research-based study are formed through theoretical perspectives. Data collection and recording of the data in qualitative research can also be challenging for the researcher. Often informed consent becomes essential to record an interview. Story telling and narratives can also be important sources of data recording in qualitative studies. In case of qualitative research design, the initial plan for research may change, shift or alter. The researcher after entering the field might feel the need to take on a new course of action which was not in the plan earlier. The key idea behind qualitative research is to learn about the problem or issue from participants and to address the research to obtain that information [Creswell, 2009: 176]. Hence a proper thought out and flexible research design is very important for qualitative research.

16.6 Conclusion

Qualitative research is a field of study which tries to gather the perception of the people about their social lives, realities and surroundings. Qualitative research always

tries to get answer to questions of how and why things happen the way they do. Qualitative researchers have a major role to play as eliciting data or information from the study can be quite challenging for the researcher. Qualitative research is highly diverse and versatile in nature where the researcher has a wide array of choices and flexibility to collect his data. the focus of such studies is always the individual and the narratives he puts forward to make sense of his reality. Qualitative research is a field of study which is based upon subjective interpretation of the data collected. However, it also calls for certain checks on reliability and validity of the data. Although the focus of qualitative research is different from that of quantitative research methods, one must realize that qualitative and quantitative approaches are not airtight compartments but rather there can be an easy flow between the two. Due to its multiple approach method qualitative research can also incorporate positivist approaches within its study.

16.7 Summary

This unit starts with a brief introduction to qualitative research which is a research method that intends to study people in their natural setting. Qualitative research is an amalgamation of several different types of research methodologies and techniques of data collection. This type of research follows the interpretative method of analysis and looks into the subjective points of view of the respondents in their study. The roots of qualitative research can be traced to the anthropological studies of the colonial era. Over a period of time qualitative research have become a significant research method for several fields of social science like culture studies, critical studies, gender, racism, queer theory, marginalized communities and the like in order to capture the multiple realities and complexities of social life. The unit tries to provide a holistic description of the features or characteristics of qualitative research along with the uniqueness of its research design.

16.8 Questions

1. Answer in detail.

- a. What do you understand by qualitative research and what are its feature?
- b. Explain the historical tradition that help develop qualitative research.
- c. Discuss the significance of qualitative research in social sciences.

2. Answer in moderation.

- a. Discuss the phase of the lone ethnographer in qualitative research.
- b. How does the interpretivist paradigm help shape qualitative research?
- c. What are the major theoretical paradigm that helped shape qualitative research?

3. Answer in short.

- a. What is particularistic idiographic method?
- b. What is the role of the researcher in qualitative research?
- c. What does subjective interpretation mean?

16.9 References

1. Alexander, Victoria D. 2008. Analysing Visual Materials in Nigel Gilbert (ed). Researching Social Life. London, Los Angeles, New Delhi: Sage publications: Singapore. Pp 462-480
2. Babbie, Earl. 2004. The Practice of Social Research. Australia, Canada, Singapore: Thomson, Wadsworth
3. Baker, Theresa L. 1993. Doing Social Research. London, New Delhi: McGraw Hill publisher
4. Barbour, Rosaline S and John Schostak. 2005. Interviewing and focus groups in Bridget Somekh and Cathy Lewin (ed). Research Methodologies in Social Sciences. New Delhi: Vistaar publications
5. Bergmann, Jorg R. 2008. Conversation Analysis in U. Flick et al. (ed). A Companion to Qualitative Research. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications
6. Creswell, John W. 2009. Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Method Approaches. New Delhi: Sage publications
7. Denzin, Norman K and Lincoln, Yvonna S.(ed). 2007. Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore: Sage publication
8. Eatherly, Sara and Ann Cronin. 2008. Narrative Analysis in Nigel Gilbert (ed). Researching Social Life. London, Los Angeles, New Delhi, Singapore: Sage publications. Pp 420-439
9. Fielding, N. 2008. Ethnography in Nigel Gilbert (ed). Researching Social Life. London, Los Angeles, New Delhi, Singapore: Sage publications. Pp 267-284

10. Fontana, Andrea and James. H. Frey, 2007. *The Interview: From Neutral Stance to Political Involvement* in Denzin, Norman K and Lincoln, Yvonna S.(ed). 2007. *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore: Sage publication
11. Gautam, Vipul K and Jaya Gautam. 2023. *Qualitative Research Approaches in Social Sciences*. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/376797176> Qualitative Research Approaches in Social Sciences [visited on 27.07.2024]
12. Hodkinson, P. 2008. *Grounded Theory and Inductive Research* in Nigel Gilbert (ed). *Researching Social Life*. London, Los Angeles, New Delhi, Singapore: Sage publications. Pp 81-100
13. Hildenbrand, B. 2004. *Anselm Strauss* in U. Flick et al. (ed). *A Companion to Qualitative Research*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage publications
14. Lune, Howard and Bruce L Berg. *Qualitative Research Methods for Social Sciences*. England: Pearson education system
15. Turner, Jonathan H. 1987. *The Structure of Sociological Theory*. Jaipur: Rawat Publications
16. Winter, Rainer. 2004. *Cultural Studies* in U. Flick et al. (ed). *A Companion to Qualitative Research*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage publications
17. Yin, Robert K. 2016. *Qualitative Research: From Start to Finish*. New York, London: The Guilford Press

16.10 Suggested Readings

1. Babbie, Earl. 2004. *The Practice of Social Research*. Australia, Canada, Singapore: Thomson, Wadsworth
2. Baker, Theresa L. 1993. *Doing Social Research*. London, New Delhi: McGraw Hill publisher
3. Creswell, John W. 2009. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Method Approaches*. New Delhi: Sage publications
4. Denzin, Norman K and Lincoln, Yvonna S.(ed). 2007. *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore: Sage publication

Unit 17 : Qualitative Research: Theories and practices of qualitative research

Structure

- 17.1 Learning Objectives**
- 17.2 Introduction**
- 17.3 Theoretical perspectives of Qualitative Research**
- 17.4 Practices of doing qualitative research**
- 17.5 Conclusion**
- 17.6 Summary**
- 17.7 Questions**
- 17.8 References**
- 17.9 Suggested Readings**

17.1 Learning Objectives

- To get acquainted with the different theoretical perspectives of qualitative research
- To gain familiarity with the practices of qualitative research
- To learn the various methods that are employed in qualitative research

17.2 Introduction

Qualitative research is a significant method of studying social phenomena in various social science disciplines including sociology. Sociology is the study of human social groups, processes and structures that are created by human beings themselves. Sociology is also a subject that tries to decipher the meaning behind the actions that people do in everyday life; to look at familiar things in an unfamiliar way and also perceive the meanings people attach to their known surroundings. Human society is a highly complex space and the objective of sociology is often to make sense of these complexities. Human beings are curious to understand and make sense of their everyday experiences and this sense of curiosity forms the basis of social science research [Marvasti, 2004]. The need for qualitative research is felt because at times a general survey with a set

of questions in a questionnaire fail to capture the subtleties of social life. Social science researchers in due course of time have understood the importance of debunking people's actions and interactions within social groups to define a particular situation.

“A theory is an interrelated set of constructs (or variables) formed into propositions, or hypotheses, that specify the relationship among variables (typically in terms of magnitude or direction). A theory might appear in a research study as an argument, a discussion, or a rationale, and it helps to explain (or predict) phenomena that occur in the world” [Creswell, 2009: 51]. Like quantitative research, qualitative researches use theory to build explanations about social phenomena [Creswell, 2009]. The practice of research is often influenced by several philosophical ideas [Slife and Williams, 1995; Creswell, 2009]. Three major paradigms that helped shaped qualitative research methodologies are post positivism, constructivism and interpretivism. Post positivism following the scientific empirical generalizable tradition of knowledge created the scope for a more value-free findings of research. The constructivists try to look at social reality as socially constructed by the people themselves. Social constructivism is also seen as a major theoretical perspective which believes that individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences which are directed towards objects or things. The idea of constructivism can be traced to Karl Mannheim and found in the works of Berger and Luckmann's (1967) *Social Construction of Reality* and Lincoln and Guba's (1985) *Naturalistic Inquiry* [Creswell, 2009: 8]. Individuals' subjective experiences are formed out of their social interactions with social groups. The interpretivist paradigm would focus on understanding the human experiences, valuing unique perspectives and utilizing methods like narrative analysis and content analysis to understand the complexities of interpretation [Williamson, 2006; Gautam and Gautam, 2023: 150].

17.3 Theoretical Perspectives in qualitative research

It is needless to say that qualitative research is based on different theoretical positions. In case of qualitative research, the researcher is the center point or 'instrument for data collection' [Baker, 1993]. This makes qualitative research prone to human biases and value-laden positions. Baker (1993) in this regard discusses the standpoint theory which implies value free research as the researcher is expected to construct their own standpoints through their lived experiences. 'Standpoint theory tries to uncover the meaning of the social world as it is experienced by people who may have been

defined (or held back) by their race, gender, or nationality, and it attempts to retrieve and place value on the meaning of this lived experience' [Baker. 1993: 251].

Qualitative research can be grouped under three broad theoretical positions-

- a. Symbolic interactionism and phenomenology
- b. ethnomethodology and structuralism
- c. psychoanalytical positions [Flick U, et al. eds. 2004].

Phenomenological research can be traced to the German concept of *Verstehen* developed by Dilthey, a German philosopher in the 19th century. The German literary meaning for *Verstehen* is to 'understand'. *Verstehen* in social science methodology indicates "understanding" or establishing meaning from the point of view of the participants in a social environment [Baker, 1993]. German sociologist Max Weber believed that "sociology is that science which aims at the interpretative understanding of social behaviour in order to gain an explanation of its causes, its course and its effects" [Weber 1964; Turner, J 1987: 323]. Edmund Husserl and Alfred Schutz later developed phenomenological theory and incorporated it into interactionist perspective.

Phenomenological studies are based on interpretive understanding of people's lives. It is believed that social phenomena can be explained by the actions of individuals and the subjective meaning they bear for the actors themselves. Phenomenologists therefore try to unfold and reconstruct the meanings of one's experiences. By understanding people's lived experiences, the philosophical paradigm of phenomenology can be implemented as a method to study small groups of subjects to identify patterns and relationships of meaning [Moustakas, 1994; Creswell, 2009]. Phenomenological studies try to address issues in social, political and cultural contexts [Miller and Crabtree, 1992; Yin, 2016].

Pragmatism as a worldview arises out of actions, situations, and consequences rather than antecedent condition like in post positivism. Pragmatists try to use various approaches to look at a social problem [Creswell, 2009]. Pragmatism derived out of the works of Peirce, James, Mead and Dewey [Cherryholmes, 1992; Creswell 2009]. Pragmatists like Dewey and Mead focused on the human mind and the way it dealt with the social conditions of life. Symbolic interactionism, a school of thought widely employed in qualitative research, developed out of works of American sociologists and social psychological theorists like Dewey, Mead, Goffman and others. Symbolic interactionists focus on social interactions. Their major concern was to understand the link between individuals and the relationship individuals share with society.

Symbolic interactionism focuses on the way human beings create symbols in order to exist and adapt to their social world. “Society or relatively stable patterns of interaction, is seen by interactionists as possible only by virtue of people’s capacities to define situations, and most particularly to view themselves as objects in situations [Turner, J 1987: 336]. Later interactionists like Robert Park shifted attention to the social roles that individuals play within the larger social structures.

Ethnomethodology another theoretical perspective was concerned about understanding how people make sense of their external reality. Following phenomenological tradition ethnomethodology can be traced to interactionism of Herbert Blumer trying to locate the ways in which people construct meanings within interacting situations. Goffman’s dramaturgical approach dealing with the way people try to create an impression of themselves in a social situation holds significance to ethnomethodology. Ethnomethodology believe that people are always trying to maintain the social order through their interactions. The rules, norms and values that exist in every human society are maintained by individuals themselves through their methods of interaction.

“For ethnomethodologists, emphasis is on the methods employed by those under study in creating, maintaining, and altering their presumption that a social order actually exists out there in the real world” [ibid: 394]. This theoretical position was founded by Harold Garfinkel in the 1960s who was of the view that social reality is created by the actors themselves. ‘It is only in everyday practical action that social reality is realized’ [Bergmann, J 2004]. Garfinkel’s ethnomethodology tried to question Talcott Parsons’s concept of social order and structural functionalism.

Structuralist or psychoanalytic theories have also contributed to the qualitative research theoretical paradigms. These theories ‘proceed from an assumption of latent social configurations and of unconscious psychic structures and mechanisms [Flick, U et al. 2004: 5].

As Creswell (2009) noted, qualitative researchers always use theoretical lens or perspectives which helps to form questions and collect and analyze data. Apart from these major theoretical paradigms, qualitative research also gained shape in various fields of research like the cultural studies, gender and feminist studies. Cultural Studies was first developed at the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in the 1960s. The focus of cultural studies is to study culture in the context of power and politics [Winter, R. 2004: 118]. Cultural studies according to Stuart Hall (1990) enables the people to understand what is happening and provide strategies for survival

and assistance [ibid]. Cultural studies include several qualitative research methods like semiotics, participant observation, narratives and focus groups [ibid].

Feminist theory is a major paradigm which is based upon qualitative research. Feminist theory and research have focused on gender differences and how they relate to the rest of social organization [Babbie, E. 2004]. The feminist research methodologies have been found to counter the positivist and post positivist theories which speaks mostly about the male dominated society. Most of the knowledge produced in the social world depicts the reality of a male dominated society. Feminist researchers use a combination of theories used by mainstream researchers in their study.

Queer theory focusses on individuals who call themselves lesbians, gays, bisexuals or transgender. Qualitative research based on queer theory tries to understand the social situation of these people whose voices and opinions are often suppressed by society and who fall in the groups of marginalized people [Gamson, 2000; Creswell, 2009].

17.4 Methods and Practices of doing qualitative research

There are several ways or methods of doing qualitative research. Each of the methods employed by qualitative researchers are based upon the different theoretical paradigms. The theoretical paradigms are like the researchers' lenses that shape the research process which also guides the choice of methods to be used for the study [Gautam and Gautam, 2023]. However, while popular belief goes that positivist and post positivist theories shape quantitative research methods and the constructivist and interpretivist theories are useful for qualitative research, several scholars have indicated that such a distinction is not water tight. 'A paradigm establishes the philosophical basis for research, shaping how researchers conceptualize and conduct their studies [Smith et al. 2002, Gautam and Gautam, 2023: 150].

Qualitative research is done through several research methods like ethnography, case studies, grounded theory approach, interviews, personal experience, observational studies and also interactional and visual texts [Denzin and Lincoln, 2007]. W.I Thomas and Znaniecki, Robert Park conducted several studies on attitudes of people and other community-based studies under the Chicago school respectively. Other famous researchers to undertake such qualitative methods like ethnography, visual images, narratives and interview methods include names like George, Herbert Mead, E.W Burgess, Everett C. Huges, Louis Wirth, Anselm Strauss among many [Fontana and Frey, 2007: 122].

Ethnographic research became popular as researchers tried to gain first hand data or experience from social groups. Ethnographic research is a type of qualitative research where the researcher gathers data directly from the field. In ethnographic studies researchers study an intact cultural group in a natural setting over a prolonged period of time by collecting, primarily, observational and interview data [Creswell, 2007; 2009] and is different from data collected from experimental research and clinical trials. This data is collected by deploying various methods out of which the most common is that of observation. The researcher collects information about the field through mere observation of the natural surrounding around him. The researcher tries to keenly observe the social and cultural lives of the people in their natural setting [Baker, 1993]. Researchers doing ethnography wishes to capture the symbolic meaning people give to their own experiences. To understand such behavior the researcher must adopt the perspective of the members, in an effort to see things as they do [Fielding, N 2008:268]. Ethnography is also a process by which the researcher blends himself with the group of community under the study. From learning the language to making a detailed study of the field before entering the field situation, the ethnographer needs to be fully prepared. For the ethnographer at times role taking becomes important in order to get a close vision of the group. At times in case of hostile situations from the group the researcher can also undertake covert observations. In case of overt observation, access to the group is gained with the help of a gatekeeper [ibid:272]. The ethnographer must be well aware of what he is observing. A keen observer would not like to miss the relationships which people share not amongst themselves but also with the social organizations and institutions that they are part of. Many a times verbal behaviour in the form of conversations or dialogues and also interviews can serve as important sources of data giving meaning to the field situation [Baker, 1993].

Grounded Theory method was developed by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (1967) in opposition to the grand theories of Marx, Durkheim, Weber and Parsons and the deductive method of social science reasoning. Grounded theory refers to the theoretical explanations about the social world that would emerge from empirical data [Hodkinson, 2008: 82]. Grounded theory reflects a constructivist epistemology that recognizes the subjectivity and socially constructed nature of knowledge [Marsahll and Rossman, 2014; Gautam and Gautam, 2023: 159]. According to Strauss, ‘theoretical concepts which are developed during an investigation are discovered in the data and have to prove themselves in the data [Hildenbrand, 2004: 18]. Grounded theory is based on inductive reasoning in which case theories emerge directly from the data without any

preconceived notions or existing theoretical frameworks [Gautam and Gautam, 2023: 159]. According to Strauss, ‘theoretical concepts which are developed during an investigation are discovered in the data and have to prove themselves in the data [Hildenbrand, 2004: 18]. Grounded theory is based on inductive reasoning in which case theories emerge directly from the data without any preconceived notions or existing theoretical frameworks [Gautam and Gautam, 2023: 159].

In the grounded theory method, the researcher starts with data collection from the field which are then coded. Concepts are developed by the researcher from the coded data which further helps in the development of a theory. There is also focused data collection or theoretical sampling which is then compared with the existing theory [ibid]. The theory was developed by Glaser and Strauss in ‘The Discovery of Grounded Theory’ (1967) during the research of patients’ death in hospital. Grounded theory is widely used in fields of nursing, education and social work [ibid: 22].

Qualitative Interviews are major sources of information and form an important part of any qualitative research. As qualitative research essentially studies people in their natural or social settings including their feelings, experience and views about their reality, a good interaction with the subjects of the study can start with the interview method. Following Goffman’s famous dramaturgical model, Lune and Berg (2017) considers interview a performance of both the interviewer and the interviewee. The researcher undertaking interviews must put on a performance as to elicit maximum information from the respondents. Similarly, the subject under study also undertakes a performance as to how and how much information to share.

According to Douglas (1985), there is also the technique of creative interviewing where the researcher tries to stimulate the discussions and create a certain ambience to collect the right amount of information [Lune and Berg, 2017 :67]. Kvale (1996) suggests that interview enables the researcher to gain an insight into multiple views of the respondents. A dialogue should be built between the researcher and the interviewee so as to avoid a monologue in the conversation [Barbour and Schostak, 2005].

Qualitative research is often based on case studies of specific individuals, events or a set of events whereby the researcher can describe the events or explain the phenomena. Case study is a detailed examination of one setting, or a single subject, single depository of documents, or one particular event [Bogdan and Biklen, 2003; Gomm, Hammersley and Foster, 2000; Yin, 2003; Lune and Berg, 2017: 170]. The case study method also combines other methods like interview, narratives, literary sources like diary entries

and photographs. Edward Sutherland's (1937) *The Professional Thief* or Clifford R Shaw's (1930), *The Jack Roller* are some classic case studies found in sociology and criminology [ibid: 172].

Visual analysis of texts and images is a method that often suits qualitative researchers. Visual images on television, internet or even print can form major sources of data for the researcher undertaking qualitative research. Visual data like photographs or films can exhibit social relationships. Often researchers substantiate their data with visual images or pictures in reports and publications. They can be the best way to support one's analysis or argument [Alexander, V, 2008].

The case of field studies the researcher often relies on still or video cameras which create visual images for retrospection [Baker, 1993: 263]. Visual analysis can be based on reflection theory which states that the visual images often reflect the beliefs and values of a particular society. Researchers in media studies are interested in the way visual materials indicate underlying social factors, especially around issues of race, ethnicity, gender, class and sexuality (e.g. Cortese, 1999; Dines and Humez, 2003; Entman and Rojecki, 2002; Jewitt, 1997) [Alexander, V. 2008: 465]. Semiotics following Ferdinand de Saussure's theory of the language is used as a method to analyze visual images [ibid]. Interpretive analysis is used on semiotics to unravel the hidden meanings, ambiguity and intertextuality (interrelationship among images) in visual objects [ibid: 468]. Goffman's (1979) work on gender advertisements used this approach to study the structural relationship between men and women [ibid].

Narratives can also form a major source of data and information in qualitative research and are hence frequently used by researchers doing qualitative studies. Narratives can include an account of people's lives. Narrative analysis is based upon the social constructivist paradigm. It is used in not just literary studies but also in media studies and cultural studies. Narrative analysis can refer to a variety of different approaches to data collection and analysis including biography, autobiography, life history, oral history, auto ethnography, life narrative and the sociology of storytelling [Earthy and Cronin. 2008: 423].

Storytelling and narratives can be significant for qualitative researchers because they are not just information about oneself but can also reflect on the way personalities and identities took shape [Rosenwald and Ochburg, 1992; ibid]. Narratives can be useful tool for getting an insight into the lives of the people like the homeless, women in the domestic sphere, patients with chronic illness, delinquents, rehabilitated people, prisoners and so on.

17.5 Conclusion

Qualitative research is a huge arena with multiple research methods and methodologies. There is no doubt that qualitative research offers a plethora of choices to the researcher interested in detailed in-depth understanding of social phenomena. However, doing qualitative research can be a real challenge to the researcher as the research methodology is based on real life experiences in the field setting. Qualitative research focusses more on the insider's views and opinions. This also calls for a criticism of qualitative research in the light of bias opinions and perceptions and lack of precision as opposed to quantitative studies. Studies based on qualitative research cannot generalize a phenomenon and hence often face reliability issues. Validity and reliability in qualitative research are not same as quantitative studies. To establish validity and reliability checks, qualitative researchers are often vigilant in their data collection and recording methods, documentation and transcriptions. One must keep in mind that the focus of qualitative research is also not same as quantitative researches as the subjects' perceptions, feelings and experiences are sought after along with an attempt to make sense of multiple realities [Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Creswell, J 2009: 195].

17.6 Summary

This unit discussed the role of theory in qualitative research. The unit started with a brief introduction to the meaning of qualitative research followed by the use of theoretical perspectives in qualitative research. This unit also tried to describe the methods and practices of qualitative research following the theoretical perspectives. The unit will help us to understand the variations of theoretical lenses that are used and applied in qualitative studies along with a diversity of research methods which helps to conduct qualitative research.

17.7 Questions

1. Answer in detail

- a. Discuss the meaning of qualitative research and the role of theory in qualitative research.
- b. Discuss the major theoretical perspectives used in qualitative research.
- c. Write a note on the various methods and practices used in qualitative research.

2. Answer in moderation

- a. What is symbolic interactionism?
- b. Write short note on ethnography in qualitative research.
- c. How is case study method useful in qualitative research?

3. Answer in short

- a. What is *Verstehen*?
- b. What is the grounded theory method?
- c. How is story telling and narratives significant in qualitative research?

17.8 References

1. Alexander, Victoria D. 2008. Analysing Visual Materials in Nigel Gilbert (ed). Researching Social Life. London, Los Angeles, New Delhi: Sage publications: Singapore. Pp 462-480
2. Babbie, Earl. 2004. The Practice of Social Research. Australia, Canada, Singapore: Thomson, Wadsworth
3. Baker, Theresa L. 1993. Doing Social Research. London, New Delhi: McGraw Hill publisher
4. Barbour, Rosaline S and John Schostak. 2005. Interviewing and focus groups in Bridget Somekh and Cathy Lewin (ed). Research Methodologies in Social Sciences. New Delhi: Vistaar publications
5. Bergmann, Jorg R. 2008. Conversation Analysis in U. Flick et al. (ed). A Companion to Qualitative Research. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications
6. Creswell, John W. 2009. Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Method Approaches. New Delhi: Sage publications
7. Eatherly, Sara and Ann Cronin. 2008. Narrative Analysis in Nigel Gilbert (ed). Researching Social Life. London, Los Angeles, New Delhi, Singapore: Sage publications. Pp 420-439
8. Fielding, N. 2008. Ethnography in Nigel Gilbert (ed). Researching Social Life. London, Los Angeles, New Delhi, Singapore: Sage publications. Pp 267-284
9. Fontana, Andrea and James. H. Frey, 2007. The Interview: From Neutral Stance

- to Political Involvement in Denzin, Norman K and Lincoln, Yvonna S.(ed). 2007. Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore: Sage publication
10. Gautam, Vipul K and Jaya Gautam. 2023. Qualitative Research Approaches in Social Sciences. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/376797176> Qualitative Research Approaches in Social Sciences [visited on 27.07.2024]
 11. Hodkinson, P. 2008. Grounded Theory and Inductive Research in Nigel Gilbert (ed). Researching Social Life. London, Los Angeles, New Delhi, Singapore: Sage publications. Pp 81-100
 12. Hildenbrand, B. 2004. Anselm Strauss in U. Flick et al. (ed). A Companion to Qualitative Research. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage publications
 13. Lune, Howard and Bruce L Berg. Qualitative Research Methods for Social Sciences. England: Pearson education system
 14. Winter, Rainer. 2004. Cultural Studies in U. Flick et al. (ed). A Companion to Qualitative Research. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage publications

17.9 Suggested Reading

1. Babbie, Earl. 2004. The Practice of Social Research. Australia, Canada, Singapore: Thomson, Wadsworth
2. Baker, Theresa L. 1993. Doing Social Research. London, New Delhi: McGraw Hill publisher
3. Creswell, John W. 2009. Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Method Approaches. New Delhi: Sage publications
4. Denzin, Norman K and Lincoln, Yvonna S.(ed). 2007. Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore: Sage publication

Unit 18 : Ethics & Politics of Qualitative Research

Structure

- 18.1 Learning Objectives**
- 18.2 Introduction**
- 18.3 Meaning of 'Ethics' and 'Research Ethics'**
- 18.4 Ethical Considerations in Qualitative Research**
- 18.5 Importance of 'Ethics' in Qualitative Research**
- 18.6 Politics of Qualitative Research**
- 18.7 Key Components of the Politics of Qualitative Research**
- 18.8 Ethical Aspects in the Politics of Qualitative Research**
- 18.9 Solutions and Recommendations**
- 18.10 Conclusion**
- 18.11 Summary**
- 18.12 Questions**
- 18.13 References**
- 18.14 Suggested Readings**

18.1 Learning Objectives

- Define the concepts of 'Ethics' and 'Research Ethics' and explain their significance in qualitative social research.
- Identify key ethical considerations in qualitative research, including informed consent, confidentiality, privacy, and avoiding harm.
- Analyze the importance of ethics in qualitative research and its role in maintaining research integrity, credibility, and social responsibility.
- Explain the political dimensions of qualitative research and how power structures influence research design, data interpretation, and knowledge production.
- Examine the key components of the politics of qualitative research, such as

epistemological debates, institutional and funding influences, and publishing biases.

- Discuss the ethical aspects within the political landscape of qualitative research, including researcher positionality, representation, and cultural sensitivity.
- Evaluate the challenges posed by ethical and political dilemmas in qualitative research and their impact on participants and research outcomes.
- Propose ethical solutions and recommendations for conducting qualitative research that upholds integrity, inclusivity, and social justice.

18.2 Introduction:

Qualitative social research is critical for comprehending complex social events, recording lived experiences, and revealing the deeper meanings underlying human acts, attitudes, and interactions. However, this type of research is not undertaken in a politically or ethically neutral manner. Ethics and politics are crucial to qualitative social research because it involves direct engagement with human participants, who frequently discuss sensitive and very personal elements of their lives. Researchers must consequently navigate ethical duties such as obtaining informed consent, protecting confidentiality, avoiding harm, and being open about the study's goal and potential implications. Ethics in qualitative research entails not only following institutional norms but also treating participants with respect, decency, and care.

Qualitative research is intrinsically political. The themes researchers chose, the questions they ask, the methods they use, and how they communicate their findings are all influenced by societal power structures. Researchers add their own positionality-molded by class, gender, ethnicity, or ideology-to the study process, influencing interpretations and results. Furthermore, research can have political implications, either by boosting minority voices or promoting dominant narratives. As a result, researchers must critically consider their position in knowledge generation as well as the potential consequences of their work.

Finally, the ethics and politics of qualitative social research require researchers to strike a balance between their need for knowledge and their commitment to social duty, justice, and reflexivity, ensuring that the process is as ethical, inclusive, and transformational as possible.

18.3 Meaning of 'Ethics' and 'Research Ethics':

The term 'Ethics' is derived from the Greek word 'ethos,' which means character or custom. Ethics is the branch of philosophy concerned with the moral principles, values, and regulations that govern human behavior. It helps us grasp what is right and wrong, good and evil, and how individuals should behave in certain situations. Simply said, ethics is the study of what is morally acceptable and wrong in human behavior. It establishes a framework for making decisions and judging behaviors using concepts such as honesty, fairness, responsibility, and respect.

The term 'research ethics' refers to the concepts, guidelines, and standards that regulate ethical behavior in research. In social research, ethics guarantees that participants' rights, dignity, and well-being are safeguarded and that the research process is conducted with integrity, honesty, and responsibility. According to Earl Babbie (2015), "Research ethics is concerned with how we treat the people we study, how we collect and analyze data, and how we report our findings in an honest and transparent manner." Alan Bryman (2012) states, "Ethical issues in social research revolve around informed consent, confidentiality, protection from harm, and the integrity of the research process." W. Lawrence Neuman (2014) emphasizes that "ethics in social research refers to the moral principles that guide researchers in designing, conducting, and reporting research while ensuring respect for participants and integrity in findings."

18.4 Ethical Considerations in Qualitative Research:

Because of its emphasis on personal experiences, sensitive themes, and strong researcher-participant connections, qualitative research requires careful consideration of ethical concerns. In qualitative research, the researcher frequently immerses oneself in the lives of the participants, which presents a number of ethical issues. Qualitative research is the collection and analysis of non-numerical data in order to better understand experiences, attitudes, and social phenomena. Because it frequently deals with delicate themes and intimate encounters, ethical considerations are critical to ensuring participants' respect, integrity, and safety. Qualitative research has different ethical challenges than quantitative research since it is subjective and interpretative (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2001). Here are some key ethical considerations in qualitative research:

1. **Informed Consent:** In qualitative research, informed consent is an ethical principle

that requires participants to voluntarily agree to participate in a study after fully knowing its aim, methodology, risks, and rewards. It is critical for upholding ethical standards, respecting participants' autonomy, and safeguarding their rights (Patton 2015).

How informed consent is maintained:

- Researchers must explain the purpose, process, and scope of the research in a language the participants can understand.
- This includes what the research is about, why it is being conducted, and what the participant's role will be.
- Explain what methods will be used (interviews, focus groups, observation, etc.).
- Clarify the expected duration of participation.
- Mention the possibility of follow-up interviews if needed.
- Emphasize that participation is voluntary, and participants have the right to refuse or withdraw at any stage without any negative consequences.
- Inform participants about any potential risks (emotional discomfort, privacy concerns, etc.) and any benefits (gaining knowledge, contributing to social change, etc.) from participating.

2. Confidentiality and Anonymity: Confidentiality and anonymity are two important ethical considerations in qualitative research, particularly as qualitative methods sometimes include intimate engagement with individuals, in-depth interviews, focus groups, or participant observation. Confidentiality means that the researcher is aware of the participant's identity but takes precautions to guarantee that this information is not shared with anybody outside the research team. Confidentiality is critical in qualitative research since the data is extensive, comprehensive, and often personal. Anonymity means that neither the researcher nor the participant knows each other's identities; there is no relationship between the data obtained and the participant's identity. This is significantly more difficult to accomplish in qualitative research because interviews, focus groups, and ethnographic methods often need face-to-face interaction (Wiles et. al 2008).

How confidentiality is maintained:

- Removing identifying information (e.g., names, addresses, job titles) from transcripts.

- Using pseudonyms (false names) instead of real names.
- Storing data securely (password-protected files, locked cabinets).
- Ensuring only authorized researchers have access to the data.
- Reporting findings in a way that individuals cannot be recognized, even indirectly.

How anonymity is maintained:

- Using online surveys where no names or IP addresses are collected.
- Avoiding collection of personally identifiable information (PII).
- Ensuring responses cannot be traced back to individuals.

3. Privacy and Intrusiveness: Privacy and intrusiveness are critical ethical concerns in qualitative research, particularly because qualitative methods (such as interviews, focus groups, ethnography, and participant observation) frequently involve close interaction with participants and in-depth exploration of personal experiences, opinions, and emotions. Privacy refers to a participant's right to decide the extent, timing, and circumstances under which their personal information, identity, or experiences are shared or exposed during the study. Privacy is critical in qualitative research because the methods used (such as interviews, focus groups, and participant observation) frequently entail intensely personal talks that reveal sensitive issues, viewpoints, and personal histories. Intrusiveness refers to the extent to which the study process intrudes on participants' personal space, emotions, relationships, or private lives. Qualitative research, by definition, can be more intrusive due to the need for close participation and open-ended talks that may reveal personal or even distressing details (Hammersley & Traianou 2012).

How to Maintain Privacy and Reduce Intrusiveness:

- Ensure that participants fully understand the purpose, methods, and potential risks of the research.
- Obtain voluntary and documented consent before collecting data.
- Use pseudonyms or codes instead of real names.
- Store data securely to prevent unauthorized access.
- Share only aggregated or anonymized data in reports.
- Minimize the number of personal or sensitive questions.

- Use non-intrusive data collection methods like interviews in comfortable settings.
- Allow participants to skip questions or withdraw at any time.
- Be respectful of cultural norms and personal boundaries.
- Avoid probing too deeply into distressing topics without proper support mechanisms.
- Follow institutional and legal guidelines for data storage and protection (e.g., GDPR).
- Destroy or anonymize data after the research is completed, as per ethical guidelines.

4. Power Dynamics and Reciprocity: Power dynamics are the uneven interactions between the researcher and the participants in qualitative research. This imbalance frequently occurs when the researcher has more authority, control, and access to resources, but the participants may feel vulnerable owing to characteristics such as their socioeconomic status, gender, ethnicity, or cultural background. To guarantee that participants are treated fairly, respectfully, and with dignity, ethical qualitative research must acknowledge and resolve the power imbalance. Reciprocity in research ethics refers to the mutual exchange and benefit between researchers and participants. It is the belief that research should not just collect data from participants but also provide them with something worthwhile in return, such as knowledge exchange, community benefits, pay, or meaningful participation. In qualitative research, reciprocity seeks to avoid seeing participants as just “data sources.” Ethical reciprocity ensures that people feel respected, heard, and valued (Guillemin & Gillam 2004).

How to Maintain Power Balance and Reciprocity:

- Researchers should continuously reflect on their own biases, privileges, and position of power.
- Keeping a research journal to document interactions can help maintain ethical awareness.
- Ensure that participants fully understand the purpose, risks, and benefits of the research.
- Provide options for withdrawal at any stage without consequences.
- Engage participants in shaping research questions, methods, and interpretations.
- Co-produce knowledge rather than treating participants as mere data sources.

- Use participatory methods that give agency to participants, such as storytelling, community discussions, or action research.
- Provide a platform for participants to express their own narratives authentically.
- Accurately represent participants' voices and lived experiences without distortion.
- Use pseudonyms or anonymization to protect their identities.
- Offer tangible benefits such as fair compensation, skill-building workshops, or community engagement initiatives.
- Acknowledge participants in publications and reports where appropriate.
- Be mindful of cultural norms, traditions, and ethical considerations specific to the community.
- Build trust by investing time in understanding the socio-cultural background of participants.

5. Cultural Sensitivity: Cultural sensitivity in qualitative research ethics refers to researchers' ethical responsibility to understand, respect, and respond appropriately to the cultural norms, values, beliefs, and practices of the participants and communities under investigation. It entails being conscious of cultural differences while avoiding ethnocentrism (judging other cultures based on one's own cultural norms) (Smith 2012).

How to Maintain Cultural Sensitivity:

- Researchers must study and understand the cultural background, language, traditions, and social norms of the participants before starting the research.
- Respectful communication and relationship-building with the community are essential. Researchers should work collaboratively with participants to establish mutual trust.
- Informed consent should be obtained in a culturally appropriate way, using local language, culturally relevant examples, and ensuring participants fully understand their rights.
- Researchers should avoid generalizing or imposing their own cultural assumptions on participants.
- Researchers should critically reflect on their own cultural biases and positionality (how their own background, class, gender, etc., influence the research process).

- Language used in interviews, reports, and publications should be culturally respectful and free from derogatory or culturally insensitive terms.
- Where possible, involve local researchers, translators, or community leaders who understand the culture and can guide ethical interactions.
- Researchers should recognize the power imbalance between themselves and participants, especially when working with marginalized or indigenous communities. Respect for local authority structures is important.
- In some cultures, privacy may be understood differently (e.g., collective consent in indigenous communities). Researchers should adapt ethical practices accordingly.
- If the research involves indigenous knowledge (like traditional healing practices), proper acknowledgment and benefit-sharing should be ensured.

6. Avoiding Harm: Avoiding harm is a basic ethical principle in qualitative research that highlights the importance of researchers taking all reasonable precautions to protect participants from physical, psychological, emotional, social, or legal harm. This concept assures that researchers do not exploit, deceive, or subject volunteers to any type of distress, discomfort, or risk. Avoiding injury is especially critical in qualitative research, as researchers frequently delve deeply into participants' personal experiences, feelings, and perspectives. Because qualitative studies frequently include interviews, focus groups, or ethnographic research, the possibility of harm arises if sensitive themes are discussed or confidentiality is violated (Hedgecoe 2016).

How to Maintain “Avoiding Harm”:

- Researchers must obtain voluntary, informed consent from participants, ensuring they understand the purpose, risks, and benefits of the study.
- Participants should have the right to withdraw at any time without consequences.
- Personal data should be protected through anonymization or pseudonyms.
- Confidentiality agreements must be strictly maintained to prevent exposure of sensitive information.
- Researchers should be sensitive to participants' emotions, avoiding distressing questions or intrusive discussions.
- Providing psychological support or counseling referrals if needed.
- Ensuring that participants are not manipulated or pressured into participating.

- Maintaining a respectful researcher-participant relationship without coercion.
- Ensuring findings are accurately represented without misinterpretation.
- Avoiding reinforcement of negative stereotypes or social harm to vulnerable communities.

7. Deception: In qualitative research, deception is defined as the deliberate act of concealing information, deceiving, or supplying incorrect information to research participants regarding a study's genuine aim, nature, or techniques. This occurs when researchers fear that fully divulging the study's objectives may impact participants' behavior, resulting in skewed data. Deception is considered unethical because it breaches the concept of informed consent, which states that participants have the right to know what they are committing to. However, minimal deception may be employed in specific research situations (for example, to examine sensitive behaviors or social interactions), but it must be justified, minimized, and followed by a proper debriefing.

How to Maintain Ethical Standards While Handling Deception:

- Researchers must demonstrate that deception is necessary for the study and that truthful methods would compromise its validity.
- Ethical review boards (such as Institutional Review Boards, IRBs) must approve deception-based studies.
- The potential risks of deception should be carefully assessed, and efforts should be made to minimize psychological or emotional harm to participants.
- Deception should never exploit or manipulate participants in a way that causes distress.
- After the study, participants must be fully informed about the true purpose of the research.
- Researchers should explain why deception was necessary and address any concerns participants may have.
- Even in deceptive research, participants should be allowed to withdraw at any time without consequences.
- Informed consent should still be obtained, with as much transparency as possible.
- Research institutions and ethical committees must carefully monitor studies involving deception.

- Researchers should be accountable for any unintended harm and take steps to mitigate it.

8. Plagiarism in Qualitative Research Ethics: Plagiarism in qualitative research Ethics is defined as the use of someone else's ideas, words, data, or interpretations without proper attribution. It is considered an ethical violation since qualitative research frequently involves direct interaction with individuals, which requires originality and integrity. Plagiarism can take different forms, such as:

- Direct Plagiarism - Copying verbatim from another source without citation.
- Self-Plagiarism - Reusing one's previous work without proper referencing.
- Mosaic Plagiarism - Using phrases from different sources without proper attribution.
- Paraphrasing Plagiarism - Rewriting someone else's ideas without citation.
- Misrepresentation of Sources - Providing incorrect or fabricated references.

How to Maintain Ethical Standards and Avoid Plagiarism:

- Always cite sources using a recognized format (APA, MLA, Chicago, etc.).
- Use quotation marks for direct quotes.
- Paraphrase correctly while maintaining the original meaning and citing the source.
- Follow institutional and journal ethical guidelines regarding research integrity.
- Adhere to ethical codes like those from the American Sociological Association (ASA) or British Sociological Association (BSA).
- Acknowledge sources of qualitative data, including interviews, field notes, and case studies.
- Give credit to participants where applicable, respecting their contributions.
- Check work with plagiarism detection software like Turnitin, Grammarly, or Plagscan.
- Ensure that both textual and conceptual similarities are properly addressed.
- Give due credit to co-researchers and collaborators.
- Avoid ghostwriting and unauthorized data use.
- Clearly differentiate between one's interpretations and existing literature.
- Obtain proper permissions when using previously published qualitative data.

18.5 Importance of 'Ethics' in Qualitative Research:

Ethics is important in social research because it ensures that studies are carried out ethically while preserving the rights of participants and maintaining research integrity. Because data collection in qualitative research is collaborative, interpretive, and frequently very personal, ethical considerations are much more important. Unlike quantitative research, which frequently depends on numerical data and formal techniques, qualitative research involves participants' actual experiences, emotions, and narratives, making ethical issues more difficult. The following is an in-depth exploration of the significance of ethics in qualitative research:

1. Protection of Participants' Rights and Welfare: Case studies, ethnographies, focus groups, and interviews all entail extended interactions with participants-sometimes in delicate situations-in qualitative research. As a result, safeguarding individuals against social or psychological injury is crucial. For example, researchers looking into survivors of domestic abuse need to make sure that study participants don't experience more trauma or dangers as a result of participating. Throughout the study process, ethical standards aid in preserving tact and consideration (Diener & Crandall, 1978).

2. Informed Consent: Qualitative research frequently necessitates in-depth conversations on individual experiences, in contrast to quantitative research, when participants may only be asked to complete a survey. Beyond simply getting a signature, participants must be fully aware of how their identities, words, and feelings may be used in the study in order to give their informed permission. Furthermore, consent should be continuous in participatory research, enabling participants to leave at any time if they experience discomfort (Beauchamp & Childress, 2013).

3. Confidentiality and Privacy: Qualitative research usually employs audio or video recordings, personal narratives, and detailed observations, all of which contain identifiable information. Researchers must take extra care to anonymize data while protecting confidential information. For example, maintaining secrecy in ethnographic studies where researchers immerse themselves in communities might be difficult, but it is critical for preserving participants' confidence (Babbie, 2017).

4. Avoidance of Deception: In some qualitative research, particularly those involving covert observation or sensitive issues, deception may be considered. However, ethical norms underline that deceit should be avoided and justified. For example, in a study on social behaviors in public places, participants may be unaware that they are being

observed. In such circumstances, researchers must verify that no harm occurs and that debriefing is offered as needed (Kimmel, 2011).

5. Ensuring Research Reliability and Integrity: Subjectivity and interpretation are important in qualitative research because they shape the findings. Ethical integrity requires that researchers avoid manipulating data to fit preconceived narratives. Misrepresentation, selective reporting, or misquoting participants can result in biased and unethical conclusions. Ethical compliance guarantees that research is credible, reliable, and transparent (Resnik 2020).

6. Social Responsibility: Qualitative research frequently deals with social inequities, underprivileged communities, and sensitive societal concerns. Researchers must be aware of the larger ramifications of their discoveries. Research on racial discrimination in the workplace, for example, should aim to encourage social change rather than reinforce preconceptions (Israel & Hay, 2006). Ethical research should serve the community rather than exploit it for academic gain.

7. Respect for Cultural Sensitivity and Diversity: Because qualitative research frequently involves direct engagement with varied communities, ethical standards emphasize respect for cultural values, customs, and views. For example, in anthropological or sociological studies of indigenous groups, researchers should be respectful, request permission, and avoid putting external biases on their interpretations (Punch, 2014). Misrepresenting or exoticizing cultural behaviors might result in ethical lapses and distortions in research findings.

8. Transparency and Accountability: Transparency is especially important in qualitative research, as conclusions are frequently interpreted rather than merely statistical. Researchers must be upfront about their funding sources, conflicts of interest, and methodological decisions. Furthermore, they must recognize participants' contributions and, where possible, share discoveries with the communities engaged, establishing a feeling of collaborative knowledge generation (Shamoo & Resnik, 2009).

Ethics in social research, particularly qualitative research, is critical for preserving the dignity, privacy, and well-being of participants while assuring the legitimacy and integrity of study findings. Given the intense personal involvement, cultural intricacies, and possibility for misinterpretation in qualitative investigations, ethical vigilance is even more important. Researchers must manage complicated ethical challenges with sensitivity and honesty, ensuring that their work benefits both academia and society.

18.6 Politics of Qualitative Research:

Qualitative research, which is frequently viewed as an interpretative and subjective method to understanding social reality, is profoundly ingrained in political settings. The politics of qualitative research include the power dynamics, epistemological arguments, ethical issues, and institutional influences that determine how research is conducted, understood, and applied. That means that the politics of qualitative research are diverse, incorporating epistemological debates, ethical quandaries, institutional biases, and Western knowledge systems' predominance. Researchers must stay reflexive, ethical, and critical in order for their work to contribute significantly to social justice and knowledge democratization.

18.7 Key Components of the Politics of Qualitative Research:

Below are some key components of the politics of Qualitative Research:

1. Epistemological Politics in Qualitative Research: In qualitative research, epistemological politics refers to how power dynamics, cultural contexts, and researchers' positions influence knowledge formation. This concept recognizes that the process of generating knowledge is not neutral and is influenced by a variety of social, political, and historical circumstances.

Key Aspects of Epistemological Politics in Qualitative Research:

- i. **Positionality and reflexivity:** Researchers' viewpoints and interpretations are influenced by their origins, beliefs, and societal positions. Reflexivity enables researchers to critically assess how their positionality influences the study process and results.
- ii. **Power Dynamics in Knowledge Production:** Power asymmetries exist between researchers and participants. Recognizing these interactions is critical for ensuring that participants' perspectives are accurately conveyed and not dominated by the researcher's biases.
- iii. **Knowledge colonialism:** Traditional research approaches frequently privilege Western ways of knowing while marginalizing indigenous and local knowledge systems. To address knowledge coloniality, we must challenge prevailing paradigms and value various epistemologies.

- iv. The ethics of representation: How academics depict their subjects can either perpetuate stereotypes or promote social justice. Ethical representation demands a dedication to honestly and respectfully portraying participants' experiences.
- v. Methodological Choices: Epistemological ideas influence the choosing of research methodologies. Qualitative researchers must connect their procedures with their epistemological viewpoints to ensure study coherence and integrity.

[Staller 2013 & Grass 2024]

2. Institutional and Funding Politics in Qualitative Research: Institutional and financial politics have a considerable impact on the course and form of qualitative research. These dynamics influence research agendas, methodology, and the dissemination of results. Funding bias, also known as sponsorship bias, is the tendency for scientific research to favor the interests of their financial sponsors. This phenomenon is very common in research fields such as chemical toxicity, tobacco, and pharmaceuticals. Such biases might jeopardize the integrity of research findings and are an example of experimenter bias. Government policies and political agendas have a substantial impact on research financing. For example, the European Union's Framework Programme has developed to stress economic competitiveness, scientific excellence, and societal issues, thereby reflecting current political beliefs and objectives. Lobbying and political issues also influence how research funds are allocated. Studies have looked into how academic earmarks, or monies given to specific institutions through political processes, affect research quality and quantity. These earmarks highlight the confluence of politics and research financing, as institutions may campaign for cash, potentially influencing the direction and focus of research.

[Lincoln & Cannella 2004]

3. Politics of Language and Publishing in Qualitative Research: In qualitative research, the politics of language and publication refer to the ways in which power dynamics, cultural settings, and institutional practices influence both study conduct and the dissemination of findings. Language is not just a means of communication but also a carrier of power and ideas. In qualitative research, the language used can influence the development of knowledge and the depiction of participants' experiences. For example, the use of jargon or specialized terminology may make research inaccessible to a larger audience, supporting existing power dynamics. An article in *The Times* criticizes the widespread use of jargon in academics and politics, claiming that it serves

as a barrier to entry and stifles genuine intellectual engagement. Furthermore, the act of translation in multilingual research contexts involves difficulties that can influence data interpretation. The concept of “untranslatables”-words or phrases in a source language that have no direct equivalent in the target language-can be difficult to grasp. Researchers must thoroughly analyze their assumptions as well as the cultural settings of both the source and target languages in order to account for these linguistic variations. A study published in *Language and Intercultural Communication* explores how untranslatables provide moments of productive difficulties, encouraging a more in-depth examination of both data and research frameworks.

The world of academic publication is plagued with power dynamics that can influence which research is published and distributed. Conflicts of interest can stem from a variety of factors, including financial links, institutional affiliations, and personal relationships. These conflicts can result in biases that compromise the quality and integrity of research. A complete summary of such issues in academic publishing is provided in a Wikipedia page on the topic. The dispute over open access to publicly sponsored research mirrors the politics of publication. Advocates claim that making research freely available improves knowledge transmission and democratizes information. For example, Australia's Chief Scientist, Cathy Foley, has advocated that all government-funded research be made freely available in order to increase productivity and keep industry up to date on the newest advances.

[Denzin & Lincoln 2005]

18.8 Ethical Aspects in the Politics of Qualitative Research:

With its focus on comprehending social phenomena and human experiences, qualitative research inevitably entails negotiating challenging political and ethical environments. Building on fundamental ethical precepts, it's critical to investigate how these issues appear specifically in qualitative methodologies:

i. Informed Consent: Getting informed consent is a continuous process in qualitative research, particularly when using techniques like ethnography or in-depth interviews. Consent must be continuously negotiated by researchers, taking into account participants' changing comprehension and comfort levels. It might be difficult to get true permission in politically delicate situations because individuals could be afraid of the consequences. In order to ensure that permission is genuinely informed and free, researchers must be

on the lookout for coercion.

ii. Confidentiality and Anonymity: Given the detailed nature of qualitative data, maintaining confidentiality requires meticulous attention. Descriptions of participants' experiences can inadvertently reveal identities, especially in small communities or specialized groups. Researchers must employ strategies such as pseudonyms and altering identifiable details while preserving the data's integrity. In politically charged environments, safeguarding data becomes paramount to protect participants from potential harm.

iii. Avoiding Harm to Participants: Qualitative research often delves into personal and sensitive topics, which can evoke emotional distress. Researchers must be prepared to provide support or referrals to appropriate services. In unstable political climates, participation might expose individuals to risks like surveillance or stigmatization. An ethical approach involves conducting thorough risk assessments and implementing measures to mitigate potential harms.

iv. Accountability and Public Interest: It is imperative that qualitative researchers critically examine their positionality, which includes their personal histories, convictions, and potential biases, and how these impact the research process. Transparency is guaranteed, and the power relations between participants and researchers are better understood because of this reflexivity. Funding sources and dominant ideology are examples of political influences that might influence research objectives and interpretations. Maintaining ethical standards necessitates a dedication to delivering results that accurately reflect the opinions of participants and advance the welfare of society.

v. Cultural Sensitivity: In qualitative research, it is crucial to delve thoroughly into the cultural settings of participants. Respectful interactions with communities are necessary as researchers work to comprehend cultural norms and values. This sensitivity keeps preconceptions from being reinforced and stops outside opinions from being imposed. Cultural sensitivity is essential for navigating complexity and establishing confidence with participants in politically sensitive contexts.

vi. Research Manipulation and Misuse: Because qualitative findings are rich in context and subtleties, they may be misunderstood or used selectively to further particular goals. It is the duty of researchers to communicate the extent and constraints of their research in an understandable manner. Engaging with stakeholders and promoting the ethical implementation of research findings are essential to anticipating potential misuses.

Political and ethical issues are further entwined by utilizing methodologies such as Participatory Action Research (PAR) and Critical Ethnography. Researchers must be extremely conscious of their ethical responsibilities and the political ramifications of their work in order to engage in critical ethnography, which questions established power systems and aims for revolutionary results. In addition to democratizing the research process and tackling issues of representation and power, PAR places a strong emphasis on participant collaboration. In order to ensure that their research not only advances knowledge but also respects and empowers the communities they study, qualitative researchers must embrace reflexivity, cultural competence, and a strong commitment to ethical principles. This will help them navigate the complex ethical and political terrains inherent in their work.

18.9 Solutions and Recommendations:

In qualitative research, addressing potential political biases is crucial to ensure the integrity and validity of findings. The following strategies can be employed to mitigate such biases:

- 1. Encouraging Reflexivity in Study:** To comprehend how their own backgrounds and prejudices may affect the study process, researchers should constantly reflect on themselves. This self-awareness can be improved by keeping reflective journals and taking part in peer reviews.
- 2. Keeping Research Practices Ethical:** Respecting ethical norms is crucial to safeguarding participants, particularly those from marginalized communities. This entails getting informed consent, maintaining participant confidentiality, and defending their rights during the research.
- 3. Encouraging Research Design Inclusivity:** Diverse viewpoints, especially those from underrepresented groups, enhance the study and cast doubt on prevailing beliefs. Enhancing inclusion can be achieved by bringing together research teams with diverse backgrounds and concentrating on issues that deal with power dynamics.
- 4. Promoting Open and Transparent Research:** Political manipulation can be avoided by ensuring that data collection, analysis, and interpretation are transparent. Public participation and inspection are made possible by putting open-access policies into place and offering precise methodological explanations.
- 5. Enhancing Critical and Participatory Approaches:** By incorporating communities

into the research process through techniques like participatory action research (PAR), knowledge production is democratized, and the voices of underrepresented groups are given a central place.

6. Taking Care of Financing and Institutional Bias: Scholars should be aware of how financing sources can affect the results of their work. Potential biases can be reduced by being open and honest about funding sources and looking for a variety of financing options.

7. Improving Public Engagement and Dissemination: Research findings can be kept from being misused or politicized by clearly communicating findings and interacting with the public. Results dissemination across several platforms guarantees comprehension and accessibility.

8. Fostering Interdisciplinary Collaboration: Collaborating across disciplines provides a more nuanced understanding of research topics and helps avoid ideological biases, enriching the research process.

By implementing these strategies, qualitative researchers can produce more ethical, inclusive, and unbiased studies, thereby enhancing the credibility and impact of their work.

18.10 Conclusion:

The ethics and politics of qualitative social research are inextricably linked with researchers' responsibilities to participants, society, and knowledge generation. In qualitative research, ethical considerations such as informed permission, confidentiality, privacy, cultural sensitivity, and damage minimization are critical to guaranteeing respect and integrity. These ethical norms not only protect participants but also improve the legitimacy and trustworthiness of study results.

Qualitative research is fundamentally political. The selection of study topics, methodology, and interpretations is influenced by power relations, institutional objectives, and financial sources. Researchers must maintain a critical awareness of their positionality and the potential consequences of their work, ensuring that their findings do not promote dominant narratives or marginalize vulnerable communities. Furthermore, ethical and political quandaries, such as research manipulation, knowledge colonialism, and biases in funding and publishing, necessitate ongoing reflection and accountability.

To address these issues, researchers should use inclusive and participatory research procedures, maintain transparency, and form interdisciplinary collaborations. Ethical reflexivity, methodological rigor, and a commitment to social justice are essential for conducting research that is not only academically significant but also ethically responsible and socially transformational. By addressing these ethical and political challenges, qualitative research can make a significant contribution to knowledge, policymaking, and societal change.

18.11 Summary

The ethics and politics of qualitative social research are inextricably linked, requiring researchers to fulfill commitments to participants, society, and knowledge development. Informed consent, confidentiality, privacy, cultural sensitivity, and damage minimization are critical ethical issues that ensure respect and integrity while increasing study credibility. Power dynamics, institutional aims, and funding sources impact study themes, methodology, and interpretations, making qualitative research fundamentally political. Researchers must rigorously analyze their positionality in order to avoid promoting dominant narratives or marginalizing disadvantaged populations. Ethical and political issues such as research manipulation, knowledge colonialism, and financing and publishing biases necessitate ongoing assessment and accountability. To solve these difficulties, researchers should use inclusive and participatory methodologies, maintain transparency, and foster cross-disciplinary collaboration. Ethical reflexivity, methodological rigor, and a commitment to social justice are essential for conducting research that is both academically important and socially transformational, contributing meaningfully to knowledge, policymaking, and societal advancement.

18.12 Questions

1. Define 'Ethics' and 'Research Ethics' and explain their significance in qualitative social research.
2. What are the key ethical considerations in qualitative research, and why are they important?
3. How does informed consent function in qualitative research, and what are the steps to ensure it is ethically maintained?
4. Discuss the role of confidentiality and anonymity in qualitative research. How can researchers protect participant identities?

5. Explain the concept of power dynamics in qualitative research. How can researchers ensure reciprocity and minimize power imbalances?
6. How does cultural sensitivity impact qualitative research, and what strategies can researchers use to maintain cultural ethics?
7. What are the key political aspects of qualitative research, and how do they influence research outcomes?
8. Discuss the ethical dilemmas associated with research funding and publication biases in qualitative research.
9. What are the challenges researchers face in maintaining ethical standards while dealing with sensitive or political topics?
10. Suggest solutions and recommendations for conducting ethically and politically responsible qualitative research.

18.13 References

- | | |
|--|---|
| Babbie, E. (2015). | The Practice of Social Research (14th ed.). Cengage Learning, Noida, Uttar Pradesh 201303. |
| Babbie, E. R. (2017) | The Practice of Social Research (14th ed.). Cengage Learning. Toronto, Canada and India. |
| Beauchamp, T. L., & Childress, J. F. (2013); | Principles of Biomedical Ethics (7th ed.). Oxford University Press. New York. |
| Bryman, A. (2012). | Social Research Methods (4th ed.). Oxford University Press. U.K |
| Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). | The Sage handbook of qualitative research. Sage. UK |
| Diener, E., & Crandall, R. (1978); | Ethics in Social and Behavioral Research. University of Chicago Press, 1427 East 60th Street Chicago, IL 60637 U.S.A. |
| Grass, K. (2024). | “The Three Logics of Qualitative Research: Epistemology, Ontology, and Methodology in Political Science.” |

- American Journal of Qualitative Research, 8(1), 42-56.
- Guillemin, M., & Gillam, L. (2004). Ethics, reflexivity, and “ethically important moments” in research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 10(2), 261-280. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800403262360>
- Hammersley, M., & Traianou, A. (2012). *Ethics in Qualitative Research: Controversies and Contexts*. Sage Publications. United Kingdom.
- Hedgecoe, A. (2016). Reputational risk, academic freedom and research ethics review. *Sociology*, 50(3), 486-501. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038515587634>
- Israel, M., & Hay, I. (2006); *Research Ethics for Social Scientists: Between Ethical Conduct and Regulatory Compliance*. Sage Publications Inc, New Delhi.
- Kimmel, A. J. (2011); *Deception in Social Research: A Conceptual Approach*. American Psychological Association.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Cannella, G. S. (2004). Qualitative research, power, and the radical right. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 10(2), 175-201
- Miller, T., & Bell, L. (2002). Consenting to what? Issues of access, gatekeeping and ‘informed’ consent. In M. Mauthner et al. (Eds.), *Ethics in Qualitative Research* (pp. 53-69). Sage.
- Neuman, W. L. (2014). *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (7th ed.). Pearson. New York City
- Orb, A. et al (2001). Ethics in qualitative research. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, 33(1), 93-96.
- Orb, A., Eisenhauer, L., & Wynaden, D. (2001) Ethics in qualitative research. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, 33(1), 93-96.
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*. 4th ed. Sage Publications.
- Punch, K. F. (2014); *Introduction to Social Research: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications Inc, New Delhi.
- Resnik, D. B. (2020); *The Ethics of Research with Human Subjects: Protecting People, Advancing Science, Promoting Trust*. Springer.

- Shamoo, A. E., & Resnik, D. B. (2009); *Responsible Conduct of Research* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press, New York.
- Smith, L. T. (2012). *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. Zed Books. London, U.K.
- Staller, K. M. (2013). “Epistemological Boot Camp: The Politics of Science and What Every Qualitative Researcher Needs to Know to Survive in the Academy.” *Qualitative Social Work*, 12(4), 395-413.
- Wiles et. al (2008). The management of confidentiality and anonymity in social research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 11(5), 417-428. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645570701622231>

18.14 Suggested Readings

1. American Psychological Association (2020); *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct*. APA. Retrieved from <https://www.apa.org/ethics/code/> On 12 July 2024
2. American Sociological Association (1997); *Code of Ethics and Policies and Procedures of the ASA Committee on Professional Ethics*; American Sociological Association; 1430 K Street NW, Suite 600 ,Washington, DC
3. Baker, Therese L.(1998); *Doing Social Research*; 3rd Edition, McGraw-Hill College, Boston
4. Bryman, Alan(2004); *Social Research Methods*;2nd Edition, Oxford University Press, New York
5. Council of Writing Program Administrators. (2019); *Defining and Avoiding Plagiarism: The WPA Statement on Best Practices*. CWPA. Retrieved from <http://wpacouncil.org/positions/WPAplagiarism.pdf> On 12 July 2024
6. NESH (2024); *Guidelines for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities*; (5th edition), Retrieved from <https://www.forskningsetikk.no/en/guidelines/social-sciences-and-humanities/guidelines-for-research-ethics-in-the-social-sciences-and-the-humanities/> On 14 July, 2024

7. University of Oxford. (2021); Plagiarism. University of Oxford. Retrieved from <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/skills/plagiarism> On 12 July 2024
8. University of Southern California. (2021); Understanding and Avoiding Plagiarism. USC. Retrieved from <https://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/plagiarism> On 14 July 2024

Unit 19: Methods of Qualitative Research:

Ethnography

Structure

- 19.1 Learning objectives**
- 19.2 Introduction**
- 19.3 What is qualitative research method?**
- 19.4 Ethnography as a qualitative research method**
- 19.5 What is Ethnography?**
 - 19.5.1 Ethnographic Design**
- 19.6 Usage and Types of Ethnography**
- 19.7 Concept of 'Field' in Ethnographic research**
 - 19.7.1 Approaching the 'Field'**
 - 19.7.2 Facing the 'Field'**
 - 19.7.3 Takeaways from the 'Field'**
- 19.8 Writing Ethnography**
- 19.9 Problems of Ethnography**
- 19.10 Conclusion**
- 19.11 Summary**
- 19.12 Questions**
- 19.13 References**

19.1 Learning Objectives

- To learn what qualitative research methods are.
- To know the history and types of usages of qualitative research methods.
- To be able to recognise the structures of qualitative research designs.
- To learn about ethnography as a popular qualitative research method.

- To know about the key concepts and designs related to ethnographic research.
- To learn about the major concerns and issues faced in ethnography.

19.2 Introduction

In the previous units, the nature of qualitative research and the underlying philosophies has already been discussed. So, we have already seen that the anti-positivist philosophies, rooted in the thoughts of classical sociological thinkers like Max Weber and George Simmel, paved the path for qualitative research to emerge in the discipline of sociology during the twentieth century. With the emergence of sociological schools of thoughts like Symbolic Interactionism, Phenomenology, Constructionism, Feminism etc; the ability of pure quantitative research to deliver an authentic and 'true' body of social knowledge was questioned. Quantitative research deals with quantitative variables, i.e. variables which are measurable in numerical terms. Therefore, strict use of scales, statistical measures and graphical representations were deemed to be the 'objective' and 'reliable' way of fetching knowledge from the society. But from the 1920's and onwards, the proponents of Chicago School of thought, like Robert Park, Ernest Burgess, W. I. Thomas, Florian Znaniecki, Louis Wirth, Clifford Shaw, Henry D. McKay, G. H. Mead, Herbert Blumer, Erving Goffman etc developed the platform for qualitative research in sociology. In the 1960's, the philosophy of social constructionism was developed by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann. Alfred Schutz developed Phenomenology in the 1930's and continued the discussion so forth. All these developments contributed in the emergence of qualitative research methodology, research methods and techniques. In this unit, we will discuss ethnography as a major qualitative research method, the logic of its application, the techniques of its application and the related problems. Now let us jump into the next section where we will discuss about qualitative research methods in opposition to quantitative research methods and shall try to trace where they are different.

19.3 What Is Qualitative Research Method?

Opposed to the quantitative research, which seeks to deal with numerically measurable variables; qualitative research deals with qualitative variables. According to the 'The SAGE Encyclopaedia of Social Science Research Methods' (2004), a qualitative variable is "... whose value varies by attributes or characteristics" (Wang, 2004, p. 894). Therefore, numerical measurements do not apply to qualitative variables. There are several such variables that intrigue the researcher all the time; but, if the researcher only abides by

pure quantitative research designs, then s/he would miss the world of qualitative variables. In order to take account of the qualitative social world, the researcher must apply methods and techniques to grasp the world of 'meaningful' attributes and values, which would not rely upon just numerical measurements. The SAGE Encyclopaedia continues, "The scale for measurement of a qualitative variable is a set of unordered or nominal categories" (Wang, 2004, p. 894). Nominal categories are simply names with certain attributes. No amount of mathematical or graphical representation would adequately explain them. For example: gender (female, male); party identification (democratic, Republican, Independent); marital status (single, married, divorced, widowed); ethnic groups (with categories such as white, black, Hispanic, Asian, other); employment status (unemployed, employed, retired); and religious affiliation (with categories such as Catholic, Jewish, Protestant, Muslim, Buddhist, other, none) are all qualitative variables (Wang, 2004). All these variables are non-measurable in any sort of numerical terms or mathematical relations. In a particular culture, male or female is understood as per a set of attributes which are meaningful to the members of that particular culture. These meaningful orientations vary as space and time would vary. So, as there is no singular measurable standard for qualitative variables, numerical differences are also inappropriate for measuring them.

Outside the realm of quantitative studies, the value-laden social world is an important arena for research that needs proper attention and interpretation. But, to conduct research scientifically in this arena, quantitative methods are of no use. The 'meaningful social world' needs different methods that would systematically collect, analyse and interpret data, establish attributional relation among qualitative variables, and write detailed accounts of the subject under study; which would, in turn, give rise to a body of qualitative knowledge about society.

The methods that the early qualitative researchers in sociology used in their research work were not created by them to satisfy this novel requirement. Rather, these methods were already present and were being used in different disciplines. By inviting these methods in the discipline of sociology, the early researchers successfully generated rich and deep accounts of their 'field'. Some of these popular studies were: 'The Hobo' by Nels Anderson (1923), 'Street Corner Society' by William Foote Whyte (1943), 'Asylums' by Erving Goffman (1961), 'The Managed Heart' by Arlie Russell Hochschild (1983). In the next section, let us observe what methods they used in their qualitative research.

19.4 Ethnography as A Qualitative Research Method

Discussing about qualitative research methods, one of the most popular methods that we need to understand in detail is Ethnography. The early qualitative research in sociology like 'The Hobo' or 'Street Corner Society' was ethnographic research. Similarly, "The Polish Peasant in Europe and America" by W. I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki (1918-20) was a case-study. Another important example of case-study research is Erving Goffman's "Asylums: Essays on the Condition of the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates" (1961) which he conducted on St. Elizabeths Psychiatric Hospital in Washington, DC.

It is not an easy task to understand how these methods came to be adopted into the discipline of sociology, how they have worked and changed over time. The history of these methods is versatile and full of different narratives. As we have already gone through the fact that these methods were not created within this discipline and were imported from elsewhere (other social science's disciplines; even in which these methods were not truly born), we will not address the issue of birth of these methods. Rather, let us go through a short history of qualitative research methods within the discipline of sociology.

Nine progressive periods have been mentioned by Denzin and Lincon which highlights the difficulty of characterizing 'qualitative research (Bryman, 2012). These are briefed as follows (Bryman, 2012, p. 381):

- 1) The Traditional Period: The duration of this phase ranges from early twentieth century to the Second World War. This phase is characterized by the early works of the Chicago school theorists. Reliance upon positivist philosophy was observed in this phase.
- 2) Modernist Phase: This phase lasts up to early 1970's. In this phase, the researchers largely followed the path of traditionalists, but at the same time sought their own path too and reflected upon the nature of their craft.
- 3) Blurred genres: This phase is ranged from 1970 to 1986. This phase is marked by an exploratory rigour to set out from the clutches of positivist tendencies and search for other epistemological, ontological and theoretical ideas.
- 4) Crises of representation: This phase occurred during mid-1980's onwards. This phase is where the researchers became aware that their research works have limited

scientific authority, because it is only one way of representing the study; and there can be multiple ways of representing the same study. All those representations would be different from each other and none can claim the ultimate 'truth' value.

- 5) Postmodern period of experimental ethnographic writing: This was in mid-1990's. Following the basic tenets of postmodernism, in this phase, researchers have tried to represent the people differently upon whom they conduct their research.
- 6) Post-experimental enquiry: This is the time of 1995-2000. Denzin and Lincoln described this phase with the emergence of AltaMira press for qualitative research that encouraged experimental and interdisciplinary writings.
- 7) The methodologically contested present: The time frame for this phase is 2000-2004. This period is signified by disagreements and debates between researchers and research organisations about qualitative research work and its methodology. How is qualitative research possible and how the methods should be devised and applied - remained the sole topic of these debates.
- 8) Now: The time mentioned by Denzin and Lincoln for this phase is 2005-?. This period reasserts the traditional scientific practices through a giving a backlash to qualitative research.
- 9) The Fractured Future: The authors speculated that the future holds a separation of camps among the qualitative researchers; where different camps would seek different ways to conduct their research works.

These phases do offer a useful insight in the development of qualitative research work over the decades; however, one must be cautious while reading for the fact that there are several limitations of this unfolding narration.

Now that we have a general idea about what qualitative research methods are, how they work and how they have been used over the years; in the following sections, we will discuss about Ethnography subsequently in detail.

19.5 What Is Ethnography?

Ethnography as a method of knowledge has a long history going back to the colonisers' initiatives to know about the colonised other. It was during the nineteenth century when almost all of the colonial powers from the 'west' had set sail towards the 'rest' of the world, had established trading camps, fought wars and manipulated the internal political

affairs of those lands, colonised and compromised the native indigenous cultures and established colonial governments to rule over the colonised people, exploited them, looted from them, and swept away wealth to their own country - and with it, built what we know as 'the first-world' today. But all these did not happen overnight; neither did it happen merely through using brute force. Force, when directly applied, generates reversals. So, the colonisers chose other ways. They investigated into the cultures of the colonised, tried to learn about their everyday lives, their beliefs, practices, ritual orders, social systems etc; and manipulated their history in favour of their own interests. Now, how did they do so?

India has been colonised under the British Empire for nearly 200 years. British rulers soon realised that crude exploitation will not perpetuate their superior position in the native lands. After the 1770's Bengal famine, which occurred six years after the battle of Buxar (thirteen years post-Plassey war) where British won the ultimate victory against the Indian forces, the Crown of England realised that to keep their power for a longer period in Indian lands, sheer exercise of crude power will prove to be dangerous. So, they employed the alternative method of manipulating with the history, culture and mentalité of the colonised. A survey Institution, Survey of India, was already set up in 1767 by the East India Company. In 1784, Asiatic Society was founded. Subsequently, in 1823, Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland was established. Indian Museum, Kolkata was established on 1814. Geological Survey of India and Archaeological Survey of India was established respectively on 1851 & 1861. All these research organisations, and also the others, had one motive and that is to learn the life in Asia (which is an 'other' to Europe). These colonial initiatives gave rise to the discipline 'Anthropology' whose task was to know the world outside of the 'west'; while 'Sociology' had the task of studying the modern 'western' society.

To study the world outside of the 'west', anthropologists applied the method of ethnography - which penetrates deep into the lives of the 'exotic other'. Gradually, with practice, ethnography became like a patent method for anthropology. Meaning, ethnographic training came to be considered as a must-learn for any student of anthropology in order to become an anthropologist. In the nineteenth century, anthropologists like E. B. Taylor, L. H. Morgan, F. Boas and in the twentieth century, B. Malinowski, A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, M. Mead, Claude-Levi Strauss, R. Benedict etc provided some seminal ethnographic works. In the twentieth century, this method was 'adopted' by the sociologists - as we have already seen in the previous section.

Putting simply, "Ethnography is the art and science of describing a group or a culture" (Fetterman, 2004). The researcher goes to the field (the place where her/his intended group or culture is situated) and gets immersed in it. S/he mixes with the people of that group by following their ways of life and tries to get into their 'meaningful world'. By this, the researcher tries to generate a holistic insider's perspective of what it means to live in that group or culture. This can be contrasted with studies based on structured observation or survey - in which the researcher remains an 'outsider' throughout the entire research process. Ethnography identifies and addresses the problem of the researcher being an outsider. The findings of a study where the researcher remains an outsider never penetrates into the 'natural' setting of the respondents; and thus, fails to capture the 'actual' scenario of the subjects under study. This is why, ethnography tries to erase the 'outsider' label over the researcher and attempts to transform her/him as an 'insider' to the group under study, so that s/he can gain an insight of the 'natural' order of their lives.

○ Is 'Ethnography' and 'Participant Observation' Same?

The terms 'ethnography' and 'participant observation' has been used interchangeably by several authors. Some prefer to address this research work as 'participant observation' for here; the researcher participates into the life of the 'natives' along with other 'natives' within the 'native' culture. But the researcher also remains aware about her/his position and duty; i.e. to observe the 'native' culture.

On the other hand, others prefer the term 'ethnography' over 'participant observation' because, for them, the latter term does not sufficiently explain the research work. The term 'ethnography' denotes more angles and aspects than 'participant observation' can.

In the 1970's 'ethnography' as a term became popularized. 'Ethnography' explores not only the means of collecting data, but the processes of interpretation and processes of analysis too. Its faculty also extends to writing the 'narrative'. Whereas, by 'participant observation', we can only be notified about process of collecting data from the field. (Bryman, 2012)

19.5.1 Ethnographic Design

When we talk about research designs, it is usually thought of as a pre-plan prepared for the whole conduct of research. Just like a blue-print is made before erecting a building which describes the plan of the construction; research design is such a plan which

decides what to do, when to do, and how to do.

But, when it comes to ethnographic research, a plan made beforehand seems implausible. Ethnography, unlike structured observations or interviews, is relatively open ended and depends a lot upon the researcher's improvisations. For the 'field' in ethnographic research is always an 'unknown' zone with which the researcher must enmesh her/himself; and there is no predilection would help this eventful encounter.

Again, this gives rise to an important question. Is this sort of 'fortune seeking' approach really acceptable in scientific community? Is the ethnographer really a person who, in her/his mind, has no structure of approach or any plan for carrying out the research work? Is this purely a vacant exploration?

To answer these questions, we must keep in our minds that no matter what, the ethnographer is no vacant persona. S/he has undergone long and detailed process of training in order to become an 'ethnographer'. Therefore, the 'no-plan' approach is not entirely a true statement. Obviously, there is structure to ethnographic research work. But it is fluid and mutable to the circumstances. This relatively flexible methodology of ethnography is what makes it different from positivistic methodologies. But this flexibility is no mere 'fortune-seeking'. Here, the scientific community relies upon the scientific status of the ethnographer and her/his expertise. Different ethnographic accounts over the same field shall vary. But this does not mean that one ethnographer is wrong and the other is right. The scientific rigour of their studies determines their quality.

Let us discuss some rationale for ethnographic research work (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007):

- The 'field' is real. Meaning, the field is not artificially created (as is usually done in experimental research). The researcher intends to observe people in their 'natural' setting.
- There is a great range for sources of data in ethnographic research. But, usually the informal conversations and on-field experiences of the ethnographer is considered to be the main source.
- The 'unstructured' method of data collection has two major connotations. One, there is no stipulated procedural research design to follow; two, the categories employed for interpreting data are generated out of the data analysis process, and are not implicated beforehand.

- The size of the field is limited and focused in order to generate rich and deep details.
- The interpretation and analysis of data follows a descriptive, explanatory and theoretical dimension of qualitative writing; whereas, quantitative analysis plays a subordinate part.

19.6 Usage and Types of Ethnography

Use of ethnographic research has sprouted out of the debate against positivism and its various approaches to construct knowledge. As positivistic research methods often distort the 'natural' order of the field by several manners; and then, collect data from that 'distorted' realm, analyses them and conclude findings with a 'truth' claim. Ethnographic research has been about how to capture the 'natural' order of the field in itself - by avoiding any sorts of distortion. The prevalent debate - positivism vs. Naturalism - has delved into the great epistemological question: what should be the right manner of acquiring/constructing knowledge? And, both the sides have come up with logical arguments supportive to their positions. As Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson explores, for positivism, the solution is the standardization of research procedures; for naturalism, it is getting into direct contact with the social world, and in extreme form the requirement that the ethnographers 'surrender' to the cultures they wish to study (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Now, neither the sides can adequately justify their positions. The standardized research instruments and procedures do not guaranty fetching any 'real' data. The standard picture is not the actual picture. Neither the 'surrendered' researcher is any empty vessel whose gaze captures the uncontaminated 'realness' from the field. So, "it is argued that what both positivism and naturalism fail to take account is the fact that social researchers are part of the social world they study" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). The sharp distinction between the knower (researcher) and the known (researched) cause both for positivism and naturalism to provide for a fitted approach to study the social world. Ethnography as a method grapples with these debates and tries to be useful for creation of knowledge.

Over the decades, several types of ethnographic research have emerged. Let us discuss some of those in brief:

- a) Autoethnography: When the ethnographer studies her/his own life, it is called Autoethnography. This is a convergence of ethnography and autobiography.

- b) **Virtual Ethnography:** It is the ethnographic study of the digital life. As virtual spaces have become rapidly grown within the last decade and the present, virtual ethnography becomes an important research work to study the life of the people online.
- c) **Institutional Ethnography:** This refers to the ethnographic study of people within the institutional context. It tries to narrate how several institutions affect the lives of the people, and how the people act as per the multi-institutional set-up. This method was first developed and applied by Dorothy E. Smith in her studies.
- d) **Sensory Ethnography:** This approach to ethnography focuses upon how the bodily sense perceptions capture the social environment (e.g. sound of music, noise of traffic, smell of slum or a five-star restaurant, view from a tower etc). It tries to take account of the human experiences of the social world. Sarah Pink's work is foundational to this approach.

Based upon the researcher's perspective, we can divide two folds:

- a) **Emic Perspective:** It is the 'insider's perspective'. Meaning, when the researcher tries to study the life of a group of people from the perspective of those people, it is called emic perspective.
- b) **Etic Perspective:** This is the 'Outsider's perspective'. When the researcher studies the life of a group of people by comparing it with concepts and theories created outside of that group, it is called etic perspective.

19.7 Concept of 'Field' in Ethnographic Research

When it comes to social research, 'field' is an important concept that we must understand. 'Field' refers to that particular area upon which the research enquiry has been based. There is no reason to think at all that the 'field' is always a geographical location. In qualitative research, 'field of research' can have several meanings. Various defining features of the 'field' of a particular research ensure its vitality and significance. For example, size of the field, components of the field, dimensions of the field etc. The researcher must acquaint herself/himself with the field in a very well manner; otherwise, the research might get tampered even if all the procedures are conducted logically.

Now we will see how ethnographic studies look over the concept of 'field'. In these studies, defining the 'field' is rather a complicated task. As the ethnographer usually has

the task of capturing the holistic scene from her/his field, there are several obstacles that s/he faces. Let us break these down and discuss each in brief.

19.7.1 Approaching The 'Field'

The ethnographer's approach to the field is not that much simple to that of a surveyor. Surveyor approaches the field as an outsider and remains so for the entire research process. But, here, the ethnographer has a lot to deal with. S/he must build a rapport in order to mix well with the people. This rambling process takes time. Situational factors are very important here. The position of the researcher, her/his approach must not be taken as any extreme.

The ethnographer, in a great many cases, has to hide her/his personal identity and intentions in order to keep the targeted people 'normal'. Otherwise, the people might get conscious of the presence of the ethnographer and the ethnographer shall risk her/his study. The covert approach to the field raises an ethical issue, which we will address on the latter section.

19.7.2 Facing The 'Field'

An ethnographer's 'field' is a holistic entity. S/he must be aware about all that is happening within the 'field', including her/his experiences. As the ethnographer do not have any questionnaire or any structured intent of carrying out her/his research; s/he must improvise and become a persona well suited in the field. The ethnographer must be able to 'define the situation' on field and what her/his stance has come to be. To keep the rigour of research alive, s/he might have to configure and reconfigure her/his position now and then on field as per the situations occurs.

19.7.3 Takeaways From The Field

Unlike the surveyor, the ethnographer's takeaways cannot be listed. The experiences from the field, that the ethnographer gathers, are total. It is not some mere answers to some pre-crafted questions. Rather, the ethnographer's deep involvement and improvisations gives space to several open-ended tales. The descriptions of these tales are rich and thick (Geertz, 1973). Therefore, the ethnographic experiences of the field are often life-transforming for the ethnographer. The ethnographer takes field-notes and then analyses and writes it according to her/his study.

19.8 Writing Ethnography

Ethnography is a method that not only guides the collection of data, or its interpretation and analysis; it also significantly addresses the issue of writing. Here, what this method offers the most that many other methods of social science research usually don't. Writing ethnography is a very important part, probably the most crucial, in the whole research process. In the late twentieth century, the issue of writing ethnography was first brought to sight.

Ethnographic writing is a tough task, for it is not like writing any quantitative research findings that seeks statistical relations and summarises the research based upon it. The ethnographer faces a particular 'reality' in the field that is composed of numerous factors all working together simultaneously. To write this 'reality' or the ethnographer's experience of this 'reality' under the analytic shelter is a great hurdle. The 'reality' encountered is a wholesome phenomenon - how would one write it? The ethnographer has to disentangle the complex factorial interplays of social reality, analyse and interpret them, and then hybridize them to a synthesis for ethnographic account (Hammersley, 2007). This takes a certain engineering skill of the writing process. Therefore, the ethnographic writing is actually an analytic process which also narrates the ethnographic account. So, we can say that ethnography is the 'art of writing'. The ethnographer must be a 'good engineer of writing' in order to write a good ethnographic account.

The ethnographer uses rhetoric, metaphors, different story-telling styles, ironies etc in her/his writing. All of these are necessary expressions that build up the gravity of the text. So, all of these creates the intricate atmosphere that decides the genres of ethnographic writing.

19.9 Problems of Ethnography

No matter how much deep thought has been invested in a method of acquiring knowledge, it cannot become 'the perfect method'. So, like any other methods, ethnography also has many major issues that need to be enlightened and discussed. Here, we will point out some of those major problems of ethnography.

- **ETHNOGRAPHER'S POSITION:** Even if there has a lot of efforts been put to make the ethnographer's position seem 'natural' in the field; however, this is an impossibility. The ethnographer, her/his identity as an ethnographer, her/his intent

of study, approaches, training, paradigmatic setup etc already prevails and cannot just evaporate magically. Therefore, the ethnographer no matter how much try to capture the 'natural' setting of the field will eventually fail. The way s/he will observe, interact, register, interpret and write about the field will obviously be affected by her/his preconceptions and training. So, the 'natural' voice shall be dominated by the 'scientific' voice.

- **INFILTRATION:** The ethnographer's intent to study a group of people would cause an infiltration to the everyday lives of those people. Knowingly, or unknowingly, the ethnographer's presence and actions shall manipulate those people's lives in any manner.
- **ETHICAL CONCERNS:** One of the major concerns for ethnographic research revolves around its ethical conduct. To get immersed into the field, the ethnographer often has to camouflage her/his identity and intent. This is called covert research. But, covert research is a red signal for ethical conduct of research. Here, the subject peoples are unaware that they are being studied upon. Hence, the question of consent is ignored. Even if the ethnographer reveals her/his true identity and intent at the end of the research, still the ethical issue cannot be completely tackled. As the knower-known binary prevails between the ethnographer and the subject peoples; ethicality is ironically exercised.
- **'GOING NATIVE':** When the ethnographer, being so immersed with the culture and people under study, loses sight from her/his intent of research, it is called 'going native'. It is the loss of the peculiar balance between the 'people's persona' and 'ethnographer's persona' within the researcher's personality.

There are several other problems that need serious attention. However, we will end the discussion around ethnography here with a short note on 'reflexivity'.

○ Reflexivity

Reflexivity is the ability of the researcher to refer to her/his own position while studying. It means that the researcher remembers who s/he is, what training has s/he undergone, what is her/his social position, what motives and preferences does s/he has etc. This elaborates that the researcher is a part of the knowledge that s/he is constructing. Therefore, whatever s/he is advancing is not a 'truth' in general; rather it is a useful scientific account which can be questioned, contested and furthered, also benefited from.

Ethnography without reflexivity is a problem. It faces the trouble of generalisation. So, a responsible ethnographer should be reflexive in her/his writing. Because, every writings are distinct representations of the 'real' that have been studied by one or many ethnographers.

19.10 Conclusion

We have discussed about the qualitative research methods and ethnography as a method for qualitative analysis. There are several strengths and weaknesses of this method. This method approaches the social reality and try to extract knowledge in its unique way. It is impossible for a method to be perfect, for it attends to some particular angles in some particular styles while other sides remain unattended.

19.11 Summary

However, 'doubt' remains science's most efficient method. Science does not blindly follow anything, not even its own methods or instruments of knowledge. That is why; it keeps transforming itself, because it transforms its methods of acquiring knowledge. So, these methods that we have studied in this unit are constantly transforming, dealing with different 'doubts'. This dynamism is what keeps science alive. The 'doubt' or the 'question' keeps science alive.

19.11 QUESTIONS

Answer the following (descriptive):

- a) What are qualitative research methods?
- b) How have these methods evolved?
- c) Why do we need qualitative research methods?
- d) What is ethnography? What are its types?
- e) Is 'field' an important space in ethnographic research? Why?
- f) How do you distinct between ethnographer's field and survey researcher's field?
- g) What are the major problems of ethnography?

Answer the following (short):

- a) What is participant observation?
- b) What is emic and etic perspective?
- c) What do you mean by 'going native'?
- d) Write a short note on: reflexivity

19.12 References

- Atkinson, P. & Hammersley, M. (2007). *Ethnography: Principles and Practices* (3rd ed.). Routledge Taylor and Francis group. London and New York.
- Bryman, A. (2012). *Social Research Methods* (4th ed). Oxford University Press
- Fetterman, D. M. (2004). *Ethnography*. Bryman, Lewis-Beck & Liao (Eds.). *The Sage Encyclopedia of Social Science Research methods* (pp. 328-332). Sage Publication
- Hammersley, M. (2004). *Case Study*. Bryman, Lewis-Beck & Liao (Eds.). *The Sage Encyclopedia of Social Science Research methods* (pp. 92-94). Sage Publication
- Hammersley, M. (2006). *What's Wrong with Ethnography? Methodological Exploration*. Routledge. London and New York
- Hammersley et al. (Eds.). (2000). *Case Study Method: Key Issues, Key Texts*. Sage Publication. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi
- Wang, Cheng-Lung. (2004). *Qualitative Variable*. Bryman, Lewis-Beck & Liao (Eds.). *The Sage Encyclopedia of Social Science Research methods* (pp. 894-895). Sage Publication

Unit 20: Methods of Qualitative Research: Case-Study

Structure

20.1 Learning objectives

20.2 Introduction

20.3 A brief reflection to qualitative research methods

20.4 Case-study method

20.5 What is Case-study?

20.5.1 Case-study Design

20.6 Usage and Types of Case-study

20.7 Some major concerns of Case-study

20.8 Conclusion

20.9 Summary

20.10 Questions

20.11 References

20.1 Learning Objectives

- To focus upon case-study as a major qualitative research method.
- To trace the significance of case-study as a research method.
- To learn how case-study research is designed.
- To know about different types of case-study.
- To be aware of usages and concerns of case-study research.

20.2 Introduction

The rise of qualitative research methods in social sciences in the 20th century cannot be mistaken as its birth. Modern science, what we call it today, emerged during the European enlightenment era with a new vigour to know about the world through a logical and factual lens. Backed up positivist philosophy, mere quantitative research

became the order of the day. As numerical measurements appeared to be more concrete and abstract figures that offers reliable basis of data, qualitative variables were deemed lesser important than quantitative ones. Modern social science began with an inclined slant towards quantitative data and quantitative research. After a century of reign, at the beginning of 20th century, the problems and limitations of pure quantitative research was slowly realised.

Pure quantitative research with numerical data and statistical analysis always fails to capture the imbricated social reality - it simplifies the complex social realities into numerical comparisons that breaks the coalition of different elements that make up the reality in itself. This separation or breakings in itself distorts the reality, and thus, the knowledge derived is distorted. The veracity claim that quantitative research posits, is limited. Therefore, a need to study the social reality in descriptive terms, other than just statistical measurements and assumptions, is real. But, addressing this complex social reality is no easy task. To study this reality, that does not allow to be captured under mere numerical relations, efficient methods were needed. Those methods that shall address the complex social reality systematically and deal with qualitative variables. These are the qualitative research methods.

Case-study research is considered as one of the most valuable qualitative research methods, through which we get to know about a unitary case in detail. Case-study research attempts to pick a case that has naturally occurred in its natural setting. This means, the case is not to be forcefully constructed. For sociological case-study research, the case is an event or an issue that has happened for its own reason within the social reality. The case-study researcher observes such an event or an issue and then constructs a case out of it, studies it minutely and tries to find out causal relations hidden within it.

In positivist research methods, no scope is available to focus on a particular case and go into its details while studying it. For positivist research always focuses upon finding out 'generalised truths' or 'governing laws' that applies to the whole of the society or a macro part of the social structure, it never is concerned about 'particularities' of the social reality. So, even if those positivist research finds out some general governing principles of the society, a large section of the social reality always remains beyond its grasp. The 'particular' constitute an interesting realm of research and knowledge. It is not to claim that the 'particular' is a wholly erratic event that do not follow any general principles of governance. Instead, it is to think that the 'particular' has some amount of autonomy in it too, a specificity or an agency, that renders a reality different than general

truths. Therefore, just to capture the 'generalised truth' does not mean knowing the 'particular'. The 'particular' follows and deviates from the 'general truth' simultaneously. This is why every case is different, yet not mutually exclusive from each other. Each case is unique in its own way, yet not entirely alien to the structural patterns. The failure of positivist research to capture the uniqueness of each cases eludes the need for addressing these cases based on an alternative methodology.

Rise of anti-positivism found its roots in Weber's and Simmel's thoughts. Weber's idea of *Verstehen* and Simmel's idea of *Sociation* taught us about the space that is being left out in positivist research findings - the world of meaning. Qualitative research methods stand with this stance, i.e. these methods try to pursue the world of meaning. Human society is always based on processes of signification and translation of meanings. If sociology fails to deal with it and remains satisfied with some 'generalised truths' of society, the disciplinarian quest would never be positively prospective. Case-study, in its search focused upon the 'particularities' of a case, and through it, trying to construct an analytical generalisation, if not empirical generalisation, contributes to sociology with its rich offerings.

In this unit, we will be talking about case-study research in sociology. But before that, let us go through a succinct account of the significance of qualitative research methods and techniques.

20.3 A Brief Reflection to Qualitative Research Methods

There are several qualitative research methods prevalent in the uses of sociologists today. Some of them can be named: ethnography, case-study, content analysis, critical discourse analysis, life history, narrative analysis etc. But, as we already know, these methods were not particularly created for sociological research purposes. These methods were used by other researchers from other branches of social sciences. Sociology, as a discipline, adopted these methods when the need became coarse.

The dominance of positivist philosophy in scientific research was already being questioned by the early half of the nineteenth century. Can value-neutral research really capture the 'true' image of the social reality? Is value-neutrality possible at all? Is it desirable anyway? Is numerical analysis at all value free?

The scientific community became sceptic upon the sake of 'value-neutrality' of the positivist research and its truth-claim. The value-neutral 'disengaged researcher' seemed

like an impossible person. But as this claim of 'disengagement' were actually made by the positivist researcher, the knowledge that they provided were looked upon with criticality. Issues of reliability arose over those findings. New ways were needed to learn about the society. Ways that would not merely predict relations between variables under strict numerical terms. Rather, would focus upon the problem of meaning of the variables, would go further to analyse those meanings by getting engaged with the reality. But this engagement is not same as social members engaging in every-day life actions. The qualitative researcher is a trained persona who engages with the reality and traces the constitution of different meanings and experiences of social life, but also maintains a critical distance from it. Therefore, using qualitative research methods need different modes of trainings and certain level of expertise.

20.4 Case-study Method

An important qualitative research method is Case-study method that has a popular practice today in sociology and other social sciences. This method was adopted, like ethnography, by the early Chicago school theorists who critiqued and wanted an alternative to positivism and its methods of research. Those researchers used data from social work case records, like in Thomas and Znaniecki's 'The Polish Peasant in Europe and America' (1918-20), and gradually this practice eased up and became frequent (Hammersley & Gomm, 2000). Apart from sociology, case-study has been widely used by medical practitioners and psychologists or councillors. We might also find several other instances where this method is in use. But the question arises from here is: Can these common uses of this method become a standard practice for sociology or other social sciences?

The common use of case-study might be labelled as less-scientific or unscientific while judging by the standards of science. The strict process of systemization of logical enquiry and staple methodological concerns that extracts scientific knowledge distinct from any common-sense knowledge would accuse the common use of case-study method with several charges. However, with growing challenges and questions against the prevalent methodological rigorousness of science and its resulting in 'authentic' outcomes; the stipulate need for drawing a clear definition of case-study is no longer a demand. However, this does not mean that we cannot separate case-study method from other methods of social sciences, but the boundaries remain 'fuzzy-edged' (Hammersley & Gomm, 2000).

20.5 What Is Case-study?

Alan Bryman writes, "A case study entails the detailed exploration of a specific case, which could be a community, organisation, or person" (Bryman, 2012). Robert E. Stake argues that, "case study research is concerned with the complexity and particular nature of the case in question" (Stake, 1995). So, we can observe that case-study deals with a 'case'. What constitutes this 'case'? How is it different from survey method or experimental method and their ways of research?

○ **CASE:** A 'case' is a particular instance naturally constructed within the social setting. The researcher finds such a case that has occurred; and focuses upon studying it. So, the unit of analysis in case-study research is one particular case. In that sense, the surveyor, in survey research, deals with several cases. But the difference is that the surveyor is strictly framed by time and structure of the research. The surveyor does not invest much on each respondent (unit of analysis). Her/his task is to generate an overview from a representative sample that consists of several respondents. But, the case-study researcher does not seek for an overview. S/he focuses upon one particular case and examines it deeply and thoroughly.

The experimental researcher, on the other hand, creates a 'case'. Meaning, she creates an artificial setting via controlling several factors and manipulating variables to observe a particularly conditioned reflex. But, the case-study researcher does not 'create' any case. Rather, s/he chooses the 'case' that has happened in its natural setting and then examines it.

What is important in case-study is to know how to style the study. Let us discuss about the design of case-study in the next section.

20.5.1 Case-study Design

Case-study research is a time taking process for it needs detailed scrutiny of the 'case' under study. Framing a structured design does not always prove to be viable. However, the researcher must be trained under scientific rigour so that s/he can keep up the standard of scientificity in her/his work.

As one of the founding fathers of sociology, Max Weber, said that objectivity begins after selection of the research topic; the case-study researcher chooses a particular 'case' according to her/his personal interests. But after that, s/he must be guided by her/his

training and methodological obligations.

There can be several methods of data collection employed in case-study research. These can be unstructured interviews, document analysis, narrative analysis, archive analysis etc.

From all these, the researcher collects a deep and raw data. Quantitative data are superseded by qualitative data. The researcher, then, analyses and interprets through writing. Here, we might find a lot of similarities between ethnography and case-study. Writing ethnography and writing case-study are equally important parts of research. The case-study researcher also has to be a good 'engineer of writing', like the ethnographer.

20.6 Usage and Types of Case-study

Case-study research provides a rich and thorough account of a particular case. In order to understand the usage of case-study, we must understand why this rich and deep account of a particular case is necessary. Social life is a multi-layered reality. These layers cannot be easily penetrated by simple survey research. Neither these can be truly known through experimental research, which already manipulates the 'natural' setting as per its own demands. If not looked upon closely enough, a social event might remain unexplored and unknown forever. That is why a deep and detailed account is needed. What case-study and its thick description (Geertz, 1973) can offer is a slice of the lifeworld that people are living in their 'normal' social lives.

There can be several types of cases that the researchers study. Yin (2005) offers a five-fold typology of the cases that are usually studied (Bryman, 2012). These are as follows (Bryman, 2012):

- **THE CRITICAL CASE:** This type of case study depends upon a chosen case that allows a better understanding of the circumstances in which the hypotheses will and will not hold, and a well-developed theory of the researcher that critically analyses the case. Example: the study by Festinger et al. (1956) on the religious cult that believed that the end of the world is about to happen.
- **THE EXTREAME OR UNIQUE CASE:** This is a type of case that focuses upon something essentially unique. For example: M. Mead's (1928) study 'Coming of Age in Samoa'.
- **THE REPRESENTATIVE OR TYPICAL CASE:** The objective of this type of

case-study, in Yin's words', is - "the objective is to capture the circumstances and conditions of an everyday commonplace situation" (Yin, 2009). So, not only extreme or unique occurrences make a case; but, the most common and mundane happenings are also worth studying. For example, Russell and Tyler's 'Thank Heaven for Little Girls: 'girl Heaven' and the Commercial Context of Feminine Childhood' (2002).

- **THE REVELATORY CASE:** These types of case studies are those which analyse a previously inaccessible phenomenon. For example, W. F. Whyte's 'Street Corner Society' (1943).
- **THE LONGITUDINAL CASE:** When a case study has more than one juncture in time; meaning, the case is studied in more than one point in time, it is a longitudinal case-study.

All these types are like ideal types for case-study. These overlap with each other in real case-study research.

20.7 Some Major Concerns of Case-study

There is a series of methodological concerns for case-study research. Some of these are briefly discussed in the following (Hammersley, 2004):

- **GENERALIZABILITY:** Due to case-studies are only focused upon one case, it is tough to draw any general conclusions from the research. Case-studies focus upon particularities of social phenomena, rather than finding 'universal truths'. Therefore, generalizing the findings from case-study research is a questionable task.
- **CAUSAL OR NARRATIVE ANALYSIS:** Case-study research often claims that it can establish causal relation by studying one or two cases. But it is, however, a debatable issue that whether this much is adequate proof to sustain a causal relation or not.
- **THE NATURE OF THEORY:** A lot of debate surrounds around the role of theory in case-study research. Researchers argue upon the matter that how a theory should be used and where to use them in case-study research?
- **AUTHENTICITY AND AUTHORITY:** Much has been debated about authenticity of case-study research. How to validate the voices of the people involved in the case? Often, the claim to authenticity depends upon case-study researcher's authority to reject any personal bias being involved in the account. But this again raises the

question - is the case-study researcher an altogether separate entity from the case? Does s/he not become a part in the case while studying it?

20.8 Conclusion

It is important for us to keep in mind that the methods that we use in research are guided by the philosophies that back them. A research method can be used from alternative philosophical stand-points. A method that is associated with positivist research and analysis, may be modified and used in research that follows anti-positivist paradigm. For example, a content analysis may only be focused upon quantitative data, which will make that quantitative research. However, even if such free use can be done, it is often not practiced in such a manner. For, every method carries its own history with itself. That history restricts its presence in the scientific disciplinarian usage. This gives rise to some actual problems too that are very hard to overcome. For example, survey research is used for collection of large-scale data in a short period of time. Therefore, surveys are not preferred in qualitative research. Because, the data that we get from surveys are wide ranged, but is not deep enough to analyse the subtleties of meanings from that.

So, methods are best understood along with its histories. the histories of a method are folded in its current usages. Surely, it restricts the method, but enables it too, in order to systematically be applied as per requirements. The restrictions and habit of usages of the method does not also entirely mean that it is subservient to the philosophy that historically backs it up. Therefore, methods are in itself critical entities. Those are not something pure or those are not something beyond doubts. A good researcher always struggles with the task of refurbishing her/his methods and methodology. This is where science looms free.

20.9 Summary

In this unit, we have learned about case-study research as a prominent method of qualitative analysis. Significance of qualitative research in sociology was realised in the early twentieth century, as quantitative research based on positivist methodology was already showing its risks and limitations. It's failure to capture the 'particular' social reality, in urge for seeking 'general truths' about the society, placed it in front of some of the biggest challenges. These challenges were not some that could have been answer appropriately by positivist methodology. Therefore, a need for alternative methodology

and proper methods aroused. Case-study method is such a method that was adapted by the sociologists back then in order to tackle those challenges.

We have learned about case-study research design and its implications in sociological research. We have also captured some of the types of case-study research and some of the major issues around this method. However, this does not entirely train us to be an expert of this method. No method is actually realised until it is applied or practiced in the real world. So, without a real practice, our learnings may remain ever incomplete.

20.10 Questions

Answer the following (descriptive):

- a) Explain the significance of qualitative research methods in social sciences.
- b) Does qualitative research work needs separate trainings and expertise than quantitative research work?
- c) What is case-study? Explain case-study research design.
- d) What are the major types of case-study research?
- e) What are the prime concerns faced by case-study research?

Answer the following (short):

- a) Is pure 'value-neutrality' possible?
- b) What is a 'case'?
- c) Name different types of cases mentioned by Yin.
- d) Write a short note on the issue of generalizability of case-study research findings.

20.11 References

- Bryman, A. (2012). Social Research Methods (4th ed). Oxford University Press
- Hammersley et al. (Eds.). (2000). Case Study Method: Key Issues, Key Texts. Sage Publication. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi
- Hammersley, M. (2004). Case Study. Bryman, Lewis-Beck & Liao (Eds.). The Sage Encyclopedia of Social Science Research methods (pp. 92-94). Sage Publication

- Wang, Cheng-Lung. (2004). Qualitative Variable. Bryman, Lewis-Beck & Liao (Eds.). The Sage Encyclopedia of Social Science Research methods (pp. 894-895). Sage Publication

Unit 21 Mixed Method Research in Sociology

Structure

- 21.1. Learning objectives**
- 21.2 Introduction**
- 21.3 Defining Mixed Method Research**
- 21.4 Philosophical Foundations**
- 21.5 Designing Mixed Method Research**
 - 21.5.1 Determining the Research Questions**
 - 21.5.2 Choosing the Mixed Method Design**
- 21.6 Sampling Strategies**
- 21.7 Data Collection Methods**
- 21.8 Data Analysis**
- 21.9 Data Collection and Analysis**
 - 21.9.1 Qualitative Data Collection**
 - 21.9.2 Quantitative Data Collection**
- 21.10 Data Analysis Techniques**
 - 21.10.1 Qualitative Analysis**
 - 21.10.2 Quantitative Analysis**
- 21.11 Integration of Qualitative and Quantitative Data**
- 21.12 Conclusion**
- 21.13 Summary**
- 21.14 Questions**
- 21.15 References**
- 21.16 Glossary**

21.1. Learning objectives

- Understanding Mixed Methods Research (MMR)
- Research Design and Integration
- Data Collection Strategies
- Data Analysis and Interpretation

21.2 Introduction

Mixed method research combines qualitative and quantitative research approaches within a single study or series of studies, providing a comprehensive understanding of complex social phenomena. This methodology is particularly valuable in sociology, where diverse human experiences and societal patterns require a multifaceted approach. By integrating qualitative and quantitative data, mixed methods enable a holistic analysis, capturing both the depth and breadth of social issues (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). The emphasis is on the term 'mixed,' signifying the essential step of data linkage or integration at appropriate stages of the research process. Purposeful data integration allows researchers to achieve a more comprehensive view of their research landscape by examining phenomena from multiple perspectives and using diverse research lenses.

This approach is particularly valuable in sociology, where the complexity of human behaviour and social structures often requires diverse and complementary perspectives. By leveraging the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative data, sociologists can delve into the depth and breadth of social issues, yielding richer and more nuanced insights. Mixed methods enable researchers to capture the multifaceted nature of social life, offering a fuller picture that single-method studies may not achieve.

In sociology, the strength of mixed methods lies in its ability to address the limitations of qualitative and quantitative approaches by combining their advantages. Qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews and ethnographies, offer detailed and contextualized understandings of social experiences and meanings. Quantitative methods, like surveys and statistical analyses, provide the capacity to generalize findings across larger populations and identify patterns and trends. By integrating these methodologies, sociologists can enhance the validity and reliability of their findings through triangulation. This methodological pluralism not only strengthens the robustness of the research but also allows for a more comprehensive exploration of social phenomena.

The application of mixed methods in sociology is particularly beneficial for examining complex and multifaceted social issues. Social phenomena often involve intricate layers of individual experiences and broader societal structures, requiring diverse methodological approaches for thorough investigation. For example, a study on social mobility might use qualitative interviews to understand personal narratives and lived experiences, while also employing quantitative data to examine broader trends and statistical relationships. This dual approach enables sociologists to uncover both the subjective and objective aspects of social issues, providing a holistic perspective that can inform more effective social policies and interventions.

One of the key advantages of mixed methods research in sociology is its flexibility and adaptability. Social realities are dynamic and evolving, necessitating research approaches that can respond to changing conditions and new insights. Mixed methods research allows for iterative data collection and analysis, where initial findings from one method can guide and refine subsequent phases of the study. This adaptability ensures that the research remains relevant and aligned with the dynamic nature of social phenomena. Additionally, the ability to draw on multiple data sources and methodological perspectives enhances the overall rigor and comprehensiveness of the research, making mixed methods an essential tool for sociologists aiming to capture the full complexity of social life.

21.3 Defining Mixed Method Research

Mixed method research involves the systematic integration of qualitative and quantitative techniques throughout the research process. It is defined by its ability to collect and analyse both numerical and textual data to address research questions comprehensively (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007).

- **Qualitative Research:** Involves collecting non-numerical data to understand concepts, opinions, or experiences. Methods include interviews, focus groups, and observations. Qualitative research is a methodological approach that focuses on understanding the meanings, and interpretations of individuals within their social contexts. This type of research emphasizes rich, descriptive data collected through methods such as interviews, observations, and content analysis. Unlike quantitative research, which seeks to quantify phenomena, qualitative research aims to provide a deep, nuanced understanding of complex issues by exploring them from multiple perspectives. It is particularly valuable in fields like

sociology, anthropology, psychology, and education, where researchers seek to grasp the intricacies of human behaviour, culture, and interactions. Through its flexible, participant-centered approach, qualitative research offers valuable insights that can inform theory, practice, and policy.

- **Quantitative Research:** Involves collecting numerical data to quantify variables and generalize results from a sample to a population. Methods include surveys, experiments, and secondary data analysis. Quantitative research is a systematic investigation that primarily focuses on quantifying data and phenomena to uncover patterns, relationships, and trends. It employs statistical, mathematical, or computational techniques to analyse numerical data gathered through various methods such as surveys, experiments, or secondary data analysis. By using tools like statistical software, researchers can test hypotheses, make predictions, and generalize findings to larger populations. The goal of quantitative research is to produce objective, measurable, and reliable results that can be used to inform decisions, validate theories, or identify causal relationships.

21.4 Philosophical Foundations

Mixed method research is rooted in pragmatic philosophy, which prioritizes practical outcomes and the use of all available tools to address research questions. Pragmatism allows for flexibility and adaptability, focusing on what works best to understand the research problem (Maxcy, 2003).

- **Pluralism:** Valuing multiple methods and perspectives. Pluralism in mixed methods research refers to the integration of multiple perspectives and methodologies to provide a more comprehensive understanding of a research problem. It involves combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches within a single study to leverage their respective strengths. This approach allows researchers to address complex questions from various angles, enhancing the robustness of findings. For example, a study might use quantitative surveys to gather broad, generalizable data while employing qualitative interviews to explore deeper insights and contextual nuances. By embracing pluralism, researchers can achieve a richer, more nuanced understanding that single-method approaches might overlook, ultimately leading to more informed and holistic conclusions.
- **Practicality:** Emphasizing practical solutions and outcomes. Practicality in mixed

methods research refers to the feasibility and effectiveness of combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches within a study. It involves considering factors such as time, resources, and expertise to ensure that integrating these methods is manageable and adds value to the research. Practically, this means designing a study that can efficiently collect and analyse both numerical and textual data, aligning with the research objectives without overwhelming the research process. Researchers must plan how to effectively combine data collection methods, ensure compatibility between quantitative and qualitative data, and address any logistical challenges. By carefully managing these aspects, mixed methods research can provide a comprehensive view while remaining practical and achievable.

- **Adaptability:** Flexibility in using different methods as research evolves. Adaptability in mixed methods research refers to the flexibility and responsiveness of the research design and process to changes and new insights that emerge during the study. This quality allows researchers to modify their approach as needed, whether by adjusting data collection methods, altering research questions, or refining analysis strategies based on initial findings. For instance, if preliminary qualitative findings reveal unexpected trends, researchers might adapt their quantitative survey to explore these trends further. Adaptability ensures that the research remains relevant and rigorous, accommodating new information and evolving understanding while still adhering to methodological integrity. This flexibility helps in addressing complex research problems more effectively and in producing more robust and nuanced results.
- **Real-world Orientation:** Focusing on real-world applications and implications. Real-world orientation in mixed methods research emphasizes the application of both quantitative and qualitative approaches to address practical, real-life problems and questions. This orientation ensures that the research is relevant and directly applicable to the contexts and situations it aims to study. By combining numerical data with in-depth qualitative insights, researchers can develop a more holistic understanding of complex issues as they occur in everyday settings. For example, a mixed methods study examining educational interventions might use quantitative measures to assess academic performance and qualitative interviews to understand students' experiences and perceptions. This approach helps bridge the gap between theory and practice, providing actionable insights and solutions that are grounded in real-world experiences and conditions.

Pragmatism contrasts with traditional paradigms that strictly separate qualitative and

quantitative approaches, enabling researchers to prioritize research questions over methodological allegiance.

21.5 Designing Mixed Method Research

Designing a mixed method study involves several critical steps:

21.5.1 Determining the Research Questions

Formulating clear research questions that require both qualitative and quantitative data to be comprehensively answered. This ensures that the chosen methods align with the research objectives (Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2015).

21.5.2 Choosing the Mixed Method Design

Selecting an appropriate design based on the research questions and objectives. Common designs include:

- **Convergent Parallel Design:** Collecting qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously and merging the results. Convergent Parallel Design in mixed methods research is a strategy where both quantitative and qualitative data are collected concurrently, analysed separately, and then compared or combined to draw comprehensive conclusions. In this design, researchers collect and analyse quantitative and qualitative data independently but simultaneously, allowing them to address research questions from multiple perspectives. Once the data are analysed, findings from both methods are integrated to provide a more complete understanding of the research problem. This approach is particularly useful when the goal is to validate or corroborate results from one method with those from the other, offering a richer, more nuanced interpretation of the data and enhancing the overall validity and reliability of the research outcomes.
- **Explanatory Sequential Design:** Collecting quantitative data first, followed by qualitative data to explain the quantitative findings. Explanatory Sequential Design in mixed methods research is a two-phase approach where quantitative data collection and analysis are followed by qualitative data collection and analysis. In this design, researchers first collect and analyse quantitative data to address the research questions, then use qualitative methods to further explore or explain the quantitative findings. The qualitative phase helps to provide deeper insights into patterns or anomalies observed in the quantitative data, allowing for a more

comprehensive understanding of the results. This approach is particularly useful when researchers need to explain or interpret unexpected results or gain a richer context for numerical findings. By integrating the sequential phases, the design enhances the robustness and depth of the research conclusions.

- **Exploratory Sequential Design:** Collecting qualitative data first to explore a phenomenon, followed by quantitative data to test hypotheses. Exploratory Sequential Design in mixed methods research involves a two-phase approach where qualitative data collection and analysis are conducted first, followed by quantitative data collection and analysis. In this design, researchers begin with qualitative research to explore a phenomenon, develop theories, or generate hypotheses. The insights gained from this initial qualitative phase inform the development of quantitative instruments or hypotheses for the subsequent phase. The quantitative phase then tests or further investigates these insights on a larger scale. This design is particularly useful when the research topic is not well understood or when researchers need to develop a framework or constructs before testing them quantitatively. By starting with qualitative exploration, the design helps ensure that the quantitative phase is grounded in a thorough understanding of the context and relevant variables.
- **Embedded Design:** Collecting qualitative and quantitative data within a traditional design to address different aspects of the research question. Embedded Design in mixed methods research involves integrating qualitative and quantitative data collection within a single study, where one type of data plays a supportive or supplementary role to the other. In this design, the primary method (either qualitative or quantitative) addresses the main research questions, while the secondary method provides additional context, depth, or understanding. For example, a study might primarily use quantitative surveys to assess the impact of a program, while embedding qualitative interviews to explore participants' experiences and perceptions. The embedded design allows researchers to gain a more nuanced understanding of the research problem by incorporating diverse data sources within the same study, enhancing the richness and validity of the findings.
- **Multiphase Design:** In the context of mixed methods research in sociology, the multiphase design is a comprehensive approach that involves the integration of several sequential or concurrent mixed methods studies, each contributing to different phases of a larger research program. This design allows researchers to

address complex research questions by utilizing multiple methods over an extended period, thereby capturing the dynamic and multifaceted nature of sociological phenomena. For instance, a multiphase design might begin with an exploratory qualitative phase to understand a social issue, followed by a quantitative phase to test hypotheses generated from the qualitative data, and conclude with a mixed methods phase to integrate findings and provide a holistic understanding. This approach is particularly valuable in longitudinal studies and community-based research, where multiple layers of data are necessary to grasp the evolving social contexts and interactions comprehensively (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

21.6 Sampling Strategies

Using purposive sampling for qualitative data to gain in-depth insights and probability sampling for quantitative data to ensure generalizability (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). In mixed-method research, sampling strategies blend qualitative and quantitative approaches to provide comprehensive insights. Quantitative strategies often use probability sampling methods like simple random, systematic, stratified, or cluster sampling to ensure representativeness. In contrast, qualitative strategies typically employ non-probability sampling methods such as purposive, snowball, convenience, or quota sampling to gather in-depth data from specific subgroups. Mixed-method sampling can be sequential, where one phase informs the other, or concurrent, where both types of data are collected simultaneously. Multi-stage sampling combines different methods across stages to enhance robustness. Key considerations include integrating data effectively, ensuring adequate sample size, and aligning strategies with research questions and available resources. This combination aims to capitalize on the strengths of both approaches for a more nuanced understanding of the research problem.

21.7 Data Collection Methods

Employing various data collection methods such as surveys, interviews, focus groups, observations, and document analysis (Creswell, 2014). In mixed-method research, data collection integrates both qualitative and quantitative techniques to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. Quantitative methods, such as surveys, experiments, and observational studies, gather numerical data and identify patterns across large samples. Qualitative methods, including interviews, focus groups, and document analysis, delve into participants' perspectives and contextual nuances.

Data can be collected sequentially, where one type informs the other, or concurrently, where both are gathered simultaneously and independently. Triangulation enhances reliability by cross-verifying data from multiple sources. This blended approach ensures a richer, more nuanced analysis, leveraging the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative data to address complex research questions effectively.

21.8 Data Analysis

Analysing qualitative and quantitative data separately using appropriate techniques, then integrating the results to draw comprehensive conclusions (Bryman, 2006). Data analysis in mixed-method research involves integrating qualitative and quantitative techniques to provide a comprehensive interpretation of the data. Quantitative analysis often includes statistical methods to identify patterns, relationships, and trends within numerical data. Qualitative analysis involves coding and thematically analysing textual or visual data to uncover deeper meanings and insights. Mixed-method analysis can be sequential, where the findings from one type of analysis inform the other, or concurrent, where both types are analysed independently and then integrated. Triangulation of data from different sources enhances the validity and reliability of the findings. This integrative approach ensures a holistic understanding, capturing both the breadth and depth of the research problem.

21.9 Data Collection and Analysis

21.9.1 Qualitative Data Collection

Qualitative methods include:

- Interviews: Semi-structured or unstructured interviews allow in-depth exploration of participants' perspectives (Kvale, 2007).
- Focus Groups: Group discussions provide insights into collective views and social dynamics (Morgan, 1997).
- Observations: Direct observations of social interactions and behaviours in natural settings (Creswell, 2014).
- Document Analysis: Analysing textual or visual documents to understand social phenomena (Bowen, 2009).

21.9.2 Quantitative Data Collection

Quantitative methods include:

- **Surveys:** Structured questionnaires with closed-ended questions to collect numerical data (Groves et al., 2009).
- **Experiments:** Controlled studies to test hypotheses and establish causal relationships (Campbell & Stanley, 1963).
- **Secondary Data Analysis:** Analysing existing datasets to answer new research questions (Hakim, 2000).

21.10 Data Analysis Techniques

21.10.1 Qualitative Analysis

Techniques used to identify patterns and themes include:

- **Thematic Analysis:** Identifying and analysing themes within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis in mixed methods research involves identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within qualitative data, while integrating these findings with quantitative data to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. This approach allows researchers to uncover rich, detailed insights from qualitative data, which can be triangulated with numerical data to enhance the depth and validity of the study. By combining qualitative and quantitative data, thematic analysis in mixed methods enables the exploration of complex phenomena, revealing both statistical trends and underlying meanings, thus offering a more nuanced and holistic view of the research subject.
- **Grounded Theory:** Developing a theory grounded in the data collected (Charmaz, 2006). Grounded theory in mixed methods research involves the systematic generation of theory from qualitative data through iterative cycles of data collection, coding, and analysis, integrated with quantitative data to strengthen the theoretical framework. This approach enables researchers to develop theories that are deeply rooted in empirical data, capturing the nuances and complexities of social phenomena. By combining qualitative insights with quantitative validation, grounded theory in mixed methods research ensures that the emerging theory is both grounded in real-world experiences and supported by statistical evidence. This integrative

approach facilitates a richer, more robust understanding of the research problem, allowing for the development of theory that is both comprehensive and empirically substantiated.

- **Narrative Analysis:** Examining the stories that people tell to understand their experiences (Riessman, 2008). Narrative analysis in mixed methods research focuses on examining and interpreting the stories or personal accounts of individuals to uncover the meanings and experiences that shape their lives, while integrating these qualitative narratives with quantitative data for a fuller understanding. This approach allows researchers to capture the rich, contextual details of participants' lived experiences and to identify patterns and themes within their stories. When combined with quantitative data, narrative analysis provides a powerful means to corroborate and expand upon statistical findings, offering a more comprehensive and humanized perspective on the research question. By weaving together, the numerical and the narrative, researchers can achieve a deeper and more nuanced understanding of complex phenomena, enhancing both the rigor and the relevance of their study.
- **Content Analysis:** Systematically analysing textual or visual content (Krippendorff, 2018). Content analysis in mixed methods research involves systematically coding and categorizing qualitative data to identify patterns, themes, and meanings, while also incorporating quantitative data to enhance the depth and breadth of the analysis. This method allows researchers to quantify the presence and frequency of specific themes or concepts within textual or visual data, providing a structured approach to analyzing large volumes of qualitative information. By integrating qualitative insights with quantitative measures, content analysis in mixed methods research offers a balanced and comprehensive perspective, enabling the validation and triangulation of findings. This combination enhances the reliability and richness of the results, facilitating a more thorough understanding of the research topic and enabling the drawing of more robust and actionable conclusions.

21.10.2 Quantitative Analysis

Techniques include:

- **Descriptive Statistics:** Summarizing data using measures such as mean, median, and standard deviation (Field, 2013). Descriptive statistics in mixed methods research involve summarizing and organizing quantitative data to provide a clear and concise overview of the dataset, which can then be integrated with

qualitative insights for a more comprehensive analysis. These statistics, including measures of central tendency (mean, median, mode) and measures of variability (range, standard deviation), offer a snapshot of the numerical data, highlighting key patterns and trends. When combined with qualitative data, descriptive statistics help contextualize the numerical findings, enriching the interpretation by linking statistical summaries with deeper, narrative insights. This integration allows researchers to present a well-rounded view of the research problem, ensuring that the numerical trends are not only statistically significant but also meaningful and grounded in real-world contexts.

- **Inferential Statistics:** Making inferences about a population based on a sample (Field, 2013). Inferential statistics in mixed methods research involve using quantitative data to generalize or predictions about a larger population based on a sample, while integrating these findings with qualitative data to provide deeper context and understanding. Techniques such as hypothesis testing, confidence intervals, and regression analysis allow researchers to draw conclusions and identify relationships within the data, extending beyond mere description to infer underlying patterns and effects. When combined with qualitative insights, inferential statistics offer a more nuanced interpretation, enriching the numerical results with the lived experiences and perspectives of participants. This dual approach enhances the rigor and relevance of the research, enabling the development of well-supported and comprehensive conclusions that are both statistically robust and contextually grounded.
- **Regression Analysis:** Examining the relationship between variables (Field, 2013). Regression analysis in mixed methods research involves examining the relationships between variables within quantitative data to identify predictors and measure the strength of their associations, while integrating these quantitative findings with qualitative data to gain deeper insights into the underlying mechanisms and contextual factors. This analytical technique helps in understanding how one or more independent variables influence a dependent variable, providing a detailed statistical understanding of the dynamics at play. By combining regression analysis with qualitative data, researchers can contextualize and interpret the statistical relationships more meaningfully, exploring the reasons behind the observed patterns and enhancing the explanatory power of their findings. This integrative approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding of complex phenomena, offering both the precision of quantitative analysis and the depth of qualitative insights.

- **Structural Equation Modelling:** Testing complex relationships between variables (Field, 2013). Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) in mixed methods research involves using quantitative data to test and estimate complex relationships among multiple variables, while integrating these results with qualitative data to enrich and contextualize the findings. SEM allows researchers to build and assess theoretical models that include both direct and indirect effects, providing a comprehensive statistical framework to understand the intricate web of associations between observed and latent variables. By incorporating qualitative insights, researchers can validate the constructs and pathways identified through SEM, offering deeper explanations and narratives behind the statistical relationships. This integrative approach enhances the robustness and relevance of the research, allowing for the development of more sophisticated and nuanced models that are both empirically grounded and contextually informed.

21.11 Integration of Qualitative and Quantitative Data

Integration occurs at various stages:

- **Data Collection:** Collecting both types of data concurrently or sequentially based on the design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). This method typically includes the use of surveys or structured questionnaires to gather numerical data from a large sample, ensuring the statistical validity and generalizability of the findings. Concurrently, qualitative data is collected through methods such as interviews, focus groups, or participant observations, which offer in-depth insights into participants' perspectives, behaviours, and experiences. The combination of these methods allows researchers to cross-validate and corroborate findings, address the research questions from multiple angles, and draw more nuanced conclusions that neither method could achieve independently.
- **Data Analysis:** Analysing data separately and then merging the results to draw comprehensive conclusions (Bryman, 2006). The process typically starts with the separate analysis of quantitative data using statistical techniques, such as descriptive statistics, inferential statistics, and regression analysis, to identify patterns, relationships, and trends. Simultaneously, qualitative data is analysed through methods like thematic analysis, content analysis, or grounded theory, allowing researchers to extract meaningful themes, narratives, and insights from textual or observational data. After the initial separate analyses, the findings are integrated

through various techniques such as data transformation (quantitizing qualitative data or qualitizing quantitative data), data comparison, or the creation of joint displays. This integration helps to corroborate results, highlight convergences and divergences, and provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. The synthesis of these diverse data types enriches the interpretation and enhances the validity and reliability of the research outcomes, offering a more holistic view of the sociological phenomena under study.

- **Interpretation:** Interpreting integrated data to provide a holistic understanding (Plano Clark & Ivanova, 2015). This process requires researchers to examine how the statistical trends and patterns identified in the quantitative analysis align with the themes and narratives uncovered in the qualitative analysis. The goal is to identify points of convergence, divergence, and complementarity between the two data sets. Researchers consider the context provided by qualitative findings to explain the statistical results and use quantitative data to support or challenge qualitative insights. This integrative approach allows for a more nuanced interpretation, addressing the research questions comprehensively and revealing the complexities of social phenomena that may be overlooked when using a single method. The interpretation phase culminates in a coherent narrative that reflects the richness of the data and offers deeper theoretical and practical implications for the field of sociology.
- **Presentation:** Presenting findings in a cohesive manner, highlighting the complementary nature of the data (Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989). Researchers typically use a combination of visual and narrative techniques to communicate their findings. Quantitative results are often displayed through tables, graphs, and statistical charts to clearly present numerical patterns and relationships. Qualitative findings are shared through direct quotes, thematic maps, and descriptive narratives that highlight the depth and context of participants' experiences. Joint displays, which merge both types of data, are particularly useful in illustrating how qualitative insights explain quantitative trends and vice versa. The presentation should articulate the connections between the data sets, emphasizing how the integration enriches the overall understanding of the research questions.

21.12 Conclusion

Mixed method research in sociology provides a robust framework for understanding complex social phenomena by integrating qualitative and quantitative data. Despite its

challenges, the benefits of mixed methods, including comprehensive understanding, triangulation, contextualization, and flexibility, make it an invaluable approach in sociological research. The future of mixed method research is bright, with technological advancements and interdisciplinary collaborations further enhancing its potential. By addressing ethical considerations and leveraging the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative methods, mixed method research can continue to provide deep insights into the social world, informing policy, practice, and further academic inquiry. This methodological integration not only enhances the validity and reliability of the findings but also provides richer, more detailed insights that single-method approaches might overlook. The ability to triangulate data from diverse sources ensures a more robust and credible analysis, ultimately leading to more informed and impactful conclusions.

The strength of mixed methods lies in its capacity to harness the best of both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Qualitative methods bring depth and context, uncovering the meanings and experiences behind social phenomena, while quantitative methods offer generalizability and the ability to identify broader patterns and trends. Together, they create a synergistic effect, allowing sociologists to explore social issues from multiple angles and levels of analysis. This comprehensive approach is particularly valuable in addressing complex social problems that require nuanced and multifaceted solutions.

As the field of sociology continues to evolve, the importance of mixed methods research is likely to grow. The dynamic and interconnected nature of contemporary social issues demands innovative and adaptable research strategies. Mixed methods provide the flexibility needed to respond to these challenges, enabling researchers to adapt their approaches as new insights emerge. This adaptability not only keeps the research relevant but also ensures that it remains closely aligned with the realities of the social world it seeks to understand and improve.

Ultimately, mixed methods research in sociology represents a commitment to methodological rigor and a comprehensive understanding of social phenomena. By combining the strengths of qualitative and quantitative approaches, sociologists can produce more holistic and impactful research. This approach not only enriches our theoretical knowledge but also enhances the practical application of research findings in addressing real-world social issues. As we move forward, the continued integration of mixed methods will be crucial in advancing the field of sociology and contributing to the development of more effective and equitable social policies.

21.13 Summary

Mixed Method Research in sociology integrates qualitative and quantitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of social phenomena. It combines statistical analysis with in-depth narratives, enabling researchers to explore patterns while capturing individual experiences. This method is particularly useful for studying complex social issues, as it allows triangulation, enhancing the validity and reliability of findings. Researchers can adopt various designs, such as sequential, concurrent, or transformative strategies, depending on the study's objectives. Mixed methods are valuable in sociology for examining structural inequalities, cultural practices, and social behaviours by merging survey data with ethnographic insights or interviews. It facilitates a holistic perspective, addressing both numerical trends and contextual meanings. Despite its strengths, challenges include the need for expertise in multiple methodologies, time-intensive data collection, and integration difficulties. Nevertheless, mixed method research remains a powerful tool in sociology, fostering richer, well-rounded analyses that contribute to theoretical advancements and evidence-based policymaking.

21.14 Questions

Short Questions

1. What is Mixed Method Research in Sociology?
2. Mention two advantages of using a mixed-method approach.
3. What are the key components of a mixed-method research design?
4. How does mixed-method research differ from qualitative and quantitative research?
5. Name one sociologist known for using mixed-method research.
6. What is the significance of triangulation in mixed-method research?
7. Give an example of a sociological study that can benefit from a mixed-method approach.
8. What are the main challenges of conducting mixed-method research?
9. What are the two main types of mixed-method research designs?
10. Why is mixed-method research useful for studying social problems?

Long Questions:

1. Explain the concept of Mixed Method Research in Sociology with suitable examples.
2. Discuss the strengths and limitations of Mixed Method Research in sociological studies.
3. Describe the different types of mixed-method research designs and their applications in sociology.
4. How does mixed-method research enhance the validity and reliability of sociological findings?
5. Discuss the role of qualitative and quantitative data integration in mixed-method research.
6. What are the ethical considerations in conducting mixed-method research in sociology?
7. Explain the process of data collection and analysis in a mixed-method study with an example.
8. Compare and contrast sequential and concurrent mixed-method research designs in sociology.
9. How can mixed-method research be applied to study social inequality?
10. Critically evaluate the importance of using mixed-method research in policy-making and social change.

21.15 References

- Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2), 27-40.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- Bryman, A. (2006). Integrating quantitative and qualitative research: How is it done? *Qualitative Research*, 6(1), 97-113.
- Byrne, D., & Callaghan, G. (2014). *Complexity theory and the social sciences: The state of the art*. Routledge.

- Campbell, D. T., & Stanley, J. C. (1963). *Experimental and quasi-experimental designs for research*. Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. Sage.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2017). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Denzin, N. K. (1978). *The research act: A theoretical introduction to sociological methods* (2nd ed.). McGraw-Hill.
- Field, A. (2013). *Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS statistics* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Finlay, L. (2002). Negotiating the swamp: The opportunity and challenge of reflexivity in research practice. *Qualitative Research*, 2(2), 209-230.
- Greene, J. C. (2007). *Mixed methods in social inquiry*. Jossey-Bass.
- Greene, J. C., Caracelli, V. J., & Graham, W. F. (1989). Toward a conceptual framework for mixed-method evaluation designs. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 11(3), 255-274.
- Groves, R. M., Fowler, F. J., Couper, M. P., Lepkowski, J. M., Singer, E., & Tourangeau, R. (2009). *Survey methodology* (2nd ed.). Wiley.
- Hakim, C. (2000). *Research design: Successful designs for social and economic research* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Ivankova, N. V., Creswell, J. W., & Stick, S. L. (2006). Using mixed-methods sequential explanatory design: From theory to practice. *Field Methods*, 18(1), 3-20.
- Johnson, R. B., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2004). Mixed methods research: A research paradigm whose time has come. *Educational Researcher*, 33(7), 14-26.
- Johnson, R. B., Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Turner, L. A. (2007). Toward a definition of mixed methods research. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 1(2), 112-133.
- Krippendorff, K. (2018). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Kvale, S. (2007). *Doing interviews*. Sage.

- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage.
- Maxcy, S. J. (2003). Pragmatic threads in mixed methods research in the social sciences: The search for multiple modes of inquiry and the end of the philosophy of formalism. *Handbook of mixed methods in social & behavioral research*, 51-89.
- Maxwell, J. A. (2013). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Mertens, D. M. (2009). *Transformative research and evaluation*. Guilford Press.
- Morgan, D. L. (1997). *Focus groups as qualitative research* (2nd ed.). Sage.
- Plano Clark, V. L., & Ivankova, N. V. (2015). *Mixed methods research: A guide to the field*. Sage.
- Riessman, C. K. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. Sage.
- Tashakkori, A., & Teddlie, C. (2010). *Sage handbook of mixed methods in social & behavioral research* (2nd ed.). Sage.
- Teddlie, C., & Yu, F. (2007). Mixed methods sampling: A typology with examples. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 1(1), 77-100.

21.16 Glossary

- **Convergent Parallel Design** - A mixed methods design where qualitative and quantitative data are collected simultaneously and merged for analysis.
- **Case Study** - A research approach that involves an in-depth investigation of a single case or multiple cases using both qualitative and quantitative methods.
- **Data Integration** - The process of combining qualitative and quantitative data to derive meaningful conclusions.
- **Deductive Approach** - A research approach where hypotheses are tested using collected data, often associated with quantitative methods.
- **Embedded Design** - A research design where one method (qualitative or quantitative) plays a supportive role to the primary method.
- **Epistemology** - The study of knowledge and justified belief, influencing the choice of mixed methods in research.

- Framework Analysis - A systematic approach used in qualitative research to identify key themes and patterns.
- Generalizability - The extent to which research findings can be applied to broader populations.
- Longitudinal Mixed Methods - A research approach involving data collection over an extended period using both qualitative and quantitative methods.
- Narrative Inquiry - A qualitative research approach focusing on personal stories and experiences.
- Parallel Mixed Methods - A design where qualitative and quantitative data are collected and analysed separately before being integrated.
- Qualitative Research - Research focused on understanding social phenomena through non-numeric data like interviews and observations.
- Quantitative Research - Research that uses numerical data and statistical methods to analyse patterns and relationships.
- Sequential Mixed Methods - A research design where one method (qualitative or quantitative) is conducted first, followed by the other.
- Thematic Analysis - A qualitative analysis method for identifying patterns and themes in data.
- Triangulation - The use of multiple methods, sources, or theories to enhance the credibility of research findings.

UNIT 22 Theoretical Underpinnings, Applications and Future Trends of Mixed Method Research

Structure

- 22.1 Learning Objectives**
- 22.2 Introduction**
- 22.3 Dialectical Pluralism**
- 22.4 Transformative Paradigm**
- 22.5 Complexity Theory**
- 22.6 Strengths of Mixed Method Research**
- 22.7 Challenges of Mixed Method Research**
- 22.8 Case Studies and Applications**
 - 22.8.1 Health and Well-being**
 - 22.8.2 Educational Outcomes**
 - 22.8.3 Social Inequality**
- 22.9 Practical Applications in Sociology**
- 22.10 Future Directions in Mixed Method Research**
- 22.11 Ethical Considerations in Mixed Method Research**
- 22.12 Conclusion**
- 22.13 Summary**
- 22.14 Questions**
- 22.15 References**
- 22.16 Glossary**

22.1 Learning Objectives

- Understand the Theoretical Foundations of Mixed Method Research
- Analyse the Applications of Mixed Method Research in Various Disciplines

- Evaluate the Strengths and Challenges of Mixed Method Research
- Explore Future Trends and Innovations in Mixed Method Research

22.2 Introduction

Mixed Method Research (MMR) has emerged as a powerful approach that integrates both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to provide a comprehensive understanding of complex research problems (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). This methodological paradigm acknowledges the strengths and limitations of both qualitative and quantitative traditions, facilitating a more nuanced exploration of social, behavioural, and applied sciences (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). Rooted in pragmatism, MMR seeks to transcend the dichotomy between positivist and constructivist paradigms, advocating for methodological pluralism to address diverse research questions effectively (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007).

The applications of MMR extend across various disciplines, including education, health sciences, social sciences, and business research, where the integration of numerical data with rich contextual insights enhances the validity and reliability of findings (Bryman, 2012). Researchers employ MMR in program evaluations, policy assessments, and intervention studies to capture both measurable outcomes and subjective experiences, thereby informing evidence-based decision-making (Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2016).

Looking toward the future, MMR is poised for further evolution with advancements in technology, big data analytics, and artificial intelligence, which enable more sophisticated data integration and analysis techniques (Fetters & Molina-Azorin, 2020). The growing emphasis on interdisciplinary research and real-world problem-solving further underscores the significance of MMR in shaping the next generation of empirical inquiry.

This paper explores the theoretical foundations of MMR, its diverse applications across disciplines, and emerging trends that will shape its trajectory in the coming years.

Mixed method research is supported by several theoretical frameworks that guide its application in sociological studies:

22.3 Dialectical Pluralism

Dialectical pluralism emphasizes the integration of different methodological approaches

to understand social phenomena comprehensively. It advocates for the use of multiple perspectives and methods to capture the complexity of social issues (Greene, 2007). This perspective embraces the idea that reality is complex and multifaceted, acknowledging that multiple, sometimes contradictory, viewpoints can coexist and provide a richer understanding of social phenomena. Dialectical pluralism encourages researchers to engage in a dynamic and iterative dialogue between the different methodologies, recognizing that each offers unique insights that can inform and enhance the other. By fostering an ongoing interplay between opposing paradigms, this approach aims to synthesize diverse data sources and perspectives into a coherent whole, without forcing a false sense of uniformity. This theoretical stance promotes flexibility, reflexivity, and openness to complexity, enabling researchers to construct more comprehensive and nuanced interpretations that reflect the real-world intricacies of the subjects they study.

22.4 Transformative Paradigm

The transformative paradigm focuses on social justice and empowerment, particularly for marginalized groups. It encourages the use of mixed methods to address power imbalances and promote social change (Mertens, 2009). The Transformative Paradigm in mixed method research is a theoretical framework that emphasizes social justice, human rights, and the empowerment of marginalized groups. Rooted in critical theory, it advocates for research that not only seeks to understand social issues but also aims to challenge and change oppressive structures and power dynamics. This paradigm integrates qualitative and quantitative methods to provide a comprehensive analysis of complex social phenomena while ensuring that the voices of marginalized populations are central to the research process. Researchers operating within the Transformative Paradigm are committed to reflexivity, ethical considerations, and the active involvement of participants as co-researchers. This approach ensures that the research process and outcomes are aligned with the goals of promoting equity and social change, making the Transformative Paradigm a powerful tool for addressing systemic inequalities and fostering inclusive societal development.

22.5 Complexity Theory

Complexity theory views social phenomena as complex systems with interconnected elements. Mixed methods are suitable for studying such systems because they allow for

the examination of multiple dimensions and interactions within social phenomena (Byrne & Callaghan, 2014). Complexity theory in mixed method research offers a theoretical underpinning that acknowledges the intricate, interconnected, and dynamic nature of social phenomena. This perspective views social systems as complex adaptive systems characterized by non-linearity, emergence, and interdependence, where small changes can lead to significant and often unpredictable outcomes. In mixed method research, complexity theory encourages the integration of qualitative and quantitative data to capture the multifaceted and evolving nature of social realities. It promotes the use of diverse methodological tools to explore how patterns and behaviours emerge from the interactions of various components within the system. By embracing complexity, researchers can better understand the contextual and relational factors that influence social phenomena, leading to richer, more nuanced insights. This approach fosters a holistic view that transcends reductionist tendencies, allowing for the exploration of multiple layers of reality and the dynamic interplay between structure and agency within social systems.

22.6 Strengths of Mixed Method Research

- **Comprehensive Understanding:** Captures both numerical trends and in-depth insights (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). Comprehensive understanding in mixed methods research involves integrating both qualitative and quantitative approaches to provide a more complete and nuanced view of the research problem. This methodological pluralism leverages the strengths of each approach: qualitative methods offer depth and context through detailed, narrative data, while quantitative methods provide breadth and generalizability through statistical analysis. By combining these approaches, researchers can validate findings across different data sources, uncover patterns and relationships that might be missed using a single method, and address research questions from multiple perspectives. This holistic approach enhances the robustness and credibility of the research, leading to richer insights and more informed conclusions.
- **Triangulation:** Enhances validity and reliability through triangulation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). Triangulation in mixed methods research refers to the use of multiple data sources, methods, or theoretical perspectives to cross-verify and enhance the validity and reliability of the study's findings. By employing a combination of qualitative and quantitative techniques, researchers can offset the

limitations inherent in each method and achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem. This process involves comparing and integrating data from different angles to identify convergence, discrepancies, or patterns, thereby increasing the robustness and credibility of the results. Triangulation not only helps in confirming the consistency of findings but also enriches the interpretation, providing a deeper and more nuanced analysis that can lead to more robust and well-supported conclusions.

- **Contextualization:** Provides rich contextual data (Maxwell, 2013). Contextualization in mixed methods research involves situating the findings within the broader social, cultural, historical, and environmental contexts to enhance their relevance and applicability. This process acknowledges that the data does not exist in a vacuum and that understanding the context is crucial for interpreting the results meaningfully. By integrating qualitative insights that capture the lived experiences and perspectives of participants with quantitative data that provide measurable evidence, researchers can provide a richer, more comprehensive picture of the phenomena under study. Contextualization allows for a deeper understanding of how various factors interact and influence outcomes, leading to conclusions that are not only empirically robust but also practically significant and culturally sensitive.
- **Flexibility:** Allows adaptability in research design and methods (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Flexibility in mixed methods research is a crucial strength, allowing researchers to adapt their approach to the specific needs and dynamics of the study. This methodological adaptability enables the incorporation of diverse data collection and analysis techniques, providing a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the research problem. Flexibility facilitates iterative cycles of data collection and analysis, allowing for the exploration of emerging themes and adjustment of research strategies in response to preliminary findings. This responsiveness ensures that the study remains relevant and aligned with its objectives, accommodating unexpected developments and complex real-world scenarios. Ultimately, the flexibility inherent in mixed methods research enhances its capacity to generate robust, contextually rich, and actionable insights.

22.7 Challenges of Mixed Method Research

- **Complexity:** Requires advanced skills in both qualitative and quantitative

methods (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). One of the primary challenges is the integration of qualitative and quantitative data, which requires a sophisticated understanding of both methodological approaches and their respective analytical techniques. This integration demands careful planning and coordination, often necessitating additional time and resources to manage the data collection, analysis, and synthesis processes effectively. Researchers also face the difficulty of reconciling divergent findings, where quantitative results may not align with qualitative insights, posing interpretive challenges. Additionally, the need for proficiency in multiple methods and the potential for increased methodological rigor can be demanding. Ethical considerations, such as maintaining participant confidentiality while combining different data types, add another layer of complexity.

- **Resource-Intensive:** Demands more time and resources compared to single-method research (Bryman, 2006). Conducting both quantitative and qualitative research simultaneously demands substantial investment in terms of financial resources, as it often involves hiring trained personnel, acquiring specialized software, and managing extensive data collection processes. The dual nature of this approach necessitates considerable time for planning, executing, and integrating two distinct sets of methodologies, which can extend project timelines. Additionally, researchers must possess or develop expertise in both qualitative and quantitative methods, increasing the demand for specialized training and potentially complicating team collaboration. The logistical complexity of coordinating various research activities, such as surveys, interviews, and data analysis, further adds to the resource burden. These intensive resource requirements can limit the feasibility of mixed method research, particularly for individual researchers or smaller institutions, posing a significant challenge in the effective implementation and completion of such studies.
- **Integration Difficulties:** Challenges in reconciling contradictory findings (Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2015). One major issue is ensuring that the two data types complement rather than contradict each other, which requires a deep understanding of how to align diverse findings in a coherent manner. Researchers must skilfully navigate different analytical frameworks, as quantitative data often relies on statistical analysis while qualitative data depends on thematic or narrative analysis. This disparity can make it difficult to create a unified interpretation that accurately reflects the research questions. Additionally, selecting appropriate integration techniques, such as triangulation, data transformation, or joint displays, demands

careful consideration and methodological expertise. Misalignment in timing and sequencing of data collection can further complicate integration efforts, as can potential biases introduced during the data merging process. Overcoming these challenges requires meticulous planning, methodological flexibility, and a clear strategy for synthesizing disparate data types into a comprehensive and cohesive narrative.

- **Philosophical Differences:** Bridging differences between paradigms can be challenging (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). Quantitative research is typically rooted in positivism, emphasizing objectivity, measurement, and statistical analysis to uncover generalizable truths. In contrast, qualitative research often aligns with interpretivism or constructivism, focusing on subjective experiences, context, and the meaning individuals ascribe to their social world. Bridging these philosophical divides requires reconciling differing views on the nature of reality (ontology), the nature of knowledge (epistemology), and the methods of inquiry (methodology). Researchers must navigate potential conflicts between the pursuit of generalizable patterns and the exploration of contextual, nuanced understandings. This reconciliation can be intellectually demanding and may require adopting a pragmatic approach that values the strengths of both paradigms while being mindful of their limitations.

22.8 Case Studies and Applications

22.8.1 Health and Well-being

A mixed method study on health and well-being might involve:

- **Quantitative Phase:** Conducting a survey to measure health behaviours and outcomes.
- **Qualitative Phase:** Conducting interviews to explore personal experiences with healthcare.

Integration of these data provides a comprehensive understanding of health issues and informs targeted interventions.

22.8.2 Educational Outcomes

A mixed method study on educational outcomes might involve:

- **Quantitative Phase:** Administering standardized tests to assess academic performance.
- **Qualitative Phase:** Conducting focus groups to explore factors influencing academic performance.

Integration of these data reveals systemic issues and individual experiences affecting student performance, informing policy recommendations and educational practices.

22.8.3 Social Inequality

A mixed method study on social inequality might involve:

- **Quantitative Phase:** Analysing census data to identify patterns of income disparity.
- **Qualitative Phase:** Conducting ethnographic research to understand the lived experiences of individuals in different socioeconomic strata.

This combination offers a nuanced view of social inequality, highlighting both structural factors and personal narratives.

22.9 Practical Applications in Sociology

Mixed method research has numerous practical applications in sociology:

- **Policy Development:** By providing a nuanced understanding of social issues, mixed methods can inform the development of more effective policies. For example, mixed method studies on poverty can combine quantitative data on income levels with qualitative data on lived experiences to create comprehensive anti-poverty programs.
- **Program Evaluation:** Mixed methods are valuable in evaluating social programs. Quantitative data can measure program outcomes, while qualitative data can provide insights into participant experiences and program implementation challenges.
- **Community Research:** Sociologists often use mixed methods to study communities, combining surveys with interviews and observations to understand community dynamics, needs, and strengths.

22.10 Future Directions in Mixed Method Research

The future of mixed method research in sociology is promising, with advancements in technology and methodology enhancing its potential:

- **Technological Integration:** Advances in data collection and analysis software make it easier to handle and integrate large datasets. For instance, digital ethnography tools and online survey platforms enable more efficient data collection.
- **Methodological Innovations:** Ongoing developments in mixed method designs and integration techniques enhance the rigor and applicability of mixed methods research.
- **Interdisciplinary Approaches:** Collaboration with other disciplines, such as public health, education, and urban planning, can enrich mixed method research by incorporating diverse perspectives and expertise.

22.11 Ethical Considerations in Mixed Method Research

Conducting mixed method research involves several ethical considerations to ensure the protection and respect of participants:

- **Informed Consent:** Ensuring that participants are fully informed about the study's purpose, methods, and potential risks, and that they voluntarily consent to participate.
- **Confidentiality:** Protecting the privacy of participants by securely storing data and anonymizing information when presenting findings.
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Being aware of and respecting cultural differences and ensuring that research practices are appropriate for the populations being studied.
- **Equity and Inclusion:** Striving to include diverse perspectives and voices in the research to avoid bias and ensure comprehensive understanding.

22.12 Conclusion

Mixed Method Research (MMR) has established itself as a powerful methodological approach that bridges the divide between qualitative and quantitative paradigms, offering a more holistic and nuanced understanding of complex research problems (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Its theoretical foundation in pragmatism allows researchers to prioritize research questions over methodological constraints, enabling the integration of diverse data sources to enhance the validity, reliability, and depth of findings (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). The applications of MMR span a wide range of disciplines, including social sciences, health research, education, and business, demonstrating its

adaptability and capacity to generate comprehensive insights into human behaviour, institutional dynamics, and policy effectiveness (Bryman, 2006).

Despite its growing popularity, MMR faces challenges such as the complexity of data integration, time and resource constraints, and the need for interdisciplinary expertise (Plano Clark, 2010). Addressing these challenges requires continued advancements in methodological frameworks, increased researcher training, and the development of standardized guidelines to ensure rigorous implementation (Fetters & Freshwater, 2015). Additionally, with the rapid growth of technology, emerging trends in MMR include the use of artificial intelligence and machine learning for automated data analysis, digital tools for real-time mixed methods research, and the increasing emphasis on participatory and community-driven research (Hesse-Biber, 2015).

Looking ahead, MMR will continue to play a transformative role in academic and applied research, particularly in addressing multifaceted societal challenges such as health disparities, climate change, and educational reforms. By fostering methodological pluralism, promoting interdisciplinary collaboration, and leveraging technological innovations, MMR is well-positioned to shape the future of research in the 21st century. As scholars and practitioners refine its theoretical and practical dimensions, MMR will not only contribute to more informed decision-making but also pave the way for more inclusive and impactful research outcomes.

22.13 Summary

Mixed Methods Research (MMR) combines qualitative and quantitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of research problems, rooted in pragmatism, which emphasizes practical solutions over methodological constraints (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). Researchers adopt various designs, such as convergent, explanatory sequential, and exploratory sequential, based on study objectives (Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2016).

MMR is extensively applied in social sciences, health research, and education, offering data triangulation for enhanced validity (Bryman, 2012; Greene, 2007). It is particularly useful in sociology and public policy for analysing complex social phenomena and in education for curriculum assessment and instructional improvements (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007).

Future trends indicate the integration of big data analytics, AI-driven tools, and digital

platforms for seamless data integration, broadening interdisciplinary and cross-cultural research applications (Bazeley, 2018; Fetters, Curry, & Creswell, 2013; Plano Clark, 2021).

22.14 Questions

Short Questions:

1. What is the basic philosophy underlying mixed methods research?
2. How does pragmatism influence mixed methods research?
3. What are the key advantages of using mixed methods in social science research?
4. What are the main challenges in integrating qualitative and quantitative data in mixed methods research?
5. How does mixed methods research contribute to triangulation?
6. What are some common designs used in mixed methods research?
7. What ethical considerations are important in mixed methods research?
8. How can technology enhance the application of mixed methods research?

Long Questions:

1. Discuss the theoretical foundations of mixed methods research. How do different philosophical paradigms (pragmatism, transformative-emancipatory, etc.) influence the approach to MMR?
2. Explain the key mixed methods research designs. How do researchers decide which design is most appropriate for their study?
3. How has mixed methods research evolved over the past few decades, and what are its implications for interdisciplinary studies?
4. Analyse the challenges and limitations associated with mixed methods research. How can researchers overcome these challenges?
5. What are the major applications of mixed methods research in social sciences, healthcare, and education? Provide relevant examples.
6. What role does technology play in the collection, integration, and analysis of mixed methods data? Discuss recent advancements and future trends.

7. Discuss how artificial intelligence (AI) and big data are influencing the future of mixed methods research. What are the opportunities and risks involved?
8. How can mixed methods research contribute to policy-making and evidence-based practice in public administration and governance?

22.15 References

- Bryman, A. (2012). *Social Research Methods* (4th ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2018). *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2018). *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*. SAGE Publications.
- Denzin, N. K. (1978). *The Research Act: A Theoretical Introduction to Sociological Methods*. McGraw-Hill.
- Fetters, M. D., & Molina-Azorin, J. F. (2020). The Journal of Mixed Methods Research: Past, Present, and Future. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 14(1), 3-10. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1558689819883858>
- Fetters, M. D., Curry, L. A., & Creswell, J. W. (2013). Achieving integration in mixed methods designs-principles and practices. *Health Services Research*, 48(6), 2134-2156.
- Greene, J. C. (2007). *Mixed Methods in Social Inquiry*. Jossey-Bass.
- Ivankova, N. V., Creswell, J. W., & Stick, S. L. (2006). Using mixed-methods sequential explanatory design: From theory to practice. *Field Methods*, 18(1), 3-20.
- Johnson, R. B., Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Turner, L. A. (2007). Toward a Definition of Mixed Methods Research. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 1(2), 112-133. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1558689806298224>
- Mertens, D. M. (2007). *Transformative research and evaluation*. The Guilford Press.
- Morgan, D. L. (2007). Paradigms lost and pragmatism regained. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 1(1), 48-76.
- Ngulube, P. (2020). *Handbook of Research on Connecting Research Methods for Information Science Research*. IGI Global.

Plano Clark, V. L., & Ivankova, N. V. (2016). *Mixed Methods Research: A Guide to the Field*. SAGE Publications.

Tashakkori, A., & Teddlie, C. (2010). *SAGE Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social & Behavioral Research* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Tashakkori, A., & Teddlie, C. (2010). *SAGE Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social & Behavioral Research*. SAGE Publications.

22.16 Glossary

1. Mixed Methods Research (MMR)

A research approach that combines qualitative and quantitative methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of a research problem. It integrates data collection, analysis, and interpretation to enhance the validity and reliability of findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

2. Pragmatism

The philosophical foundation of MMR, emphasizing practical problem-solving and the integration of different methodologies based on research needs rather than rigid adherence to a single paradigm (Morgan, 2007).

3. Convergent Parallel Design

A common mixed-methods research design where qualitative and quantitative data are collected simultaneously, analysed separately, and then merged to compare and contrast findings (Creswell, 2014).

4. Explanatory Sequential Design

A two-phase MMR approach in which quantitative data is collected and analysed first, followed by qualitative data collection to help explain or expand on the quantitative findings (Ivankova, Creswell, & Stick, 2006).

5. Exploratory Sequential Design

An MMR approach where qualitative data is collected first to explore a phenomenon, followed by quantitative data collection to test or validate initial findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

6. Integration in MMR

The process of combining qualitative and quantitative data at different stages of research (design, analysis, or interpretation) to create a more robust and holistic understanding of the research problem (Fetters, Curry, & Creswell, 2013).

7. Triangulation

A technique used in MMR to enhance the credibility and validity of research findings by comparing results from multiple data sources or methods (Denzin, 1978).

8. Embedded Design

A mixed-methods approach in which one type of data (qualitative or quantitative) is embedded within a larger primary design to provide additional insights (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

9. Methodological Expansion

A trend in MMR that involves extending traditional research methodologies by incorporating innovative techniques such as artificial intelligence, big data analytics, and digital ethnography (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

10. Transformative Mixed Methods

A research approach that applies MMR within a social justice framework to address issues of equity, inclusion, and empowerment (Mertens, 2007).

11. Big Data and MMR

A future trend where mixed-methods research integrates large-scale data analytics with qualitative insights to enhance research depth and breadth (Ngulube, 2020).

12. Ethical Considerations in MMR

The need for careful attention to informed consent, data privacy, and the potential impact of combining diverse data sources on participants' confidentiality and rights (Greene, 2007).

Unit 23: Feminist Discourse: Women and Gender Studies

Structure

23.1 Learning Objectives

23.2 Introduction

23.3 Feminism as an endeavor

23.3.1 Measures initiated to combat Double Oppression

23.3.2 Indian Men: Conditions they created for women

23.3.3 The New Women

23.3.4 The Scenario since 1950 in India- The New Republic

23.3.5 Towards Equality: Initiatives of United Nations

23.3.6 Personal Narratives of Women: New Focus

23.3.7 Methods and Methodology: Resilience to analyze lived experiences

23.4 Conclusion

23.5 Summary

23.6 Questions

23.7 References

23.8 End Notes

23.1 Learning Objectives

Content of this unit has been designed to get familiarized with:

- Pioneers of feminism.
- Origin of Women's Studies
- The need to promote and maintain gender equality.
- Gender equality as a journey of change.
- Women in India and their efforts to overcome patriarchy.
- Methods and Methodology practiced in feminist studies.

23.2. Introduction

The Indian woman is not just a gender, she is a civilizational value writes Geetanjali Kirloskar who thinks women in India has started to facilitate the much needed diversity in decision making which has strengthened the business scenario. Kirloskar mentioned in her article, a revolution is afoot in women's entrepreneurship; 18% women as startup founders now which is an increase by 10% in 2015. Anna M M Vetticad writes future encyclopedia on feminism will be incomplete without a chapter on WCC (Women in Collective Cinema) and its pursuit of equitable workplaces for women. It will also document persistent marginalization and erasure of important roles played by women in various rights movement. WCC is working towards shaping government policy in the state to combat gender inequality-pervading in the film industry and symptoms of larger problems in the society. WCC attracted international attention with the release of the Hema Committee Report in 2024. WCC urged the Kerala government to start a committee to document and analyze working conditions of women in Malayalam cinema. Le Monde described this report as 'explosive' which exposed the widespread sexual harassment and abuse' in the industry. . Indian media did not consider it appropriate for media audience to know of the consciousness raising exercise of WCC in early 2017 following the sexual assault of a Malayalam film star many months before #MeToo movement started in the US. It has taken a sensational news development in August 2024 and seven years for the national media to finally give WCC the required coverage. Indian journalists, however, were captivated from Day 1 by the #MeToo revelations in the US in 2017. While we study such reports that makes space in the media learning on the emergence of terms like feminism, women s studies and gender is essential to understand how voices of women were silenced and their effort to make themselves visible and heard. The feminist movement of the nineteenth and early twentieth century's sought for women their right to cast vote and to highlight issues related to women's inequality. Women's history as a field of inquiry was a product of the women's movement in a period called "second-wave feminism" which sought to change men as well as empower women. The term 'gender' was originally used by feminist scholars to mean the cultural construction of sex difference, in contrast to the term 'sex' which was thought to mean 'natural' or 'biological' difference. History and Culture are fundamental aspects of the fabric of everyday life. Relations of inequality are closely tied to the question of culture. Social inequality is legitimized through culture to provide our identity on who we are. The relative domination is partly secured and reproduced through the practices and products of cultural institutions like language, family, educational system, and

religious organizations. Women should have the same basic human rights as men, this is fundamental to feminism; this has been central in generating interest and developing analytical approaches to the history of women. In the context of the French Revolution words like "feminism" and "feminist" started to gain ground. The word feminism has first been used by Charles Fourier (1772-1837), a French philosopher. It made way into the English language vocabulary by 1900 through British women's rights activists involved in suffrage struggles. Recognition of oppression is the central tenet of feminism. Women were not studied as victims only but on various ways they resisted their oppression. Liberal feminists stressed on equality of opportunity; women to be valued irrespective of gender or race. Radical feminism asserted women to be superior to men thereby it had strongest expression of women centered feminist cultural politics. Radical feminists viewed women's oppression as a consequence of patriarchal dominance and thus saw the problem of men's power over women or patriarchy as a central problem. This path was followed by women's historians in both Britain and the United States. Feminism has given rise to a wide range of cultural politics since the late 1960s. All images of femininity being constricting and repressive; at the heart of feminism is the question; do women understand and live their femininity? Feminists have been reconstructing new women's traditions particularly in literature, film, education, criticism, fiction, drama, film-making and fine arts since late 1960s. Women's history began in the late 1960s, it flourished in the 1970s. Women's Studies emphasized on the centrality of women's own lived experience and collective learning to develop new understanding of society and social environment. It started as the critique of patriarchal institutions which was already the endeavour of Women's Liberation Movement. Construction of knowledge and practices involved in education were also designed to stay immune from exploitative and hegemonic systems. Women Studies, the educational wing of the Women's Movement aimed at concentrating on lives of women so that social changes can be initiated to control the attitude to treat women as subordinates. The design of the study underscored the need to study women's lives, views and perspectives. Internalization of oppressive modes of femininity was the goal of Women's Studies to raise consciousness and new senses of self. Lives of ordinary women went unrecorded and unremarked before the twentieth century; it recorded lives of queens and saints. Spender (1981) suggested finding out and documenting if experiences of ordinary women and men were same and identical in domestic space and public space or initiatives of women to create space were treated as indulgence of deviants. How far viewpoints of feminists represented the perspective of subaltern women of the period still remains

agenda of multiple debates. The starting point for (much) feminist cultural politics after 1968 was the invisibility of women. So feminists responded and called for policies to enable equal representation and opportunity of women in all cultural institutions. Women's contributions are routinely erased or diminished by patriarchal historians, education systems and news media noted Geraldine Forbes who has contributed since 1970s towards the development of women's history in India for a global audience. Forbes has sustained her use of the term "feminism" as an inclusive term that "supports equal rights for women and sees patriarchal society as responsible for their oppression. A trend to reject feminist labels gained ground among (sympathetic) scholars of women studies who doubted if the most radical Indian women of the past as can be termed as 'feminists'.

In India Gloria Steinem and Germaine Greer are more cited realized Vetticad on hearing content of a podcast ; barely any mention is made of Savitribai Phule, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, Mary Roy, Bhanwari Devi whose courage, diligence, perseverance and sacrifices reformed society and opened doors that were shut to women. Public conversation on feminism in India portrays White women and those operating in the west as leaders of this transcontinentalism. Black and Brown women are relegated to the margins. Kumari Jayawardena explained, feminism in the "Third World" was fostered as much through alliances with men as with women. The struggle to achieve social equality has been to transform the shift and patterns of control. Most feminists feel there can be no fundamental transformation of gender relations without fundamental changes in men and masculinity. Men have to change and such changes would involve a transformation and redistribution of power. Gender Studies provides a space in which men and masculinity necessarily figure both in their own right and in relation to women and femininity. In the mid-1970s two US-based European women historians suggested an approach to feminist history that a decade later elaborated into 'gender history' today. Joan Kelly-Gadol suggested that the "social relation of the sexes" ought to be at the centre of feminist history. At the same time, Natalie Zemon Davis proposed that to correct the bias in the historical record, it would be necessary to look at both men and women. She suggested the need to rethink some of the central issues like power, social structure, property, symbols and periodization. Women's history started to employ gender as an "analytical category of historical analysis." The purpose being to understand the systematic ways in which sex differences have cut through society and culture and in the process have conferred inequality upon women. Gender history developed in response to the scholarship on debates about women's history. It was spurred by French post-

structuralism, whose influence on historical practice was greatly enhanced through the uses of it made by feminist historians. Post modern feminism whose base is post-structuralism tried to drive the idea that no naturally fixed meaning can be attributed either to gender or to race. Post modern feminists and their complex relationship to cultural politics initiated the quest; can gender have variable meanings across time and space?

Time has impacted endeavor of women to create spaces where their voices are heard. Oppression and patriarchy has emerged in new forms. A few women succumb to pressures while few are relentless and focus to overcome obstacles. Scholars, enthusiasts, students and teachers collect data on women by applying methods and methodology appropriate to facilitate conversations at length. To engage an interviewee (s) in the research process, consent obtaining is necessary. Self reflection is important to students and scholars of Sociology engaged in feminist research. They aim not to develop power differences between the researched and the researcher. Social reality is complex and multidimensional, feminist researchers keep this in mind to engage in conversations to unveil details not explicit to the mass in the society. Researcher is a part of social institutions and social structures. It is to be borne in mind; research is not conversation and observation only. It is self grooming to ensure hegemonic attitude and hierarchical relationship between the researcher and the researched is kept at bay and not encouraged. Spoken words and body language together provide details to understand their lived experiences. Besides agency to overcome tough situations also exist agony of women who tried but failed to reach their goal. Reflexivity is practiced by feminist researchers in their research practice; it enriches both the interviewee and interviewer. Reflexivity encourages critical look within oneself to reflect and reevaluate ones lived experiences. This becomes a process of learning to understand if social background and upbringing influences the research process.

In Bengal knowledge on women achievers and their struggle were documented by men. The discipline got enriched with the engagement of feminist researchers; they brought to light what was unarticulated and hidden for long. A propertied widow in Bengal, Rani Rashmoni (1793-1861) faced oppositions from Brahmins who raised objections when she expressed her desire to patronize a Kali temple, the sudra woman did succeed to patronize a Kali temple at Dakshineswar. Kadambini Basu Gangopadhyay (1861-1923) qualified as the first woman doctor from the Calcutta Medical College despite oppositions raised by Indian teachers and students of the college who did not want a woman to study. Their achievements inspire humankind. They both were active

till the moment their breathing stopped. Rashmoni signed the Trust Deed of the temple a day before she died and Kadambini performed the last operation an hour before she died. *Amar Jiban* published in 1876 is an autobiography written by Rasusundari Devi, the first woman in India to write her autobiography. Rasusundari Devi is a self-taught woman, she learnt alphabets after completing her domestic duties when male members were not at home. The year her book got published, Chandramukhi completed her school. Chandramukhi Basu (1860-1944) is the first woman to qualify school entrance examination in 1876 but no certificate of recognition was given to her until 2013. It was handed over to her grandson in the convocation programme. Binodini Dassi (1862-1941) is a woman theatre entrepreneur, actor and author. She collected money to build a theatre hall to be named after her but her mentor Girish Ghose (1844-1912) persuaded her to abandon the idea to name the theatre hall in her name. It was thus named Star Theatre. In 2025 it has been renamed as Binodini Theatre. Born in 1900, Kumari Sreemati Manoda Devi, student of a reputed school in Kolkata joined the profession of prostitution. She is the first woman of the town who in her autobiography, *Sikhita Patitar Atmacharit*, narrated how and why she entered the profession on her own accord and participated in the freedom movement. Patience is important in feminist research which considers oral history as important as written documents. Oral history method of interviewing covers the gamut of life. This method has uncovered the subjugated knowledge of women. It has led to our interpretation of struggle and agency of women thus co-created meanings. In Bengal we read on women achievers from new standpoint after women started to employ feminist research methods and methodologies. A perceptible difference is observed in men writing on women before feminist methodology emerged and after application of feminist methodology; men writing on women has changed.

23.3. Feminism is an Endeavour

The study on feminism can best be appreciated when we learn on contributions made by individuals and groups to develop new perspectives and promote inclusivity. British writer and women's activist Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-97) and her creation *A Vindication of the Right of Woman* in 1792 stressed on education and reason for women. Implied in her appeal/demand was a new order in France where a nation and a sex were forced into subjection during the regime of Louis XIV but it appeared as all good for everyone. Such an endeavor started the ground work to (re)define equations between men and women; class and class, gender and gender. Critical thinking is essential to

make meaningful contributions towards self-development and to society opined Virginia Woolf (1882-1941). She paved way for modern feminism that prioritized the need for financial independence and personal space in her seminal work published in 1929, *A Room of one's Own*. The role of a mother is idealized but the responsibilities associated with raising children are undervalued that is why Paris born Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986), author of the book 'Second Sex' (1949) criticized the practice of 'over' glorification of motherhood. She invited critical attention towards the validity of socially constructed woman's identity under patriarchy. Such a practice attached no importance to individual identity of women thereby created group-based conflicts. The book *Women's Role in Economic Development* published in 1970 analyzed how development projects do not consider contributions made by women. The Danish Economist Ester Boserup (1910-1999) initiated a new paradigm for women's question in non-western societies. United Nations internationalized this as the reformulated 'women's question' to understand what happens to women in the process of economic development. Collective solidarity can emerge from new "way of seeing" which can be created if women are allowed roles of decision makers argued Sheila Rowbotham (1943). Her book *Women's Consciousness, Man's World* (1973) is on the need to understand the nature of patriarchal dominance of men over women and the property relations; roles adopted by women she stated shapes ideals in family thus impacts class exploitation and racism. The goal of feminist thinking has been to transform the structures of domination which required mobilization of women worldwide. Three international conferences were organized by the UN after UN declared 1975 as Year of Women to raise consciousness of policy makers on crisis faced by women.

23.3.1: Measures initiated to combat Double Oppression

Should women with 'White-skin' dictate standards and procedures to 'Non-White Women' enquired Gloria Jean Watkins (1952-2021) in her book *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (1982). American by birth, she is also known as bell hooks. Sisters of the Yam is the group she started to assist Black women to counter/resist double oppression; from men and white-skin women. Black women were/ are marginalized, they were made to appreciate life-style and norms of beauty practiced by white-skin women. bell hooks realized feminism should be studied by analyzing crisis that exists between women thus differences between them to be studied beyond the binary of 'man' versus 'woman'. hooks urged women to 'push against oppressive boundaries' (1990), beyond racism and sex to create space because spatiality provides active agency. Categories of identity are constructed according to Joan Scott (1941), in

her study by utilizing gender as an analytical category; the subjective and collective meanings of women and men emerged. In the December 1985 issue of *American Historical Review* appeared her study on gender and how it works in social relationships. She defined gender as the meanings given to the perceived differences between the sexes thereby utilized gender as a lens to zoom in differences between masculine and feminine. The cultural interpretation of 'woman' as a category has changed when looked through the lens of space and time, the position of women is different in different societies according to Moore (1988). Space is important to analyze gendered social relations because space is constructed and attributed meanings through social practices and social relationships which makes it obvious that men and women are not equal. Gender in the study of Henrietta Moore (1957) is a symbolic construction. Experience is devoid of singular meaning according to the American academic Patricia Hill Collins (1948) so a meshing of theory and lived experience facilitates to appreciate 'differences' without positioning individuals and incidents outside contemporary social relations and history. In her book *Black Feminist Thought* written in 1990 she zoomed in on "outsiders within", the black women. Patricia, the sociologist mentioned black women being aware of their marginalized status of gender and race must navigate the dictates (rules) of the privileged white world. Differences has to be kept aside to arrive at the goalpost decided upon because woman is doubly in the shadow noted Gayatri Spivak (1990) who coined the term strategic essentialism to explain temporary solidarity is much needed to ensure social action. Feminists cannot work together for common causes because of their multiple agenda thus essentialist position has to be adopted for a temporary span by disparate groups to act cohesively. Resistance to dominations must be rooted in culture and experience just the way group domination has cultural dimensions, Spivak thus raised consciousness by stating/ asserting "I am not erudite enough to be interdisciplinary but I can break rules" (1990:27); to her the margin being more than a preference. The Indian literary theorist and cultural critic Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak (1942) questioned why abolition of the practice of sati in India is popularized as a service of British white men to save brown women from brown men in her essay 'Can the Subaltern speak?' The politics of representations of Indian women in European writings is explicit in the study of Janaki Nair who 'uncovered' the zenanna (women) and scrutinized the visions of womanhood in India. She challenged the binary between home and the world following her findings; private domestic space for women and public space for men. Nair mentioned of systematic violence perpetrated by multiple patriarchies, communities and the state. In the 18th century Europe, the growing imperialism started to make clear

the need to highlight differences between public space and private space mentioned Arjun Sengupta in the daily newspaper published from Kolkata The Telegraph on 26 January 2025. In the post editorial titled 'Colonial education, labour and gender roles: Macaulay's Minutemen' Sengupta detailed how women were encouraged to appreciate normative ideas via educational system influenced / dominated by colonial authorities. Women were expected to reflect best ideals of Western civilization which maintained fine balance between man's aggressive activity and women's passivity. By the 19th century, Sengupta writes, women in India were groomed to become custodians of purity and charity. Inspired to be beautiful and elegant women were not allowed to be in the public space. They were deprived from creating opportunities in public space instead they were identified with the private domestic space. Masculine intervention was made necessary in the public space because it was a zone where unimaginable money could be made so the danger embedded in the processes inspired women to stay away from the cut-throat ruthlessness of the world of money in the public space. Colonialism played a pivotal role in India, a period when fundamental changes occurred. The vehicle of change in late colonial India was "domesticity" argued Swapna Banerjee. The familial and the domestic have been identified as the locus of power and struggle by Indrani Chatterjee and Samita Sen. Paula Banerjee in an essay on conflicts in Nagaland and Assam mentioned the situation of women in Northeast India portrays that in times of crisis women are controlled/victimized not merely by power structures from outside but also by elites of their own communities.

23.3.2: Indian Men: Conditions they created for women

Study of social reform movements of the nineteenth century reveal a project of men for women. Raja Rammohan Roy (1772-1833) ensured prohibition of sati through a law since 1829. He is remembered as the 'First Modern Man of India'. Since 1856 remarriage of widows became legal because of sustained effort of Iswarchandra Vidyasagar. This happened at a period when women had to follow codes of monogamy strictly but men had the liberty to be polygamous. Condition of women did not improve despite the law because they lost their right to inherit property of their deceased husband if they remarried. In 1884 B.B. Malabari, a Parsi reformer attempted to force (urge) the government's hand in nudging forward the programme of widow remarriage. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948) initiated women's engagement in the public sphere by making them participate in politics. He believed in the efficacy of feminine modes of protest and adopted/practiced that in the nationalist movement. He feminized nationalist politics

thus created a special space for women; they played active role in satyagraha and passive resistance. Post-independence association and participation of Indian women in local governance accelerated in 1990 through the 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution of India which led to the start of the three tier Panchayati Raj Institutions. Iswarchandra Bandyopadhyaya (1820-1891), social reformer and educationist was the First Secretary of the First Hindu Female School in Kolkata known as Hindu Valika Vidyalaya. This school started in 1849 (1850) due to the effort of John Elliot Drinkwater Bethune (1801-1851); support was extended by Dakshinaranjan Mukherjee, Ramgopal Ghosh, Pandit Madan Mohan Tarkalankar. At Barasat Babu Kalikrishna Mitra and Naba Krishna Mitra took initiatives to start female education before it started in Kolkata but succumbed to pressure. In 1883 from the University of Calcutta qualified women graduates in India; Kadambini Basu Gangopadhyaya and Chandramukhi Basu. Jyotiba Phule (1827-1890) utilized education as a tool to improve the condition of widows in western India. In the Deccan region Indian men utilized education as a hegemonic tool during the supremacy of colonial authorities analyzed Padma Anagol. An elitist education system emerged for girls of middle-class family in colonial Maharashtra; these educational institutions were affiliated to an umbrella organization, Maharashtra Female education Society. Padma Anagol through her case studies of Female High School also known as "Huzur Paga" School and other educational institutions of the Deccan region in Western India made explicit educational politics of colonial India. Agency, activism and protests of Maharashtrian women writes Anagol to be analyzed as tripartite interaction in the social landscape of Deccan region between colonial state, women and Indian men both conservatives and reformists. The rise of a strident *navin stri* (new women) in Maharashtra from 1880 generated a veritable war of sexes. Confident, ambitious women questioned women's position within Hinduism and the caste system documented Padma Anagol in the book *Emergence of Feminism in India 1850-1920*. Experiences unique to women to be defined in their diverse historical contexts of colonialism, this is essential because there exists the plurality of Indian women. Embedded within plurality (story) is the ability of women's movements to converse across divisions and disunities; they come together periodically on common issues of campaign. Also to be borne in mind through difference and conflict women often define and identify themselves rather than through similarity or common belonging. Heterogeneity of positions and issues is reflected even in conflict ; plurality of politics-caste, class, community, region, language, and ethnicity when analyzed unveils the scope and thrust of specific movements each having unique features within their specific

context and focus.

23.3.3: The New Women

The 'New Women' found a voice in writing about their lives and the condition of women. They wrote to question their subordination since 1880 and in doing so asserted their right to be in the public space. Indian feminism can be best appreciated if women's writings are studied along with their performativity within the political and economic systems. Location of (re)actions had/has its own pattern of patriarchy which women negotiated (negotiates). *Stri-Purush Tulna* (comparison between men and women) written by a young woman Tarabari Shinde (1850-1910) is a strong critique of Brahminical patriarchy in retaliation to the death sentence conferred upon Vijayalakshmi, a Brahmin child widow in 1881 for killing her (own) illegitimate child. Snehalata's suicide in Bengal in 1914 established the link between dowry and women's death (Majumdar 2004). Rukhmabai Raut (1864-1955) protested against child marriage and challenged Hindu marriage because she disapproved her marriage that happened during her childhood without her consent. Besides child marriage her areas of protest were on infanticide, abortion and selling of women into prostitution. Rukhmabai enquired and demanded education facilities of women to match that of men so that women can avail job opportunities. She pursued education and created her space in the male dominated public space. Middle-class women were becoming partners with the men in the social and political enterprise of India (S.Sen 2002). Women from rural areas and those who did not receive school education also participated in Swadeshi movements and Partition of Bengal in 1905 (B.Ray 1995). Politically knowledgeable and educated women sought new public roles. Indian National Congress soon after its inception in 1885 invited women to attend meetings. Some women; many observers, a few delegates attended meetings of the Indian National Congress since 1899. Saraladevi Chaudhurani (1872-1945) and Ramabai (1858-1922) pioneered women's participation in public debates and political activities. Saraladevi apprehended and declared men would not champion women's cause if interests clashed. She started Bharat Stree Mahamandal in 1910-1911 to challenge patriarchy effectively by promoting women's organization to establish their causes, women according to her needed their own congress. Nari Sisksha Samiti (organization to promote education for women) was started in 1919 by Lady Abala Basu (1865-1951) to impart vocational training so that widows, wives of absconding men, single woman without someone to provide financial support can earn to be independent. The organization had verticals like Vidyasagar Bani Bhawan and Mahila

Shilpa Bhawan. The first Arts and Crafts school for women Mahila Shilpa Bhawan was started in the year 1926. The Indian National Congress became committed to the civil rights programme of women's associations since 1920s. Women's organizations were invited to join in the struggle for swaraj and accelerate mass support. Women in Bombay and Calcutta participated in trade union politics and emerged as leaders. In Bombay (militant) women labour activists organized a series of strikes since 1920. The second generation of 'New Women' became active critique of their own society so they started to articulate their needs. To consolidate women's interests, associations started and institutions developed. The National Council of Indian Women started in 1925 while the All India Women's Conference (AIWC) started in 1927. Critics mentioned of these organizations representing Indian women as elitist all-Indian national organizations consisting of women either successful in their own right or from wealthy and powerful families. These organizations campaigned to improve conditions of working women besides maternity benefits, marriage reforms and birth control were discussed. Unity among women was seen from 1920 to 1930 which is believed to be the first phase of feminist movement in India. During this time women were active to express their and civil and political rights, initiated social reforms. The institution of marriage, its validity faced questions in the 1940s when women involved in communist movements volunteered to stay in communes' analyzed (Munshi 1997; Bandyopadhyay 1989). Among communist women was seen radicalism of revolutionary women, they demanded logical explanation on restrictions imposed to control mobility of women and not allowing participation in various activities.

23.3.4: The Scenario since 1950 in India- The New Republic

Women's Movement in India waned in the 1950s and 1960s as affirmed/mentioned by Vina Mazumdar (1927-2013). The vision and strength regained between 1960 and 1980 according to the "grandmother of Women's Studies in South Asia", Vina Mazumdar. Following India's independence in 1947, the focus shifted toward nation-building and the consolidation of democratic institutions. The Constitution of India guaranteed equality for women, and legal reforms were implemented to improve their status in areas such as marriage, inheritance, and employment. However, a considerable gap persisted between legal rights and social realities. In India since 1950 gender disparities widened in public places; education, health of middle-class women suffered. Conditions of women need special attention which was absent in the new Republic because conventional models of development which aimed at benefit of all was implemented

since 1950. This model raised aggregate well-being in the developed and developing nations. The New Republic in 1950 assured equality of all residents and citizens in the country. Absence of gender based discrimination is a Fundamental Right, this is enshrined in the Constitution of India. The purpose of such a trophy for women sexes is an unresolved question. Inequality in the distribution of rewards and benefits looms large (even) in the age of digitalization and space research proliferation. In the 1960s 'new feminism' emerged in western countries which focused on the family as the site of women's oppression. Associated with the study of the 'family' women as 'subjects' evolved in the 1960s and 1970s, they were however, also studied as part of religion, culture and politics. The 1970s marked a resurgence of women's activism, emphasizing issues such as gender-based violence, reproductive rights, and economic independence. The beginning of the International Women's Decade in 1970 witnessed a paradigmatic shift in Indian women's history. SEWA- Self-Employed Women Association was started in 1972 by Ela Bhatt in Ahmedabad which raised consciousness on self respect among women engaged in textile industry. Gauri Devi inspired rural women in Garhwali to counter actions of logging companies. Women made (forced) the organization to stop felling of trees. Recorded in history as Chipko movement this environment protection initiative was encouraged by Sundarlal Bahuguna in 1973. Disrespect for women in India took the form of custodial rape in 1972, recorded as Mathura case (Maharashtra) and the Rameeza Bee case (Andhra Pradesh) in 1978. The sixteen year old Adivasi girl was (allegedly) raped by two policemen in the compound of Desai Ganj police station in Chandrapur district of Maharashtra in 1972. The two accused policemen were told to file complaint which they did, reluctantly. Mahila Samta Sainik Dal (League of Women Soldiers for Equality), a Dalit women's group was formed in 1975 in Maharashtra; they focused on sexual oppression but sought its explanation in caste and religion rather than class. (Datta 2007:134-35). Can such actions be termed as attention on women issues to improve their status; a pertinent doubt because setbacks appeared in new form. Rameeza Bee was raped by several policemen in 1978, her husband raised his voice against such action; he was murdered. The commission of enquiry that was set up found policemen guilty, however, they were acquitted in court. Forum against rape was formed in Bombay /Mumbai in 1978. Little justice was done to women issues because Ganpat and Tukaram who raped the sixteen year old Adivasi girl (Mathura case) were acquitted by the Supreme Court of India in 1979. Decisions of the court generated country wide protest. A focused agenda was created to combat patriarchy which was evident in the form of rallies, gheraos, strikes which were conducted at the local level,

near the venue of the occurrence of the violence and injustice. 'Violence' became synonymous with 'New Women's Movement'. This era also witnessed the emergence of Dalit and other marginalized women's movements, highlighting the intersectional nature of gender inequality and the necessity for inclusive solutions.

23.3.5: Towards Equality: Initiatives of United Nations

Officials of United Nations took a note that benefits of development did not reach everyone. Government of India was thus directed by the United Nations to appoint a committee to study the condition of women. Indian women appeared as a monolithic and oppressed entity. They were projected as beneficiaries of the "awakening" experienced by their men folk because of their contact with Western influences. Women's question started to gain space on the national agenda after feminist scholars and activists Phulrenu Guha and Lotika Sarkar prepared a report titled Towards Equality (1975). The report prepared by the committee initiated by Government of India to probe the condition of women elaborated on the vulnerable status of women since independence. Since 1911 condition of women deteriorated appeared in the report prepared by the Committee on the Status of women. Global circulation of feminist ideas started with conferences since declaration of 1975 as Year of the women. These conferences played a role to initiate energetic women's movements and gender politics/movement; issues like education and employment were discussed. The first UN Conference of Women was held in Mexico in 1975. The second UN organized conference in Copenhagen in 1980 and the third UN organized international conference was in Nairobi in 1985. Florence Howe (1929-2020), founder of the Feminist Press, New York attended the First International Conference on Women's Studies which was held in Anand, Gujarat in 1983. Interactions with delegates and participants provided her data on inequities faced by Indian women in terms of legal rights, living conditions, health care and right to professions. This was the scenario despite two international conferences organized by the UN. The situation waited for fresh perspectives. Indian women started to take lesson from Western feminists since 1970.

23.3.6: Personal Narratives of Women: New Focus

The emergence of women's history in India since 1970 acknowledges contribution of Geraldine Forbes and Barbara Ramusack. They restored women to history and recuperated their voices. From 1970 to 1980 these two women travelled to India, equipped with principles of second-wave feminism to search and collect from the archive, activism, personal friendships, and scholarships of women. Personal identities and

shared memories of collective actions require retrieving and building on inherited traditions of struggles fought, won, or lost. To them personal narratives were important so they followed the heritage and legacy of Indian women's resistance in text and context. Women are "agents" of their own destinies mentioned Geraldine Forbes, distinguished professor emeriti, State University of New York, Oswego. Her monograph *Positivism in Bengal* (1975) is the result of her dynamic and multi-faceted approach, it is on capabilities of women with agency. She employed a new tool of analysis, studied personal narratives, analyzed visual sources and referred to archival resources. The term "social feminism" to Indian women's movements was associated and introduced by Forbes who in her book *Women in Modern India* mentioned how the ideology of social feminism helped Indian women to develop their rights to participate in social political movements and create opinion on their obligation to perform traditional roles and serve the needs of the family. The term social feminism developed in the context of America in 1969 by William L. O'Neill (1935-2016) to proclaim "Women's rights was not an end in itself". Working class women, concerned with survival issues, in the late 1970s often felt alienated from elite women's movements analyzed Forbes, this signaled the tensions between women straddling in different classes. Women engaged in civic and labor reform movements realized this thus a new concept emerged, different from that of hardcore feminism where the main objective was winning women's suffrage. Desire, demand, need and want of women to be heard and taken note of started to gain ground.

23.3.7: Methods and Methodology: Resilience to analyze lived experiences

A research process has to be objective and free from bias. Standpoint of the researcher has to be borne in mind with respect to power and authority. Research standpoint according to Sandra Harding (1993) maximizes objectivity. Embarking on a research requires knowledge (remembrance) of the fact that research is influenced and shaped by the society to which one belongs. Research is done with a purpose, it has to gather specific points. A line of enquiry is necessary for which a substantive frame has to be created to set the harmonious tune of questions. The process facilitates to build theoretical ideas which have to be pertinent to the topic. Students of Sociology have to remember, social positionality and social background affects data collection method. Marjorie De Vault (2004) and Glenda Gross (2012) explained language of expression of the participant (interviewee) has to be noted carefully. Students of Sociology engaged in feminist research must stay engaged in what is said and what is not said which may be termed as muted language or silent communication. Researchers honor hesitant languages. Rapport building helps to engage in open-ended dialogues to interpret voices of researched

(women) which often remains silent or non-vocal. They may talk but not on topics which disturbs them. Probes and markers are important to join gaps created during interviews and dialogues. The participant and interviewee may be hesitant to express because of inhibitions and socialization. Probes mobilize them. A passing reference which is important to analyze is often made but not elaborated, this is completed by applying marker methods. It is like mentioning of a point much later when the conversation has taken a spontaneous level. At this stage the interviewee elaborates spontaneously which adds value to the research work. Markers according to Weiss (1994) are a passing reference made by the participant which should be remembered by the interviewer and to be returned to listen and make them speak again. A dialogue to start with gradually takes the shape of a monologue, the participant shares experiences. Participatory model allows rapport building through open-ended questions. The researcher shares one's biography so ice-breaking process builds up. Intersectionality proposed by black feminist covers complexity of status position.

Being woman by gender is not adequate to collect data. Reduction of social distance enables to develop emotional climate to express without fear and bias. Interpretation of spoken and unspoken words depends on values and attitudes of researchers. Qualitative research is concerned on 'why' aspect of certain events and phenomena. This requires skill to listen to gather data. Judgment samples and purposive samples often small sample size and case studies are preferred because each is unique; they add to the gamut of knowledge. Sample size should meet requirement of the research question. In the budget of 2025 it is aimed as part of the proposed Viksit Bharat 70% women in India will join by 2047 in economic activities. Participation of women in the workforce is an economic and social imperative to contribute to the GDP. The spotlight on 'women-led development' is in keeping with India's efforts to become 'developed' by 2047. Researchers engaged in social policy change have to keep in mind institutional gatekeepers during the process of data collection on the condition of working women. Gate keeping is done in the name of social justice and social issues. They stand on the way to access certain groups in the context of legal protection. FLFPR (female labour force participation rate) increased in India from 7% in 2017 of women aged 18 to 41 years to 23.3.% in 2023-2024 for women aged 15 years and older. Despite the increase men's LFPR (labour force participation rate) is nearly double that of women. Only four among every 10 women of working age were part of India's labour force in 2023-2024 writes Ashwini Deshpande in Financial Express in the article titled "Gender gaps persist", dated 26 December 2024. Quantity of employment does not suitably indicate the quality

of employment of women. Women's participation in informal, subsistence-based jobs which are often precarious in nature are done out of necessity. Unmarried women are not allowed to work in Bihar particularly in rural areas as per data collected by Pandey (2023). Unmarried female household members are absent because they succumb to social beliefs that such engagement degrades their social value. Deshpande (2024) observed there is more visibility of women in the labor force in rural areas while that of women in urban areas it is shrinking. India's development can hardly essay India's development if they are unable to safely participate in such efforts. All women are not same, differences has to be taken note of organize data collection process. Negotiating difference is essential. The appreciation of difference is important. Sociologist Robert Weiss (1994) on issues of difference, should the interviewer be an insider or outsider, it is good to be an insider. The status of 'outsider' and 'insider' affects im-epth, unstructured interview process to collect data.

Employed women include women's work on family enterprises (farms, dairy, poultry, livestock, Karana shops, etc) which is unpaid and unrecognized (often). The tendency to involve women to contribute to the earnings of the family without payment needs serious discussions. Their work similar to that of men is not considered worthy of earnings, they remain unpaid while men are counted as workforce. Historically, women's participation in the workforce in India has often been invisible and marginalized with their relatively smaller participation. An analysis of data over the last seven decades by Mitali Nikore in 2022 revealed women's work is largely informal, invisible and labour-intensive. How these women (unpaid) feel when they hear on terms like 'women empowerment'. To understand this, the researcher has to keep in mind class status, ethnicity, gender, sexual preference and cast, factors that impacts the interview process. Participants to be encouraged to provide thick descriptions when a life of participants living in a particular community is the area of research. In-depth interviewing is a valuable research method to gain insights and better understanding of human condition. A mixed method of open-ended and close-ended questions enables to elicit data required by the researcher. Unstructured in-depth interview method elicits meaning of silent body language and broken words, mono syllables, often. Pace of the interview is important, though all research are time bound to put to practice results gathered. Unstructured interview with minimum control on how respondents should reply is done by keeping in mind their socio emotional resources by which they measure their self-esteem. Memoing of data collected is essential. They have to be noted on a copy/ diary date wise, the exercise to be completed within 24 hours of collecting data so that points

not written or audio video recorded during data collection and survey method do not escape from the memory. Data has to be recorded in excel sheets, they may be colored and hyperlinked; analysis process becomes easy, generates new observations. Feminist research methodology applied in the discipline of Sociology develops a new orientation on status of women and their journey to change their position. Change for betterment of the society which requires participation of family members and policy makers, from the margins and periphery women should be given their space in the centre which is a right and not a facility granted.

23.4. Conclusion

Aimed at making women voices being heard and violence on women to stop, decentralization of power was initiated in 1990. Guidelines against sexual harassment in the workplace came into practice for the first time in India as Vishaka Judgement and Guidelines in 1997. Theoretical models for studying women's lives often seem to homogenize experiences noted Gail Minault (born 1939) who recorded evolution of ideas in *Separate Worlds: Studies of Purdah in South Asia* (1982). In the introduction to the book *Feminism: The Essential Historical Writings* (1972) Miriam Schneir (born 1933) recorded centuries of slavery do not provide a fertile soil for intellectual development and expression hence feminist works did not emerge from behind the Hindu purdah or out of Moslem harems. To live with dignity, Shah Bano, a Muslim woman filed a case and won the (controversial) lawsuit on maintenance in 1985; Muslim Women's Protection of Rights on Divorce Act, 1986 followed. In India women across class and religion joined the autonomous women's movement to accelerate the demand for Uniform Civil Code. In vital agencies like local governments Zilla Panchayats reserved posts for women Adhyakshas, Taluk Panchayats have women President and there are women Sarpanch in Gram panchayats. The 73rd amendment to the Constitution of India made provision to include women in Panchayats. The rural local government, Panchayati Raj Institution (PRIs) since then has one third positions reserved for women. 33% of seats had compulsory provision for women of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes; a Dalit lady or an Adivasi lady. The 74th amendment on urban local governments (Nagarpalikas) stated women should occupy positions of Sarpanch and Adhyaksha. To protest against oppression on the basis of class, caste and gender, the National Federation of Dalit Women was formed in 1995. Prior to this in 1975 Mahila Samta Sainik Dal (League of Women Soldiers for Equality), a Dalit women's group was formed in

Maharashtra which focused on sexual oppression but sought its explanation in caste and religion rather than class. The National Federation of Dalit Women was formed in 1995 after public hearings on the oppression of Dalit women in 1993 initiated due to sustained persuasion of Manorama. She, a Dalit activist, started to protest against Operation Demolition in the 1980s and 1990s when the state government of Karnataka forced an eviction programme against slum dwellers. Bhanwari Devi, a social worker was gang raped by enraged Gujjar men of the upper caste because she wanted to stop a child marriage in 1992. The High Court in Rajasthan acquitted all rapists thus the women whose family was engaged into pottery making received no fair treatment. Visakha, a women's rights group filed a public interest litigation and they won. Concern for workplace safety of women started resulting in Vishaka Judgement and Guidelines in 1997.

23.5 Summary

Women's education, workforce participation, and political representation reflect significant progress in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. They have excelled in science, technology, business, and politics. Despite progress there exists workplace discrimination, the gender pay gap. New challenges emerged with the rise of globalization and economic liberalization like online harassment and cybercrime. Worldwide adolescent girls are forced to discontinue school education, either they get married or sick due to poor health services. Globally 122 million girls are out of school, adolescent girls in the age bracket of 15-19 years are not in education, employment when compared to their male peers. Nearly one in every four married or partnered adolescent girls (15-19 years) have experienced violence from their intimate partners. Implementation of law can cause deterrence; even exemplary punishment is not effective to minimize violence. Safety is the enabler, to improve women's safety on roads and in their workplace preventive and proactive measures has to be designed. The study on the journey of women in India to create space in the male dominated public space includes narratives of sixth century BCE, Therigatha, which introduces to Buddhists nuns, they created rupture within patriarchal ideologies. Andal in seventh or eighth century CE, Akka Mahadevi in twelfth century CE, Lal Ded in fourteenth century CE, Meerabai in sixteenth century CE resisted established norms, challenged society that demanded unconditional obedience from them.

23.6. Questions

- Ques. State conditions that led to the emergence of feminism?
- Ques. Is the demand for a gender-just society different from issues highlighted during feminist movement?
- Ques. Name five personalities who impacted gender relations before 1990?
- Ques. Identify two men who played significant roles to facilitate women express their opinions.
- Ques. Towards Equality, is a report; who prepared it? Why was it initiated?
- Ques. To allow women express their desire what initiatives were taken in India in 1990?
- Ques. Write a note on "Women as I see them, to-day", in the note mention what changes would you like to introduce?

23.7. References

- Banerjee,N., Sen,S.,Dhawan,N., (eds.). (2011) Mapping The Field: Gender Relations in Contemporary India School of Women's Studies, Jadavpur University, Stree.
- Geetha,V. (2002). Gender, Theorizing Feminism series. Stree.
- Menon, N. (2012). Seeing Like A Feminist Penguin Random House.
- Mukhopadhyay, A.(2016). Feminisms. Orient Blackswan Private Limited.
- Rose, Sonya. (2010). What is Gender History? Rawat Publications.
- Sen, K. (eds).(2009). Inscribing Identity: Essays from Nineteenth Century Bengal Editing in collaboration with Ramkrishna Bhattacharya. K.P.Bagchi and Company.

23.8 End notes

- ¹ Chairperson and MD Krioskar Systems in the article titled "Women Leaders: How to bring more diversity to decision-making roles?" in *The Economic Times* Kolkata dated Tuesday 31 December 2024.
- ² author of *The Adventures of an Intrepid Film Critic*
- ³ "Feminist Clarity Begins at Home" in *The Economic Times* Kolkata Monday 30 December 2024.
- ⁴ *Le Monde*, daily newspaper published in Paris,

- ⁵ Gleen Jordan and Chris Weedon 1995 *Cultural Politics-Class, Gender, Race and the Post-mordern World*.
- ⁶ London Feminist History Group, *The Sexual Dynamics of History: Men's Power, Women's Resistance*, London: Pluto, 1983:2.
- ⁷ Spender, D(ed.) *Men's Studies Modified*, Oxford:Pergamon.
- ⁸ *Mapping women's History* edited by Padma Anagol, Paula Banerjee, Swapna Banerjee introduction pp.xxxvii stree 2022.
- ⁹ Distinguished professor Emerita, State University of New York, Oswego.
- ¹⁰ Geraldine Forbes, *Women in Modern India* (Cambridge:Cambridge University Press, 1996):6
- ¹¹ Neera Desai and Maithreyi Krishnaraj, *Women and Society in India* (Delhi:Ajanta, 1987)
- ¹² Gloria Steinem discussed on Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay and her contribution in Indian feminism in a podcast 'Wiser Than Me' hosted by actor-comedian Julia Louis-Dreyfus.
- ¹³ Kumari Jayawardena, *Feminism and Internationalism* (Oxford:UK: Blackwell Publishers, 1999)
- ¹⁴ Joan-Kelly-Gadol, "Methodological Implications of Women's History," *Signs* 4 (1976): 809-23.
- ¹⁵ Natalie Zemon Davis, "Women's History in Transitions," *Feminist Studies* 3 (1976): 809-23.
- ¹⁶ Judith L. Newton, Mary P. Ryan, and Judith R. Walkowitz, "Editors' Introduction," in *Sex and Class in Women's History*, London: Routledge, 1983:1.
- ¹⁷ www.galaxyimrj.com Galaxy: *International Multidisciplinary Research journal* (2012).ISSN 2278-9529 Vol. I. Issue. IV <https://www.galaxyimrj.com/V1/n4/Ramesh.pdf>.
- ¹⁸ Janaki Nair, "Uncovering the Zenana: Visions of Indian Womanhood in Englishwomen's Writings, 1813-1940," *Journal of Women's History*, 2,1(1990):8-34.
- ¹⁹ Janaki Nair, *Women and Law in Colonial India: Women and Law in Colonial India: A Social History and Constitutional Claims* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2011).
- ²⁰ Swapna Banerjee, "Debates on Domesticity and position of Women in Late Colonial India", *History Compass Journal* 8, 6 (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2010):455-73.
- ²¹ Indrani Chatterjee, *Gender, Slavery, and Law in Colonial India* (Delhi:Oxford University Press,2002).
- ²² Samita Sen, "Offences against Marriage: Negotiating Custom in Colonial Bengal," in Janaki Nair and Mary John (eds.), *A Question of Silence? The Sexual Economies of Modern India* (New Delhi:Kali for Women,1999).
- ²³ Paula Banerjee, "Peace Initiatives of Naga Women," *Canadian Women's Studies*, 19 (Winter,2000):30.
- ²⁴ Anirban Banerjee (2022).https://www.researchgate.net/publication/359518562 VIDYASAGAR_AND_THE_EDUCATION_OF_WOMEN_IN_119_TH_CENTURY_BENGAL_AND_ITS_CONTEMPORARY_RELEVANCE_1
- ²⁵ Samita Sen and Nandita Dhwan eds. in *Feminisms and the Politics of Gender: A History of the Indian Women's Movements in Mapping The Field-Gender Relations in Contemporary India* STREE : 2011.
- ²⁶ R. Majumdar, 2004. Snehalata's Death: Dowry and Women's Agency in Colonial Bengal, *Indian Economic and Social History Review*: 41:4 (Oct-Dec): 433-64.
- ²⁷ Samita Sen, 2002. Towards a Feminist Politics? The Indian Women's Movement in Historical perspective, in *The Violence of Development. The Politics of Identity, Gender and Social Inequalities in India*, Karin Kapadia, ed. Delhi: Kali for Women.

- ²⁸ Bharati Ray . 1995. The Freedom Movement and Feminist Consciousness in Bengal, 1905-1929; in, *From the Seams of History. Essays on Indian Women*, Bharati Ray, ed, Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- ²⁹ Anandabazar Patrika March1, 2025 in *Kolkata Karcha*.
- ³⁰ Munshi, V. 1997. Interview by Samita Sen, *Journal of Women's Studies*, 2,1.
- ³¹ Vina Mazumdar in *Memories of a Rolling Stone*. Delhi: Zubaan, 2010:103.
- ³² Datta, K. 2007. *Women's Studies and Women's Movements in India since the 1970s: An Overview*, Calcutta: Asiatic Society.
- ³³ Padma Anagol, "Women's Agency and Resistance in Colonial India: An Introduction," in Padma Anagol (ed.), *Emergence of Feminism in India, 1850-1920* (London: Routledge, 2006): 1-18.
- ³⁴ *Towards Equality: Report of the Committee on the Status of Women* (New Delhi: Government of India, Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, Department of Education, 1974).
- ³⁵ There were difficulties due to official constraints in accessing the archives. It was a challenging task because women still inhabited the "seams of history" in India and West.
- ³⁶ Geraldine H. Forbes, *Women in Modern India* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996: 4-5.
- ³⁷ Geraldine Forbes, *Women in Modern India*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- ³⁸ W.L.O'Neill, *Everyone was Brave: The Rise and Fall of Feminism in America* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969).
- ³⁹ Aviral Pandey, 2023 Explaining the U-curve Trend of Female Labour Force Participation in Bihar in *Economic and Political Weekly* Vol. 58, Issue No.30, 29 July 2023.
- ⁴⁰ Radha Kumar *History of Doing* (London: Verso; New Delhi: Kali for women, 1993).
- ⁴¹ *The Economic Times* 'Girls' What's Changing' The Edit Page, page 6 dated 10 March 2025.

Unit 24: Feminist Methods and Methodology

Structure

- 24.0 Learning Objectives**
- 24.1 Introduction**
- 24.2 Methods in Social Research and Feminist Research Method**
- 24.3 The Trajectory of Feminist Research**
- 24.4 Main Features of Feminist Research**
 - 24.4.1 Stages of Feminist Research in Sociology**
 - 24.4.2 Salient Features of Feminist Epistemology**
- 24.5 Key Features of Feminist Method**
- 24.6 Varieties of Methods used in Feminist Research**
- 24.7 Conclusion**
- 24.8 Summary**
- 24.9 Model Questions**
- 24.10 Reference**
- 24.11 Suggested Reading**
- 24.12 Glossary**

24.0 Learning Objectives

This unit contains a brief discussion of the recently popular feminist method in social science research. It helps us to -

- Understand the central issues of feminist research method
- Compare the feminist research method with conventional research methods and techniques
- Analyze the relevance of feminist research and feminist research method in the contemporary world

- Understand how such methods can reveal women's innermost experiences and emotions to the world at large.

24.1 Introduction

Scientific researches including classical researches in disciplines of social science usually have a gender bias, in the sense that mostly male voices and visions have earned recognition in the field of knowledge and wisdom and women's viewpoints usually are not given enough prominence. Compared to researches in general, feminist research is much younger in origin and it has such a complex character that it is not at all easy to define it. It is essential to remember that it has an intimate association with feminism and its unique character has been acquired from its historical and political roots that have common goals yet differences in values and perspectives. Feminist method in research has emerged as a very powerful critique of the gendered biases and stereotypes popularized by the traditional, age-old researches in the main-stream/male-stream social research processes. It addresses women's and other marginalized groups' experiences and concerns in their everyday life, the hardships they face, the hurdles they have to cross for getting minimum recognition and reveal the hegemonic trends, the intricate network of oppression and social hierarchies that remain hidden in the classical research processes. Its ultimate goal is to suggest an alternative method in social research to emancipate these sections without compromising with the principles of equality and social justice. In the process, it also takes into account the role of the gendered, historical and political processes of acquiring knowledge. Thus, feminist researches take into account both academic and political concerns. The methodology involved in this type of research often involves multiple kinds of approach as the feminist scholars ardently believe that there cannot be only one single dimension of truth just as there can be multiple ways of producing scientific knowledge.

24.2 Methods in Social Research and Feminist Research Method

Research methods contain the tools and techniques of research including facts, data, information, evidences and suggestions that may create a new pool of knowledge. To gain access to essential information and data, methods of inquiry usually rely on processes like choosing a sample, observation of the sample, examination of documents, conduction of face-to-face or any other type of interview and interpretation of data. There may be

certain differences between researches in natural science and social science.

The study of research methods is known as methodology; it can be divided into two genres - quantitative and qualitative research. Natural sciences adopt quantitative research based on numerical measurements, while social science researches depend more on qualitative research with help from surveys, interviews, focus groups and the nominal group technique. In social science researches usually this latter kind of techniques are adopted. Feminist research has emerged as a popular methodology in various disciplines of social science. Though it is difficult to provide a simple definition of feminist research method, it can be said that it is associated with the principles of feminism and its special character is the product of disparate historical and philosophical perspectives that share certain common goals. This kind of research enquires into the experience of women and other marginalized groups to understand the intricate network of oppression, exclusion and social hierarchies; it also expresses sincere commitment to the principles of equality and social justice. In this way feminist research involves both academic and political concerns. Even though there definitely is a lack of feminist methodology, a research can emerge as feminist when in every step of the process it brings feminist principles into effect.

Feminist research attempts to suggest some alternative ways to look at the problems concerning women and other marginalized groups. In fact, whether certain research can be labeled as feminist or otherwise depends on the central issue of the research. If it aims at women's emancipation and curves a niche between the researcher and the respondents, then that can be labeled as feminist research.

24.3 The Trajectory of Feminist Research

Sociologists started to pay attention to gender and its related concepts only since the 1970s ; prior to that gender did not get any importance in sociology and it was usually assumed that any general study of society would naturally include women. As gendered aspects of society were never questioned, gender remained invisible in the study of society. The emergence of feminist methodology in social research challenged this order as the advocates of feminist methodology made the gendered aspects of society visible.

The deplorable status of women in society, especially their exclusion from dominant forms of knowledge, started to bother women thinkers like Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797), Virginia Woolf (1882-1941), Simone de Beauvoir(1908- 1986), Betty Freidan(1921-2006) and many others since long though feminist research and method

could develop only when feminist movement in the west attained a new high during the 'Second Wave' in the 1960s and 1970s. Feminist researchers and scholars started to voice their apathy against the male bias in social science in general including sociology. Their main point of argument was that not only in researches, but also in research institutes and universities a bias in favour of menfolk compelled women to remain marginalised. In view of their observations and experiences many women's groups and organisations started to express their concerns and to build up feminist epistemological resources as an alternative to conventional, male-centric epistemology. Feminist epistemology, as a branch of social epistemology, puts focus on how the social-cultural location of the knower/ researcher affects what and how he/she knows. A person's social location is consisted of his/her ascribed social identities like gender, race, caste, class, kinship status, sexual orientation, etc. and such identities definitely create an impression in the domain of knowledge and research. Feminist researchers believe that mainstream/ male-stream researchers, in spite of their support to value-freedom in empirical researches, carry an inbuilt bias in favor of men. They perceive women as 'objects' and their claim to knowledge is nothing short of 'rape by research'. To make the knowledge 'complete' feminist researchers intend to understand and explain things from women's point of view. As 'Consciousness raising' was given utmost importance during the second wave of feminism, women from different walks of life would meet in small groups to discuss matters like 'personal is political' implying that there can be no exclusively personal problems, every problem is political in nature, just as there is no personal solution. Thus, personal is inevitably political. The political character of man-woman relationship is institutionalized through every personalized and intimate space of love, marriage, rape, prostitution or consensual physical intimacy, child rearing, etc. Feminist researchers study the process of institutionalization and politicization of all these and many other things. In the process, they want to understand how and why women as a distinct social category suffer from gendered abuse, dominance, indignity, long term oppression and humiliation in almost all spheres of life; they also examine how women experience life and express that experience by moulding themselves as per the expectations of the society. They also started to raise questions about the logic of the traditional arguments and conclusions regarding women's position in society.

Feminist concerns were initially raised outside the domain of universities and their syllabi much before formal academic disciplines came into existence and within a short time almost all academic disciplines started to examine relevant issues from a feminist perspective with the help of their discipline-specific research methods. By the early -

1980s feminist thinkers and activists built up a huge collection of literature by raising questions against the very traditional notions of things and also by suggesting alternative methods of research. The first full-fledged picture of feminist method was revealed in a book of inter-disciplinary discussions compiled by Sandra Harding in 1987. Since then the feminist research methodology started to gain scholarly attention. The important researchers of this period were Maria Milan, Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Joyce Ladner, Dorothy Smith and Bonny Thornton Deal. The methods of research they had mostly preferred were participant observations and experimental research, interview techniques, ethno-methodological approach, phenomenology, oral history, experimental ethnography, etc. In fact, the reach and scope of feminist research is so widespread that more than three decades ago, in 1992, Shulamit Reinharz aptly commented that feminist researchers have successfully adopted all types of research methods from history, literature, philosophy and other social sciences to give their research a pluralistic dimension. As we see it, in the next thirty years feminist researchers, activists and academicians have turned the storehouse of their knowledge into an inter-disciplinary treasure-trove with the inclusion of a number of theories, in-depth researches, social work, analytical and critical discussions in books and journals, etc. This has not only created bridges between different disciplines, but has also widened the scope of women's studies itself.

24.4 Main Features of Feminist Research

As we understand from the previous discussion that feminist research is the product of a conscious effort to study women's position in society. It has institutionalized women's issues, problems, achievements, struggles and success by incorporating many of their stories within the syllabus of women's studies with the aim of establishing equality and androgyny in the world of knowledge. By doing so it creates a gender-neutral knowledge goes beyond male-centric norms and theories and helps empower women by making them active producers of knowledge. Thus, from being 'objects' they not only become 'subjects' of knowledge, but also challenge the foundations of mainstream knowledge system.

Feminist research attempts to get as much objective picture of reality as possible; for this, it takes into account both the researcher's and his /her subject's experiences and place the different perspectives together. By doing so the researcher develops a more honest understanding of women's oppression and marginalization in society, suggests strategies for change and this makes women's research inherently political. Mainstream

knowledge has given little or no scope to ordinary women without power and position to represent their interests, feminist research has made women free enough to represent themselves both in public and in private. By bringing out alternative facts and framework, it has also given more voice and space to women. However, keeping in mind all the common aspects of feminist research, we need to admit that it has also included some differences while following different stages of development. In short, we can say, since the time of its inception in the 1970s feminist research has covered three stages of its development and we need to understand its key features in the light of these stages.

24.4.1 Stages of Feminist Research in Sociology

- At the initial stage, the emphasis was on sex or biological differences between individuals for understanding the biological properties of individuals.
- In the next stage, attention was focused on sex-roles, role of socialization in developing gender-specific roles.
- In the third or more recent stage, feminist researchers recognized the centrality of gender in every sphere of life like work, politics, everyday interaction, family, economic development, law, education and many other areas. Understanding of gender now has become more social and it is understood in race and class-specific ways.

With reference to these stages we now discuss the key features of the feminist method; for this we need to understand the essence of feminist epistemology first.

24.4.2 Salient Features of Feminist Epistemology

- 1) A very important feature of feminist epistemology is its separation from the traditional sociological approach to gender which treats gender as an individual attribute and considers gender inequality as an outcome of childhood socialization. In contrast, in contemporary feminist research emphasis is laid on the role of division of labor, power, social control, violence and ideology as structural and interactional bases of inequality between genders, ethnic communities and classes. Authors like Maria Mies had started to formulate guidelines for feminist research by disapproving value-free research and consciously supporting women's struggle for social change.
- 2) Feminist researchers and social scientists strongly demanded a total change in the methods of research, for example, by changing the types of questions to be asked and/or type of answer to accept. It also wants to change the gender-bias over female

headship of families and about women's work. By the term 'Work' we usually mean occupation that generates wages or work outside home. But women mostly work in the unorganized/ informal sector especially in household production units which do not usually give the wage-earners a formal status of 'workers'.

- 3) Feminist researchers have rightly noted that gender not only impacts the household and inter-personal relationships of family members, but other spheres of social life as well. In fact, no area of human existence remains un-gendered, therefore, separating private and public spheres as 'gendered' and 'un-gendered' is wrong and misleading. Due to such separation male professionals are preferred over female ones in corporate sectors
- 4) Feminist researchers question the basic framework within which knowledge is conceptualized, they have suggested alternative ways of knowing, and ushering in new directions and understanding of visions in diverse branches of knowledge by questioning basic assumptions in almost all fields of knowledge. For doing this, they use a huge variety of sources like oral history, range of interviews with individuals and collective group discussions.
- 5) Feminist epistemology attaches more importance to democratic, equality -based human relationships than the hierarchically placed relationships because they believe that hierarchical arrangement of relationship cannot do justice to their complexities.
- 6) In feminist epistemology the issue of 'gender' is given more importance than any other variable as feminists assume that gender occupies an important position within the complex network of social variables.
- 7) All feminist thinkers are consciously in favor of change in social and gender relations as well as in the position of women in society. In fact, opting for such changes have emerged as one of their political goals.

24.5. Key Features of Feminist Method

The feminist method stands out from other forms of research methods that are conventionally applied in the field of social science in several ways. Its distinct features have been discussed below.

A. Feminist researches always focus on women's issues :

Feminist scholars assume that both 'gender' and 'gender-relation' are socially constructed,

therefore they focus on their various aspects. It is also assumed that 'gender' is constructed through interactions between men and women. Thus the power-dynamics in gender relations, centralization of power and authority in the positions of men and the absence of male-female equality make gender-research an interesting area of enquiry.

B. By utilizing the store-house of women's experiences it prepares research designs that may help women themselves :

As a critique of positivist and empirical social research technique, it depends more on women's social and personal experiences and treats them as valuable scientific data. Therefore, it becomes actor- oriented, discards the principle of indispensability and adopts a continuum of subjectivity so that they can turn themselves into subjects of research. Thus, feminist researchers aspire to build up a dynamic continuum between the researchers and the subjects of research for studying and understanding women's experiences.

C. Researcher and the Subject of Research Learn from Each Other:

As both the researcher-interviewer and the interviewee remain equal in status, there exists no tussle for power between them. The research reveals the true spirit of womanhood by taking care of their lived experiences. The mutual exchange of values, beliefs and experiences build up a huge store-house of knowledge can benefit both the parties. Knowledge thus accumulated contains the narrator's version on the one hand, and on the other the self-definition provided by the researcher; each can see things differently in the light of the other's version.

D. Knowledge gives Freedom:

Feminist research helps in the enlightenment and freedom of women. It reveals a two-dimensional view of reality to the female subjects of research - one from the point of women as a part of the repressed section (to which the researcher belongs, too) and the other from the point of an enlightened member of an elite group. In this way feminist research exposes multiple faces of reality. In doing this feminist researchers have consciously shunned 'value- free' researches and have openly expressed their support in favor of protecting the interests of women and other marginalized sections in society.

Feminist researchers try to employ their own personal experiences as women, analyse them, become cordial to their respondents and to raise questions about the status and position of women in society for understanding their actual standing in life. They argue that research is not for critical analysis of data only, it generates data too. Another

important contribution of feminist methodology is , it attaches special importance to the analyses of power- relationship between genders.

Another important feature of feminist research is that it does not favor quantitative method as there are many reasons behind this. Firstly, they feel that quantitative research method does not give women enough scope to voice their own opinion freely ; secondly, it objectifies women by making 'gender' a simple category. The third reason behind disfavoring it is, over-use of control variable that resonates with both 'control' and 'masculinity'. Fourthly, feminist research is pluralistic in character as various strands or expressions of feminism are found within its fold. The researchers assume that as women are accorded different positions and identities in different societies; their roles and statuses can never remain the same everywhere and with the subject-matter of feminist research depending more on personal experiences of women being placed differently in different societies, it opposes universal principles for reaching at any conclusion. Again, for this very reason feminist research should not be restricted to any one single category of research, it has bloomed as a multi-layered, multi-dimensional research that embraces qualitative method and discards the quantitative one to bring in large-scale changes in the position of women in particular and in the social system in general. It expresses preference for qualitative research method because it gives more space to women and their voices. As the qualitative research method is less structured and formal, the relationship between the researcher and the respondent/s becomes more equal and cordial. Moreover, it does not see women as objects to be controlled by techniques and strategies and it also helps liberate women from all kinds of oppression.

24.6 Varieties of Methods used in Feminist Research

Feminist researchers usually apply methods like ethnography, personal interview, focus -group interview, archival research, etc.

a) Ethnography - Ethnography is a method of research in which a researcher collects detailed information of the group through long-term participant observation and mutual interaction with the group's members; it also contains reports of the observation in writing. This method helps records every detail of a woman's life that was previously considered useless and unnecessary. Feminist researchers and scholars have created a context for understanding women from the point of women themselves.

b) Interview technique as a part qualitative method - Interview techniques used in

qualitative method is less formal compared to the quantitative method. The researcher tries to get resourceful responses through several rounds of interview, if necessary. A high degree of cordiality and reciprocity between the interviewer and the interviewee is noticed here.

c) Focus Group - By Focus Group we mean the presence of multiple interviewees at the same point and at the same time of interview. It not only makes their answers more spontaneous and more contextual.

d) Archival research - It is based on the personal experiences of women of a particular community or group. These experiences may be used to build up archive of knowledge for that group .

Feminist researchers depend on many other techniques and methods like on-line research, content analysis etc. They often devise newer techniques for spreading awareness among women about gender inequality, patriarchy and oppression of women and other marginalized sections in society. Content analysis is used to explore a range of issues that are central to our understanding of gender and gender-inequality and relevant social actions.

24.7 Conclusion

In the context of feminist method the fundamental two aspects are quantitative and qualitative methods; while the former includes in-depth research into the motivation, attitudes and behavior of respondent or into a given situation, the latter refers to the research procedure that produces descriptive data, people's own writings, spoken words and observable behavior. In the last few decades women researchers as a community have challenged the merit of traditional research, especially the ones based on quantitative methodology, as many feminist thinkers and writers allege that traditional methods have been used as a tool for promoting sexist ideology to ignore issues of concern for women and feminists because socially oriented scientific knowledge has been based on men's experiences of the world and women's experiences are largely missing.

24.8 Summary

Feminist thinkers are interested in women both as individuals and as a social category. However, there is no single feminist way to conduct research. They try to be creative

and add varieties in their research methods by borrowing from almost all the disciplines and using all the available methods either in single or in combinations. However, discourses or essays about feminist methodology do not always express this multiplicity of feminist research methods. Feminist researchers adopt strict conventional methods when they want to utilize the most rigorous, scientifically sound methodology.

24.9 Model Questions

A. Answer in brief

5 Marks

1. What is feminist research method?
2. What are the stages of feminist research in sociology?
3. What is feminist epistemology?
4. What types of method are used in feminist research?
5. What is the purpose of feminist research?

B. Answer in detail

10 Marks

1. Make an assessment of the trajectory of feminist research.
2. Do you think feminist research method is something unique? Examine its key features.
3. Examine the different forms of feminist research method.

24.10 Reference

- Afshar, H. and Maynard, M. (ed.s) 1994. *The Dynamics of Race and Gender*, London.
- Chodrow, Nancy. 1989. *Feminism and Psycho-analytic Theory*. Cambridge, Pouty Press, London.
- Foran, J. and Kurrian, P (ed.s) 2003. *Feminist Futures, Learning up Women Culture and Development*, Zed Book, New York.
- Freidman B. 1983. *The Feminist Mystique*. Penguin, New York.
- Howard R.1983. *Patriarchal-precedents, sexuality and social relations*. Routledge and Keegan Paul, London.
- Muller N. 1988. *Subject to Change. Reading Feminist Writing*. Columbia Univ. Press. New York.

Potter David (ed) 1992. *Between Man and Feminism*. Routledge London.

Naribadi Paddhati Bidya. Sudarshana Sen (pp.148-161) in *Nari Prithibi* : Bahuswar. Chakraborty, Basabi (ed).2011. Urbee Prakashan. Kolkata.

Feminist Research - an overview| ScienceDirect Topics <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/social-sciences/feminist-research>

Feminist Methodology in Sociological Research - Methodology of Research in Sociology. <https://ebooks.inflibnet.ac.in/socp3/chapter/feminist-methodology-in-sociological-research/>

Distinctiveness of the Feminist Method in Social Research : Features and Contributions <https://triumhias.com/blog/distinctiveness-of-the-feminist-method/?amp=1>

24.10 Glossary

Purpose of Feminist theory or method: Feminist theory or method is practically the extension of feminism into theoretical, fictional or philosophical discourse. It aims to understand the nature of gender equality or philosophical discourse. It aims to understand the nature of gender equality, examines women's and men's social, political and economic roles, experiences and external interests, domestic chores patterns and feminist trends of politics in the light of multiple disciplines like sociology, anthropology and media studies.

Content of Feminist analysis: Feminist researchers use extended analysis across media forms to explore a range of issues that are central to our understanding of gender and difference as well as research aimed at social action. In the context of feminist method, the fundamental two aspects are quantitative and qualitative methods including in-depth research of the attitudes and behavior of respondents in a given situation.

Feminist theory and Feminist research: Feminist theory and feminist research are mutually useful to each other. Some sociologists say that feminist research is guided by feminist theory and sometimes by critical and mainstream disciplinary theory.

24.11 Suggested Reading

Yeatman. A. 1994. *Post-Modern Re-visioning of the Political*. London: Routledge.

Abbott P, Wallace C and Tylor M. 2008. *An Introduction to Sociology: Feminist*

Perspectives, Routledge.

Oakley, A. 1998. 'Gender Methodology and People's Ways of Knowing Some Problems with Feminism and the Paradigm Debate in Social Science'; - *Sociology*, 32 (4): 707-731.

Naples, N: *Feminist Methodology*- Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology.

Bowles, G. and Klein R.D. (eds). 1983. *Theories of Women Studies*. London, Kegan Paul.

Harding, S. 1987. *Feminism and Methodology*, Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Harding, S. (ed). 2004. *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader*: London, Routledge.

Ramajhanoglu, C. and Holland, J. 2002. *Feminist Methodology: Challenges and Choices*. Sage Publications. Reprint, 2004.

Unit 25: Understanding Data

Structure of the Unit

25.1 Learning Objectives

25.2.1 Introducing the term Data

25.2.2 Data Collection

25.2.3 Methods of Data Collection

25.3 Uses of Data in Research

25.4 Conclusion

25.5 Summary

25.6 Questions

25.7 References

25.1 Learning Objectives

- Introducing the term Data
- Data Collection
- Methods of Data Collection
- Uses of Data in Research

25.2.1 Introducing the term Data

Data forms an integral part of any kind of study; this is especially true for the social science. The parameters which are important in social science research are mostly dynamic and many times cognitive and behavioral which requires regular upgradation through primary and field-based information. It is always imperative to study the social dynamics more significantly as several activities are noted in social researches. The data can be defined as any kind of information, quantity or quality based, observations, facts and information, stories and narratives which are useful for analyzing situations. It is everchanging, so data should be updated with changing spatio-temporal scales. The word data originates from the Latin word datum which means to be given. In the discipline of philosophy data has got a very interesting meaning; it includes all the things known or assumed as facts, making the basis of certain reasoning or calculation.

In present times data is collected not only from sources including scientific researches and government records but also commercial and financial trends, online opinion polls, social media platforms and general perception studies. Often data are used interchangeably; but they are infact different. Data are considered to be some raw facts or events, numbers and transactions, which may be collected, recorded and categorised while storing the same. After processing the data according to the need of the research and aim of the study, it can be then termed as information.

"Data are just summaries of thousands of stories-tell a few of those stories to help make the data meaningful." Heath D., (<https://careerfoundry.com/en/blog/data-analytics/inspirational-data-quotes/>)

Data is generally defined as a concept which refers to the fact that some existing information or knowledge is represented or coded in some form suitable for better usage or processing. Data is collected on-field and already published sources and analysed; data only becomes information suitable for making decision in some fashion. Gathering data can be accomplished through a primary source (researcher is the first person to obtain the data) or a secondary source (the researcher obtains the data that has already been collected by other sources, such as data disseminated in a scientific journal) (Mesly, 2015). Mason H. describes data having advantages of telling us something about the world which we did not know before. According to her, the core of the data should be curiosity and learnings, finding patterns new and old, telling stories and deepening the overall understanding of the world and its activities around us. These data, if rightly introduced, may enhance knowledge to the economy and the society as well.

25.2.2 Data Collection

It may be defined as the process of gathering, collecting different events, numerical, experiences, understandings and opinions which may serve the purpose of the study in the name of data. It is a process of gathering these from various sources through on field studies, interviews, schedule and questionnaire surveys, observations of the researchers and those who have been interviewed. Collecting data is an integral part of the study which has to be done with utmost care to get the results. Infact researchers agree that data collection methods should vary according to the types of study or research the team or an individual researcher or a company seek to have. The data is not what we collect it should be mentioned at the very beginning what kind of data what will be the purpose of the data and what are the things or parameters on which data should be

gathered. For instance, a socio-economic survey in the rural settlement of Chakchoki village amidst Dooars of northern Bengal would seek data related to their demography, occupation, literacies, male and female working status and different components of man environment relationship. This would be much more geographical in approach where the questions of their adaptability to cope with continuous tragedies associated to landslides, lock downs in tea gardens and animal poaching along with other problems which would come up in data collection period. Do they use Artificial Intelligences? Or do they go to multiplexes for watching movies? would not be their ideal questions. In a city-based data collection process may be questions related to using technologies, using mobile phones and going to cinemas for entertainment may be appealing and research worthy. The use of mobile phones are manifold for the city-dwellers but these are the sources of information for government schemes and information for different kinds of grants for the rural inhabitants. The collection of data should be considered systematic and top most priority in a research journey; this is because it should be otherwise difficult to answer several questions to be answered in a conclusive and meaningful way (Elmusharaf K., 2012).

In qualitative research, data are collected in more of descriptive and non-numerical ways; here the thoughts, opinions, behaviours are recorded and assessed for better understanding of the subject. These methods involve collecting data in the form of words, descriptions, or narratives, rather than numbers. These methods are used to gather rich and in-depth insights about people's experiences, perceptions, opinions, and behaviours. Qualitative data collection methods are commonly used in social sciences, humanities, and other fields where understanding human behaviour and subjective experiences is important. Attendance records, meeting highlights and financial records along with oral histories may be considered are just a few examples of this type of research.

25.2.3 Methods of Data Collection

Before considering the methods of data collection, there are few parameters which should be considered first. These are discussed below:

a) Research Goals:

Before starting with the data collection process, the researcher should identify and streamline the major objectives of the study. In order to understand the rural land use and possible reason for its shrinking agricultural land and growing settlements, data should be related the social, economic parameters like what were the reasons for such

changes? Were the land-owners were forced to sell the land for some pressing family needs or economic demands? Questions like whether the farmers or the land owners go to cinemas and multiplexes to watch movies would be in-appropriate

b) Scope of the Study:

The scope of the study is important as any kind of research gets its goal complete when it generates scope or opportunities for further understanding of the topic. The reason is that, suppose the research team is working on the students' preference of particular institute or college after class XII and the reasons like nearness to the houses of residences, subjects' availability or previous results and faculty profiles. This would enhance further studies for other competent or alike colleges to work on these factors further to enhance their own infrastructures.

c) Sample Size:

The sample size of the research is important before the data collection methods are finalised. If a geographical survey is conducted in a village of 100 households; then at least 20 houses should be surveyed. The data should be gathered with 20% sample size of the total Census. Also, the data should represent the general characteristics of the population to enhance better representation

d) Types of Data:

The data that would be gathered should be understood by its types beforehand. Based on research query, the data should be collected. For any kind of demographic information, say male and female population of a place may be collected from Census enumeration records, mostly which are in general secondary data. For queries in relation to coping of people seeking work and life balance in post-Covid phase, qualitative and interview based primary data would be suitable.

e) Time frame:

The data collection methods should generally follow a specific time schedule. The survey of traffic volume during the peak and other times in the Eastern Metropolitan By-Pass is time specific for better comparison. The selling of apparels via online commercial portals are before Durga Puja or other festivals increase and declines after the festivals. This is a temporal study that may be considered within two separate time frames

f) Credibility:

The credibility of the data remains very signification for which the collection methods

should be meticulous and free from hassle. The studies like women education in rural areas should include the statistics of women-men composition at different school levels, the drop-out ratios should be collected and incorporated on field. Any kind of ambiguity or lack of proper socio-economic conditions of the area under study would otherwise generate errors in data representation

g) Usefulness:

Lastly the usefulness of the data is its ultimate aim. The research article would gain its maximum applicability when the data collected and analysed would generate reports that would expand the further scope of study. If a study is conducted where it has been assumed that growing levels of pollution have an adverse effect on lower birth weights of infants, and certain analysis indicate so; then there would always remain scope of identifying other factors like consuming overly pesticide treated cereals and other fast food may also lead to further investigation.

25.3 Uses of Data in Research

Data collection plays a very crucial and significant role in the statistical analysis used for research work. In social research, there are different methods used to gather information, all of which broadly fall into two categories, i.e. primary and secondary data (Douglas, 2015). It is important to talk about data in lots of places in, but it is important to make a fundamental distinction between two types of data: qualitative and quantitative. The way we typically define them, we call data 'quantitative' if it is in numerical form and 'qualitative' if it is not. In research qualitative data could be much more than just words or text. Photographs, videos, sound recordings and so on, may be considered qualitative data which enhance the credibility of the research apart from the numerical data (Sen P, 2024). Data may be systematically gathering various information regarding social activities, phenomenon, incidents and events, thus facilitating the researchers to conveniently identify various patterns, trends, variables and their inter-connections. This pave the way for understanding the human and social behavioural patterns, several issues and situations to test theories, formulate models while building hypothesis and assumptions. The results in these processes help the policy makers to plan for the ultimate goal of human welfare and peace and equality of the society, still a far cry for the human civilization.

25.4 Conclusion

While discussing data analysis, it is important to mention that a methodology to analyse data based on the purpose of the data. The dissertation also presents a critical analysis of various methods and techniques that were considered but ultimately not used for the data analysis. An effective research methodology leads to better data collection and analysis and leads the researcher to arrive at valid and logical conclusions in the research. Because there are multiple methods that may be appropriate for collecting data for the approach you have chosen, you will need to spend some time considering which method is the best fit. There are various factors which may be considered while selecting the objectives of the research, feasibility, time, funding, logistics, experience of research team, the type of participants and so forth. The objectives of the research work, specifically in social events, are important for the types of collecting data.

25.5 Summary

Among the many benefits of data analysis, the more important ones are:

- To
 - " Data analysis helps in structuring the findings from different sources of data.
 - " Data analysis is very helpful in breaking a macro problem into micro parts.
 - " Data analysis acts like a filter when it comes to acquiring meaningful insights out of huge data set.
 - " Data analysis helps in keeping human bias away from the research conclusion with the help of proper statistical treatment.

25.6. Questions

- | | |
|---|----|
| 1. What is Data? Discuss various types of Data. | 10 |
| 2. What are the various components of methods of data collection. | 6 |
| 3. State the uses of Data in Research Work. | 6 |

25.7. References

- Bernard, H. R., & Bernard, H. R. (2012). Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches. Sage.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches. Sage publications.
- Douglas, M. (2015). "Sources of data". Retrieved on 22nd September, 2017 from <http://www.onlineetymologydictionary/data>
- Gall, M. D., Borg, W. R., & Gall, J. P. (1996). Educational research: An Introduction. Longman Publishing.
- Mertens, D. M. (1998). Research methods in education and psychology: Integrating diversity with quantitative & qualitative approaches.
- Mesly, O. (2015). Creating models in psychological research. Etats-Unis: Springer press
- Neuman, W. L., & Neuman, W. L. (2006). Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches.
- Punch, K. F. (2013). Introduction to social research: Quantitative and qualitative approaches. Sage.

Unit 26: Data Collection Methods: Interviews

Structure

- 26.1 Learning Objectives**
- 26.2 Introduction**
- 26.3 Interview as a part of Social Research**
- 26.4 Types of Interviews**
 - 26.4.1 Structured Interviews**
 - 26.4.2 Unstructured Interviews**
 - 26.4.3 Semi-Structured or Quasi-Structured Interviews**
 - 26.4.4 Telephone Interviews**
- 26.5 How to be a good interviewer?**
- 26.6 Conclusion**
- 26.7 Summary**
- 26.8 Questions**
- 26.9 References**
- 26.10 Glossary**

16.1 Reflexivity

26.1 Learning Objectives

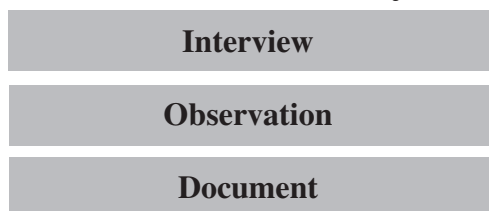
- Introduction
- Interview as a part of Social Research
- Types of Interviews
- How to be a good interviewer?
- Uses of Data in Research

26.2 Introduction

Social research attempts to understand how an entire social unit such as group, organization or community operates in its own term. Whether these qualitative data can be quantified is not the case, rather it is helpful for understanding the meaning of the social environment and the individuals within it. Social behaviour in individuals and groups should only be captured through primary based survey and interviews. It is always imperative thus to include primary level field survey to get more clarity in social researches. If the studies are based on historical events, it is needed to have a foundation of knowledge about the period. However, the researchers in any case should study the topic again and again.

26.3. Interview as a part of Social Research

The data collection methods are manifold; and as discussed earlier it had a great role to play in the quality of the research. Data collection methods can be categorized into primary and secondary source-based methods. The major three methods are;



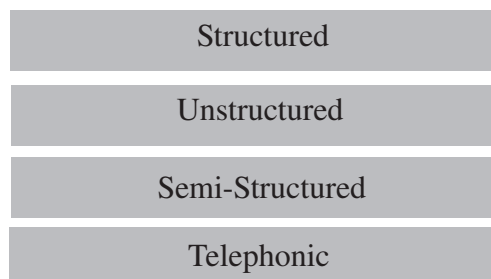
An interview is a conversation for gathering information. A research interview involves an interviewer, who coordinates the process of the conversation and asks questions, and an interviewee, who responds to those questions. Interviews can be conducted face-to-face or over the telephone. The internet is also acting as a tool for interviewing. The main task in interviewing is to understand the meaning of what the interviewees say. (Kvale,1996) An interview is a conversation for gathering information. A research interview involves an interviewer, who coordinates the process of the conversation and asks questions, and an interviewee, who responds to those questions. Interviews can be conducted face-to-face or over the telephone. The internet is also emerging as a tool for interviewing. Interviews are an appropriate method when there is a need to collect in-depth information on people's opinions, thoughts, experiences, and feelings. Interviews are useful when the topic of inquiry relates to issues that require complex questioning and considerable probing. Face-to face interviews are suitable when your target popu-

lation can communicate through face-to-face conversations better than they can communicate through writing or phone conversations (e.g., children, elderly or disabled individuals). Wikipedia defines an interview to be a structured conversation where one participant asks questions, and the other provides answers. It is basically a one-to-one conversation where the interviewer asks questions to which the interviewee responds, usually providing information for data accumulation purpose. Interviews are common in job and employment drives and of-course, social research in primary level field surveys. Interviews are completed by the interviewer based on what the respondent says. Interviews are a far more personal form of research than questionnaires. In the personal interview, the interviewer works directly with the respondent. Unlike with mail surveys, the interviewer has the opportunity to probe or ask follow up questions. Interviews are generally easier for respondent, especially if what is sought is opinions or impressions. Interviews are time consuming and they are resource intensive. The interviewer is considered a part of the measurement instrument and interviewer has to well trained in how to respond to any contingency. But the interviews may be sensitive based on the willingness of the respondents

26.4 Types of Interviews

Interviews form the commonest form of acquiring data in typical qualitative research. These encompass simple conversations within individuals and groups with interactions and these have huge scope of understanding someone's life experience, opinions, hopes, desires, distress and trauma at depths. An interview is a qualitative research method that relies on asking questions in order to collect data in different forms. Social research does not seek only the gathering of few numbers rather it includes emotions, narrations and stories which remained untold so far. Interviewing the Rohingyas who fled from Myanmar to avoid the threats and violences to the countries like Bangladesh, Indonesia and Malaysia, is not a story of their count on the basis of age and gender, rather there are stories far beyond. The interview is an important data gathering technique involving verbal communication between the researcher and the subject. Interviews are commonly used in survey designs and in exploratory and descriptive studies. There are a range of approaches to interviewing, from completely unstructured in which the subject is allowed to talk freely about whatever they wish, to highly structured in which the subject responses are limited to answering direct questions. The UN confirmed that the lack of education, employment and health facilities crippled the community who led miserable lives in the refugee camps. The three major typology of Interview as a method

of data collection in social research are discussed below.



26.4.1 Structured Interviews:

The structured interviews are those where the respondents are presented with a set of pre-formed questions which mostly include multi-optional and bi-optional. These types of interviews always have clarities of the study and aim of the study is well defined. These interviews, give two advantages; firstly, with pre-determined set of questions the survey and the interview becomes easy to conduct and hence involve less time. Besides, such questions are always easy to answer for the respondents; for instance, when the villagers are asked what is the source of their drinking water? Then it would be easy for them if the options like tap water, pond water, rivers, well, tube wells are mentioned to them because there can be more than one answer and the villagers instantly answer through the choices mentioned by the interviewers (table 1). Structured interviews enable the interviewer to ask each respondent the same questions in the same way. A tightly structured schedule of questions is used, very much like a questionnaire. The questions contained in the questionnaire usually remain planned in advance, sometimes with the help of a pilot study to refine the questions. The questions in a structured interview may be phrased in such a way that a limited range of responses is elicited. For example: "Do you think that health services in this area are excellent, good, average or poor? This is an example of a closed question where the possible answers are defined in advance so that the respondent is limited to one of the pre-coded responses. It is not unusual for otherwise structured interviews to contain a few open-ended questions. 'Catch-all' final questions are common, for example, 'Do you have anything more to add?' These questions are useful in helping to capture as much information as possible but they increase the amount of time required for analysing the interview findings.

Multiple Option Questions in a Schedule					
Source of drinking water	Tap	Well	Pond	River	Tube Well
Mode of transport	walking	toto	autorickshaws	cycling	vans

26.4.2 Unstructured Interviews:

Unstructured interviews are those set of questions asked to the respondents which occur due to majorly two reasons. Firstly, there are many problems for which structured questions may not be framed beforehand. For example, if there are some kinds of natural hazards like floods and landslides that have occurred in a particular region the interviews and following reports should be based on ad-hoc questions because unpredictable and irregular events cannot be gauged by some pre-assumed question sets. Also, while interviewing a rural village amidst the jungle of Dooars there may be some problems that the respondents would share which were unforeseen and unpredicted. Then, these interviews become unstructured and questions are framed and asked with no such prior thoughts and planning. Semi-structured interviews involve a series of open-ended questions based on the topic areas the researcher wants to cover. The open-ended nature of the question defines the topic under investigation but provides opportunities for both interviewer and interviewee to discuss some topics in more detail. If the interviewee has difficulty answering a question or provides only a brief response, the interviewer can use cues or prompts to encourage the interviewee to consider the question further. all require careful consideration and preparation. Unstructured interviews (sometimes referred to as "depth" or "in depth" interviews) are so called because they have very little structure at all. The interviewer approaches the interview with the aim of discussing a limited number of topics, sometimes as few as one or two, and frames successive questions according to the interviewee's previous response. Although only one or two topics are discussed they are covered in great detail. The interview might begin with the interviewer saying: "I'd like to hear your views on Water Crisis in Chennai". Subsequent questions would follow from the interviewee's responses. Unstructured interviews are exactly what they sound like - interviews where the interviewer wants to find out about a specific topic but has no structure or preconceived plan or expectation as to how the interview will proceed. Generally, a researcher will try to understand the informants' worldview in an unstructured interview. Students' opinion on the usefulness of National Education Policies introduced in India should be a part of un-structured interviews.

26.4.3 Semi-Structured or Quasi-Structured Interviews:

These interviews are composed of both structured and defined questions along with few unstructured or open questions for better understanding of the research study. There may be a household study based on a village living where questions like gender compo-

sition, age-structures are always defined and pre-set. But there are certain problems and issues which may not be structured and often farmed at the spot. This may be explained with examples; the villages of Chhotonagpur plateau region often suffer from certain skin and lung diseases owing to the presence of mica and manganese mines; the problems associated to this is surely not one, besides health it affects the child immunity with increasing incidents of child labour drop outs. Problems of illiteracy definitely affect women participation in labour forces, decision making in family planning but there are many other hidden issues that come with women illiteracies which lead to some more queries which are generally unstructured and open ended. In a semi-structured interview, the interviewer also has the freedom to probe the interviewee to elaborate on the original response or to follow a line of inquiry introduced by the interviewee. An example would be: Interviewer: "I'd like to hear your thoughts on whether changes in government policy have changed the work of the doctor in general practice. Has your work changed at all?" Interviewee: "Absolutely! The workload has increased for a start." Interviewer: "In what way has it increased?" Semi-structured interviews are useful when collecting attitudinal information on a large scale, or when the research is exploratory and it is not possible to draw up a list of possible pre-codes because little is known about the subject area. However, analysing the interview data from open questions is more problematic than when closed questions are used as work must be done before often diverse responses from subjects can be compared. Well-planned and conducted semi-structured interviews are the result of rigorous preparation. The development of the interview schedule, conducting the interview and analysing the interview data.

How do the women literacy rates affect social status of the community in the region?

Or

What are the adverse impact of global warming on hill tourism in the Darjeeling district of West Bengal?

26.4.4 Telephone Interviews

During the present time, telephonic interviews are considered to be very effective and economical way of collecting data where the sample to be contacted are all accessible via the telephone. However, they are not very appropriate method of data collection for a very deprived population where telephone ownerships are less and the responses may

be passive. However, telephone interviewing can be ideally suited to busy professional respondents, such as general practitioners and engineers in cases of construction hazards when the telephone numbers easily identified and timed appointments set up. Telephone interviews are also particularly useful when the respondents to be interviewed are widely geographically distributed. One of the main disadvantages of a telephone interview is that it is difficult to incorporate visual aids and prompts and the respondents cannot read cards or scales. The length of a telephone interview is also limited, although this will vary with subject area and motivation. Nevertheless, it is possible to make prior appointments for a telephone interview and send stimulus material for the respondent to look at in advance of the interview. A prior appointment and covering letter may enhance the response rate and length of interview. It is important to note that any findings derived from a telephone survey of the general population should be interpreted to take account of the non-responders who may not have access to a telephone or may be unlisted.

Focus group interviews Sometimes it is preferable to collect information from groups of people rather than from a series of individuals. Focus groups can be useful to obtain certain types of information or when circumstances would make it difficult to collect information using other methods of data collection. They have been widely used in the private sector over the past few decades, particularly in market research. They are being increasingly used in the public sector. Group interviews can be used when:

- o Limited resources prevent more than a small number of interviews being undertaken.
- o It is possible to identify a number of individuals who share a common factor and it is desirable to collect the views of several people within that population sub group.
- o Group interaction among participants has the potential for greater insights to be developed.

26.5 How to be a good interviewer?

As we came to know that the interviews are generally a one-on-one interaction, there are certain pre-conditions to be a good interviewer. The person who is conducting interview should be knowledgeable on the topic of interview for the flow of discussion. The questions, if structured should be relevant and flexible as framed by the interviewer. The information gathered should be well remembered and interpreted soon for the sake of the topic as more time passes, more would be the possibilities of fading away of the information.

- Are able to remember and interpret the information gained in the interview

- Are sensitive to the interviewee's position and their rights
- Be familiar with aims and objectives of research
- Know your topic guide well; you may not get a chance to refer to it
- Tape record your interview if possible because you won't be able to write it all down
- Reassure the respondent on the issue of confidentiality
- Be a good listener and don't interrupt too much
- Try to start with factual background questions and move gently towards more specific personal questions
- Do not express your own personal opinions or appear biased - think in advance about your own prejudices, especially in the areas of sex, race, and age

26.6 Conclusion

Prospective interviewees may be invited to participate either in writing or by telephone and social researchers often ask questions on field as well. The invitation should be polite while indicating the purpose of the interview clearly. Ethical issues such as whether interviewees' identities would be disclosed should remain personal choice-based. Before commencing the interview, the interviewer should take the time to explain again the reason for the interview including the aim of the research project and what are the purposes of such interviews. An in-depth interview may be actually fruitful for the purpose of the study.

26.7 Summary

The interview schedule will obviously depend on the purpose and focus on the research. However, there are a few guidelines that should be followed. The questions must be and should be answerable. There is no point in asking questions that the interviewee will not be able to answer because of lack of experience or knowledge and even uncomfortable with. Some questions may be designed to find out what interviewees actually know about a topic; other questions may focus on beliefs or views and experiences. It is important that the interviewer checks out with the interviewee what perspective they are using in the response.

26.8 Questions

- | | |
|---|----|
| 1. What is Interview? | 6 |
| 2. Discuss various types of Interviews. | 12 |
| 3. Highlight various techniques that may be adopted to be a good Interviewer. | 6 |
-

26.9 References

Gubrium, J.F & Holstein, J.A. (2001). Handbook of interview research: context and method. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

Crawford, I.M. (1997). Marketing Research and Information Systems, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nation, www.fao.org/docrep/W3241E/w3241e06.htm#types%20of%20personal%20interview

McNamara, C. (1999). General Guidelines for Conducting Interviews, Authenticity Consulting, LLC, www.managementhelp.org/evaluatn/interview.html

26.10 Glossary

Interview: An interview is a conversation for gathering information. A research interview involves an interviewer, who coordinates the process of the conversation and asks questions, and an interviewee, who responds to those questions.

Semi-structured interviews: They involve open-ended questions based on the topic areas the researcher wants to cover. The open-ended nature of the question defines the topic under investigation but provides opportunities for both interviewer and interviewee to discuss some topics in more detail.

Structured interviews: They enable the interviewer to ask each respondent the same questions in the same way. A tightly structured schedule of questions is used, very much like a questionnaire. The questions contained in the questionnaire usually remain planned in advance, sometimes with the help of a pilot study to refine the questions.

Unstructured interviews: They are sometimes referred to as "depth" or "in depth" interviews because they hardly have structures. The interviewer approaches the interview with the aim of discussing a limited number of topics, sometimes as few as one or two, and frames successive questions according to the interviewee's previous response

Unit 27: Data collection methods (II): Observation

Structure

- 27.1 Learning Objectives**
- 27.2 Introduction**
 - 27.2.2 Types of Observation**
- 27.3 Naturalistic Observations**
 - 27.3.1 Controlled Observations**
 - 27.3.2 Participatory Observations**
 - 27.3.3 Non- Participatory Observations**
 - 27.3.4 Structured Observations**
 - 27.3.5 Un-Structured Observations**
 - 27.3.6 Overt Observations**
 - 27.3.7 Covert Observations**
 - 27.3.8 Qualitative & Quantitative Observations**
- 27.4 Ways to be a good observer**
- 27.5 Conclusion**
- 27.6 Summary**
- 27.7 Questions**
- 27.8 References**
- 27.9 Glossary**

"Observe good faith and justice toward all nations. Cultivate peace and harmony with all...." (George Washington)

27.1. Learning Objectives

- What is Observation?
- Types of Observations

- Ways to be a good observer

27.2 Introduction

Observation are considered to be the fundamental basis of all kinds of social research in case of qualitative components. Indeed, qualitative research includes careful looking of that is observe human activities in a particular geographical set up where such actions are taking place.

Observation based data collection method is classified as a participatory study, because the researcher has to immerse herself in the setting where her respondents are, while taking notes and/or recording. The observation method is the most commonly used method especially in studies relating to behavioral sciences. The observations form the backbone of the qualitative research. It summarizes all kinds of the human activities and behavioural pattern for understanding of the major social aspects. In this context, the observations may be utilised in a very fruitful ways; a literate and educated mother's behaviour and activities like taking care of her child through proper breastfeeding, attending into immunization programmes, taking care of self and child's nutritional needs is always rational and applicable than that of those mothers who are least educated having little or no say in any kind of post-natal decision making. Marshall and Rossman (1989) define observation as "the systematic description of events, behaviour, and artifacts in the social setting chosen for study" (p.79). Observations often enable the researcher to describe existing situations using the five senses, providing a "written photograph" kind of situation under the current study (Erlandson, Harris, 1993).

27.2.2 Types of Observations

There are two types of observations; firstly, the direct observations which happens when the researchers carefully watch and see the subject; for example, the interaction between children in a playground and schools may be. It may often involve direct questions asked to them. Direct observation happens when researchers watch the subject perform a task or ask them direct questions. On the other hand, indirect observations are the second one which include the opinion polls and proportion of like and share buttons hit by the viewers in a social media post. Apart from these, observations are further sub-divided into the following types.

27.3 Naturalistic Observations

These encompass watching of events without controlling and manipulating the subjects. Observing children in a play-ground and passengers in a busy railway station may be perfect examples in this regard. These remain uncontrolled as they take place in natural setting without the influence of external or outside control. The observers usually do not plan in advance but these are related to day-to-day happenings and socio-cultural problems. It studies some of our life situations and they are suitable for certain anthropological researches.

27.3.1 Controlled Observations

These are those who variables may be controlled and manipulated during observations. How the students behave in a school class room can be an example here as the students are constant in number and teachers allotted remain same generally. Here observer and observe or subject both are controlled. For systematic data collection purpose, control is imposed on both for accuracy and precision. When observation is pre-planned and definite, then it is termed as controlled observation. In control observation, mechanical devices are used for precision and standardized. So, control increases accuracy, reduce bias, ensure reliability and standardization. Some of the devices are as under.

1. Observational plan.
2. Observational schedule
3. Mechanical appliances like, camera, maps, films, video, tape recorder etc.
4. Team of observers
5. Socio Matric Scale

27.3.2 Participatory Observations

These are those where the researcher or the observer becomes a part of the event along with the other participants. In any kind of Yoga session, and mental wellness workshops participatory observation are common. Here the researcher is actively participating in the event; taking notes, listening to therapy instructions etc. Participant observation was first introduced by Prof. Edward Winder Man. It means the activities of a group in which an observer himself participates and note the situation. He willingly mixes with the group and performs his activities as an observer not merely a participator who criticizes the situation. In other words, he takes place and shares the activities with his

group. For example, when we study the rural and urban conditions of Asian people, we have to go there and watch what is going on. The best philosophy of participant observation is that we watch the phenomena not to ask. The actual behaviour of the group may be observed only by participant observation not by any other method. Participant observation, for many years, has been a hallmark of both anthropological and sociological studies. In recent years, the field of education has seen an increase in the number of qualitative studies that include participant observation as a way to collect information. Qualitative methods of data collection, such as interviewing, observation, and document analysis, have been included under the umbrella term of "ethnographic methods" in recent years.

27.3.3 Non- Participatory Observations

These observations are those where the researcher only absorbs the event; this often happens in some public meetings, gathering and alike where respondents work as reporters. The non-participant observation has a lack of participation of the observer in the concerned group activity. They either watch the phenomena from a distance or participate in the group but never in its activities. The difference between participant & non-participant observation is that, in the former the observer takes part in a group while becoming the member of that group and also participating in their activities. However, the latter refers to the least or no participation of the observer in the group, their membership and activities.

27.3.4 Structured Observations

These are those which have specific structure of what to observe; that means in a school playground the objective of the study is to observe women participation in sport and game activities and thus the observations are specifically directed. In this type careful information's are recorded in a standardized way. It is a planned observation of phenomena and to follow certain patterns, rules and designs for the purpose what, how and when to observe. In structured or systematic observation, data collection is conducted using specific variables and according to a pre-defined schedule.

27.3.5 Un-structured Observations

Here the observers watch the event without any target group and aim to start with. Observing cricket match in Eden Gardens, Kolkata is what that is the task of research which deals with the overall views encompassing people's participation in the games and events in the city. Unstructured observation is opposite to structured. This is not

systematic and un-planned observation. A researcher does not set a plan in advance but he gets the information's freely. There are no rules to follow by the researcher. Unstructured observation, on the other hand, is conducted in an open and free manner in a sense that there would be no pre-determined variables or objectives.

27.3.6 Overt Observations

These observations are those where the group and the participants of the events are aware of the fact that they are being watched and observed. In a cookery show, the participants cooking different cuisines are aware that they are being watched by the judges, other participants and market research teams.

27.3.7 Covert Observations

These include observations where the team and event participants are unaware of being watched; the most useful example here is the installing of Close Circuit Televisions mostly in shopping malls and airports

27.3.8 Qualitative & Quantitative Observations

In quantitative research (deductive), the researcher is ideally an objective observer who neither participates in nor influences what is being studied. In qualitative research(inductive), however, the researcher can learn the most by participating and/or being immersed in a research situation. Choices about which approach to use may reflect the interests of those conducting or benefiting from the research and the purposes for which the findings will be applied. Decisions about which kind of research method to use may also be based on the researcher's own experience and preference, the population being researched, the proposed audience for findings, time, money and other resources available.

27.4. Ways to be a good observer

The feelings, thoughts, suppositions of a researcher may be noted for a good observation task. These are discussed below as must do's

- Use exact quotes whenever possible for authentic reporting;
- Use pseudonyms to protect confidentiality of the respondents or the subject under consideration;
- Describe activities in the order in which they occur for understanding the sequence

of the events;

- Provide descriptions without inferring meaning which would give the listeners or the other researchers opportunities to explore the different meanings of the same observation;
- Include relevant background information to situate the event and justify the same;
- Separate one's (the researcher) own thoughts and assumptions from what one actually observes;
- Record the date, time, place, and name of researcher on each set of notes which may be compared in different time scale.

27.5. Conclusion

Kutsche (1998) suggested that, while mapping out a setting, one must first learn to put aside his/her preconceptions. The process of mapping of observations, as he describes it, involves describing the relationship between the sociocultural behaviour one observes in the backdrop of a given physical environment. He also suggested that the researcher visit the setting under study at different times of the day to see how it is used differently at different times of the day/night. He/she should describe without judgment and avoid using meaningless adjectives, such as "older" (older than what/whom?) or "pretty" (as compared to what/whom?); use adjectives that help to describe the various aspects of the setting meaningfully (what is it that makes the house inviting?). When one succeeds in avoiding judgment, he/she is practicing cultural relativism. This mapping process uses only one of the five senses-vision. "Human events happen in particular places, weathers, times, and so forth. If you are intrigued, you will be pleased to know that what you are doing is a subdiscipline of anthropology called cultural ecology" (p.16).

27.6 Summary

Participant observation involves the researcher's involvement in a variety of activities over an extended period of time that enable him/her to observe the cultural members in their daily lives and to participate in their activities to facilitate a better understanding of those behaviors and activities. The process of conducting this type of field work involves gaining entry into the community, selecting gatekeepers and key informants, participating in as many different activities as are allowable by the community members,

clarifying one's findings through member checks, formal interviews, and informal conversations, and keeping organized, structured field notes to facilitate the development of a narrative that explains various cultural aspects to the reader. Participant observation is used as a mainstay in field work in a variety of disciplines, and, as such, has proven to be a beneficial tool for producing studies that provide accurate representation of a culture. This paper, while not wholly inclusive of all that has been written about this type of field work methods, presents an overview of what is known about it, including its various definitions, history, and purposes, the stances of the researcher, and information about how to conduct observations in the field. Gathering authentic qualitative data can be a challenge in social research; one way to do so is with observation outside of a controlled environment where participants are more likely to act natural. There are four types of observational research you can do, ranging from detached observation with no participation on your part (complete observer) to immersing yourself completely in the environment (complete participant). Which you choose depends on your goals, timeframe, and properly balancing the ethical considerations.

27.7 Questions

1. What is Observation? What are its various typologies 6+14
2. Discuss various components of observation.6
3. How to conduct an observation? 20
4. What are the limitations of observations? 12

27.8. References

- Adler, Patricia A. & Adler, Peter (1987). *Membership roles in field research*. Newbury Park: Sage.
- Adler, Patricia A. & Adler, Peter (1994). *Observation techniques*. In Norman K. Denzin & Yvonna S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp.377-392). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Agar, Michael H. (1980). *The professional stranger: an informal introduction to ethnography*. SanDiego: Academic Press.
- Angrosino, Michael V. & Mays dePerez, Kimberly A. (2000). *Rethinking observation:*

- From method to context. In Norman K. Denzin & Yvonna S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (second edition, pp.673-702), Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Bernard, H. Russell (1994). *Research methods in anthropology: qualitative and quantitative approaches* (second edition). Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.
- Bernard, H. Russell (Ed.) (1998). *Handbook of methods in cultural anthropology*. Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press.
- Breuer, Franz & Roth, Wolff-Michael (2003, May). Subjectivity and reflexivity in the social sciences: epistemic windows and methodical consequences [30 paragraphs]. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research* [On-line Journal], 4(2), Art.25. Available at <http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs-texte/2-03/2-03intro-3-e.htm> [April, 5, 2005].
- deMunck, Victor C. & Sobo, Elisa J. (Eds) (1998). *Using methods in the field: a practical introduction and casebook*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.
- DeWalt, Kathleen M. & DeWalt, Billie R. (1998). Participant observation. In H. Russell Bernard (Ed.), *Handbook of methods in cultural anthropology* (pp.259-300). Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press.
- DeWalt, Kathleen M. & DeWalt, Billie R. (2002). *Participant observation: a guide for fieldworkers*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.
- Ellis, Carolyn (2003, May). Grave tending: with mom at the cemetery [8 paragraphs]. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social research* [On-line Journal], 4(2), Art.28. Available at <http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs-texte/2-03/2-03ellis-e.htm> [April 5, 2005].
- Erlandson, David A.; Harris, Edward L.; Skipper, Barbara L. & Allen, Steve D. (1993). *Doing naturalistic inquiry: a guide to methods*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Fine, Gary A. (2003). Towards a peopled ethnography developing theory from group life. *Ethnography*, 4(1), 41-60.
- Gaitan, Alfredo (2000, November). Exploring alternative forms of writing ethnography. Review Essay: Carolyn Ellis and Arthur Bochner (Eds.) (1996). *Composing ethnography: Alternative forms of qualitative writing* [9 paragraphs]. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research* [On-line Journal],

1(3), Art.42. Available at: <http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs-texte/3-00/3-00review-gaitan-e.htm> [April, 5, 2005].

Gans, Herbert J. (1999). Participant observation in the era of "ethnography." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 28(5), 540-548.

Geertz, Clifford (1973). Thick description: Towards an interpretive theory of culture. In Clifford Geertz (Ed.), *The interpretation of cultures* (pp.3-32). New York: Basic Books.

Glantz, Jeffrey & Sullivan, Susan (2000). *Supervision in practice: 3 Steps to improving teaching and learning*. Corwin Press, Inc.

Glickman, Carl D.; Gordon, Stephen P. & Ross-Gordon, Jovita (1998). *Supervision of instruction* (fourth edition). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Gold, Raymond L. (1958). Roles in sociological field observations. *Social Forces*, 36, 217-223.

27.9 Glossary

Observation: As the name implies, is a way of collecting data through observing. Observation data collection method is classified as a participatory study, because the researcher has to immerse herself in the setting where her respondents are, while taking notes and/or recording.

Participant observation: Participant observation was first introduced by Prof. Edward Winder Man. It means the activities of a group in which an observer himself participates and note the situation.

Peopled Ethnography: the term "peopled ethnography" to describe text that provides an understanding of the setting and that describes theoretical implications through the use of vignettes, based on field notes from observations, interviews, and products of the group members.

Un-Controlled Observation

Uncontrolled observation takes place in natural setting without the influence of external or outside control. The observer does not plan in advance but this is related to day-to-day happenings and socio-cultural problems

Unit 28: Data collection methods (II): Documents

Structure

28.1 Learning Objectives

28.2 Defining Documents

28.3.1 Various forms of Documents

28.3.2 What can be considered Documents

28.3.3 Types of Documents

28.4 Advantages of Documents

28.5 Limitations

28.6 Things to Check while Considering Documents for Research

28.7 Conclusion

28.8 Summary

28.9 Questions

28.10 References

28.1 Learning Objectives

- What are Documents?
- Various forms of documents
- Advantages of documents
- Limitations of documents
- What should we be cautious of while considering Documents

28.2 Defining Documents

The documents and records are considered as valuable and important sources of data especially for researches in historical events. These are analysed for social activities where the documents are always considered important when there are paucity of other sources. The analysis of these sources enables the collection of information without

interfering with individuals or their conduct. It is also a time-efficient process since documents are typically well-organized and readily available. Furthermore, as stated already, they may give a historical perspective and a timeline of events, which help recognize the patterns and changes over time. Documents and records are mostly secondary form of data collection where the researcher does not have to spend time and resources for collecting the same on-field. Documents are considered to be cost-effective data collection methods and sequence of collecting data and arranging them into categories may not be required. The studies through documents and documents also suggest several cultural and historical activities which provide a coherent and synthetic theoretical framework for documentary research with added advantages. Document research method refers to the analysis of documents that contains information about the scenario or event under consideration. It is used to investigate, categorize and analyse physical sources, most commonly written documents, in the social, public or digital world. This research method is just as good as and sometimes even more cost effective than the surveys, in-depth interviews or other observation-based methods such as ethnography. Documents in social-research may not be considered a standalone independent method of data collection; it is usually used in conjunction with other design methods. Document research is employed when the researcher has questions and other queries to which they seek answers. It is not as helpful in an open inquiry to determine patterns as the number of documents that would need to be investigated may be huge, turning the researcher's task into a never-ending exercise. Therefore, documents is often used only as additional sources to the other research methods. Along with surveys and ethnography, document research is one of the three major types of social research and arguably has been the most widely used of the three, to study needs, behaviour of the respondents and expectations of user groups. The analysis of the documents in document research is either quantitative or qualitative analysis (or may be both). The key issues surrounding types of documents and the researchers' ability to use them as reliable sources of evidence is important.

28.3.1 Various forms of Documents

In social research, "documents" as a data collection method refers to the practice of analysing existing written materials. These materials may vary from government reports, personal letters, company records, news articles, or historical archives to gather information and understand social phenomena, providing insights into people's behaviours, attitudes, and societal structures without directly interacting with them;

essentially, using pre-existing documents as a source of data. This can include;

1. Public documents (government reports, census data);
2. Private documents (personal diaries, letters);
3. Organizational documents (meeting minutes, company reports); and,
4. Media content (news articles, social media posts)

Biographies are also considered important sources of documents. The term 'biography' has two meanings in social research. Firstly, it is a particular style of interviewing, where the informant is encouraged to describe how his or her life (or some aspect of it) has changed and developed over the years. In doing so, these reflect insights of self, identity and personal history and other information. Secondly, 'biography' refers to a work that draws on whatever materials are available to an author to represent an account of a person's life and achievements. Narrative analysis is used to elicit results. These are mostly story-like as it focuses on how elements are sequenced, why some elements are evaluated differently from others and how the pasts have shaped perceptions of the present and how the present appears and leads to the future.

28.3.2 What can be considered Documents?

A document is defined as written text. Documents may encompass files, statistical data, records of official or unofficial nature providing an account of an event, images, other written material that may be accessed in a social, public or digital context. For example, institutional memoranda and reports, census publications, government pronouncements and proceedings, diaries and other written, visual and pictorial sources in different forms and so on are socially, publicly or digitally accessible either openly or on request, may be considered documental source in research. Case research is an in-depth investigation of a problem in one or more real-life settings (case sites) over an extended period of time. Data may be collected using a combination of interviews, personal observations, and internal or external documents (Bhattacharjee A., 2012). Documents range from public through private to personal documents. The list of public document sources include government publications such as Acts of Parliament, the Constitutional documents, policy statements, census reports, statistical bulletins, reports of commissions of inquiry, ministerial or departmental annual reports, consultancy reports, etc. Private documents on the other hand often include as private sector businesses, trade unions and non-governmental organisations, as well of course from private individuals, may be. These include minutes of meetings, board resolutions, advertisements, invoices,

personnel records, training manuals, interdepartmental memos and other annual reports, etc. The list of personal documents include household account books, photo albums, address books, medical records, suicides notes, diaries, personal letters, etc and travel accounts.

28.3.3 Types of Documents

There are two types of documents that are used in documentary study, namely,

- **Primary documents:** These refer to the eye-witness accounts produced by people who experienced the particular event or the behaviour the researchers want to study
- **Secondary documents:** On the other hand, secondary documents are produced by people who were not present at the scene but who received eye-witness accounts to compile the documents, or have read and gathered eye-witness accounts (Bailey 1994: 194)

28.4 Advantages of Documents

Research notes, documentation and insights are considered to be advantageous in different aspects. These are;

1. Availability

Document research method uses documents that are public or may be accessed on request if confidential.

2. Time & Cost effective

The documents may be readily investigated and methods of analysis are exercised at ease, and hence the research is focused and closed. This saves a lot of time for the researcher and also costs that would have been incurred if an expert was consulted for the study.

3. Unbiased Collection Process

As the collection process doesn't involve direct interaction of the researcher with the user groups or author of the documents, the chances of introducing bias and errors are low. Again, if the document is of the statistical record type, then the data being collected is based on facts that may be verified and cross-checked for errors.

4. Researchers' Presence

The presence of the researcher is not mandatory and this make the study much more flexible and suitable for bigger case studies

28.5 Limitations

The collection of the data through documents and various records they face certain limitations. Nevertheless, this method has some limitations. These limitations are

- As the data or documents that are available on the phenomenon being investigated as the primary resources for the study, the findings will be based on only the data that is documented on the subject which may not fit with the research objectives
- The documents not always guarantee that they are free of bias and errors, leading to the erroneous research reports
- Documents and records may often miss relevant data required for a research-based study or organizational project
- They might lack essential context and relevant points, making it challenging to comprehend the information presented. If the documents studied are not relevant and blurry in understanding then it leads to lack of an insightful findings
- The personal documents and letters which are used by the researcher may face distortion problems (Kabir, 2016) and may not be fully dependable

28.6 Things to check while Considering Documents for Research

While considering documents as source of data, there are few things to be cautious of and should be checked for the purpose of planning. These are;

- **Assessing Credibility:** It is important to consider the credibility and reliability of the documents or source, including the author's or the organizations' credentials, the publication date, to minimise the bias and errors which may influence may influence the content
- **Verifying accuracy:** For using the documents in social research, it is crucial to verify and measure the accuracy of information presented in the documents available. Fact checking remains important for such documents because there may be

possibilities of errors and false statements too

- **Considering the Context:** It is always important to situate the document sources within its historical, social, and cultural context to understand its significance and relevance to the research question or topic. Irrelevant documents may make the research not suitable at per its objectives
- **Analysing the Perspectives:** Considering the perspectives and viewpoints represented in the document, including any biases, omissions, or marginalized voices and campaigns should be rightfully presented.

28.7 Conclusion

"Capture everything -- the adventures, the day-to-day happenings -- it's all camera worthy and is the perfect way to document your life's memories," Evans D.

There are always immense needs to capture the tiniest information while doing research especially the social studies. The case studies, the narration the records are all good sources of information and thus should be kept for further research and studies. Infact, while doing research and in-depth studies it is always needed to use any and every kind of information and the slightest to the largest forms of documents. Document analysis often involves the process of reviewing and evaluating documents both printed and electronic and handwritten also, in a methodical manner. The document analysis method, like many other qualitative research methods, involves examining and interpreting data to uncover meaning, gain understanding, and come to a conclusion.

28.8 Summary

The quantitative revolution has largely impacted the geographical studies; made it scientific and analysis based which had altered the course of its development. Multiple methods of data collection, such as interviews, observations, prerecorded documents, and secondary data, may be employed and inferences about the phenomenon of interest tend to be rich, detailed, and contextualized. Although social surveys, in-depth interviews and participant observation have been tried and tested, they are not the only ones available data collection method. Documents are another research method that are often used, it is only as a supplement to the conventional social surveys. This is the documentary research method or the use of documentary sources in social research. This method is

just as good and sometimes even more cost effective than social surveys, in-depth interviews or participant observation (Bailey 1994). Methods of data collection could range from interviews, open-ended questions, field research notes, conversations, or literally any occurrence of communicative language (such as books, essays, discussions, newspaper headlines, speeches, media, historical documents). Whatever, the sources are documents no doubt serve immensely in social researches and case studies. While doing social science researches, data, and documents form useful sources of information for the students, researchers, and practitioners in the field. While analysing empirical studies, examining statistical data, or interpreting historical documents, understanding how to effectively engage and apply the. In the study form an effective task for the researchers in decision-making.

28.9 Questions

1. What do you understand by documents used in data collection method? 8
2. What are the various forms of the documents.
3. Compare and contrast the advantages and limitations of the documents used in social research. 8+8=16

28.10 References

- Bhattacharjee, A, "Social Science Research: Principles, Methods, and Practices" (2012). Textbooks Collection.
- Richie, J, Lewis J, (eds). Qualitative Research Practice, London: 2003.
- Berger A. Media Analysis Techniques. The Sage Commtext Series, Newbury Park: 1991.
- Bryman A. Social Research Methods. Oxford University Press:2001. See chapters 17-19.
- Gibbs G. Qualitative Data Analysis: Explorations with Nvivo. Open University Press:2002.
- Leedy, P. Practical Research: Planning and Design. 6th Edition. Merrill, New Jersey, 1997.

Seale, C. *Researching Society and Culture*. Sage:2001. See chapters 18 - 21.

Wimmer, R.D. & Dominick, J. R. *Mass Media Research: An Introduction*. Belmont:1983.

<https://www.drcath.net/toolkit/document-analysis>

<https://www.globalpatron.com/blog/data-collection-methods/>

<https://think.design/user-design-research/document-research/>

Unit 30: Qualitative Data Analysis: Transcription and Data Management

Structure

- 30.1 Learning Objectives**
- 30.2 Introduction**
- 30.3 Definition of qualitative research**
- 30.4 Definition of transcription**
- 30.5 Challenges of transcription**
- 30.6 Definition and Steps of Data management**
- 30.7 Storing data with and without qualitative software**
- 30.8 Conclusion**
- 30.9 Summary**
- 30.10 Questions**
- 30.11 References**

30.1 Learning objectives

- To understand the features of qualitative research and data transcription
- To know about managing and transcribing data in the context of qualitative research.
- To learn about the challenges of transcription
- To acquire knowledge about storing data with and without qualitative software

30.2 Introduction

Any research-whether qualitative or quantitative should involve a series of systematic and planned steps for discovering the most suitable results. Inductive in nature (Mohajan, 2018), the major purpose of qualitative research is to study human behaviour in natural settings where there's no manipulation of variables and exploring experiences/data that can't be expressed numerically (Hancock et al., 2009). In simple terms it can be said

that qualitative research aims to broaden and/or provide us with an in-depth understanding of how things came and exist as they are in our world. This means that if the research questions of a study are focused on understanding how an individual or group of people are experiencing or 'going through' something unique, assessing the real-life context of an issue or exploring a sensitive topic that is not much discussed yet (Hancock et al., 2009), using qualitative methodology would probably be a good way of collecting in-depth, rich and valuable data. Of course, it's true that qualitative data can be quantified, but qualitative data is essentially about themes and patterns whose context and interpretations might be lost, if attempts are made for quantifying them (Tenny et al., 2024). This is wherein lies the importance of data transcription.

30.3 Definition of Qualitative Research

Similar to other issues in research methodology, various scholars have attempted to define qualitative research in different ways. According to Merriam (2009), "Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (as cited in Downe et al., 2017). Sandelowski (2004) (as cited in Hammersley, 2013), has argued that qualitative research is "an umbrella term for an array of attitudes towards and strategies for conducting inquiry that are aimed at discovering how human beings understand, experience, interpret, and produce the social world". Denzin and Lincoln have stated that "qualitative research is multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them". (as cited in Aspers & Corte, 2019). While these above definitions have managed to capture the essence of qualitative research, Nkwi, Nyamongo, & Ryan (Nkwi et al., 2001) offer a simpler and practical definition of qualitative research: "Qualitative research involves any research that uses data that do not indicate ordinal values".

While it is true that over the past some years qualitative research has become popular in several academic disciplines such as social work, sociology, health, education and economics, but fact is that it had started gaining popularity 1960s onwards as a strategy to demarcate itself from the more dominant form of research-quantitative research. So, it can be said that in the process of challenging the more dominant quantitative method, qualitative research emerged as a unique paradigm (Hammersley, 2013) that had its

own distinctive features.

30.4 Definition of Transcription

As "one of the most underappreciated of processes in qualitative research" (Jenkins et al., 2023), transcription in simple terms mean transforming the audio (usually recorded) and visual data, apart from field notes, comments jotted down by the researcher during qualitative interviews or participant observations into a written form. In simple terms, transcription refers to complete 'script' of the interview or the conversation (Hancock et al., 2007). On certain occasions, a researcher could be recording an interview and writing field notes simultaneously. In such a scenario, after completing the transcription, the concerned person can type the notes, which can be included in the same transcript file or added into a different file. Whatever the scenario is, it is crucial to remember that these typed field notes offer crucial information that might enhance subjective interpretation of the transcript and hence, should be part of the same data collection process (Mack et al., 2005). In the next stages, researchers use these written words for doing thematic analysis. In most cases, researchers usually take the process of transcription fairly taken for granted (McMullin, 2021), but the truth is that transcription has crucial implications on later stages of qualitative data analysis. For instance, good transcripts allow researchers to go through their data quickly and efficiently. Furthermore, any information can be quickly found in the transcripts via keyword searches-an advantage that audio and video recordings can't provide. Furthermore, researchers can use extracts from transcripts that can be used for preparing journals, articles and other types of interactive talks (Jenkins et al.).

30.5 Challenges of transcription

Though it may appear easy, the process of transcription comes with its own set of challenges. Transcription is extremely time consuming (Stuckey, 2015; McMullin, 2021) and it has been estimated that for every one hour of conversation, transcription can take three to eight hours of time, depending on several factors such as typing speed, quality of recording and subjective interpretations of the data. Ideally, transcription should begin immediately after the researcher has completed the data collection stage. Rather than allowing the recordings to accumulate, they should be processed as soon as possible (Mack et al., 2005).

Transcription is a challenging task because it's not a mechanical process where the text is simply a 'written' version of the words spoken. Ideally, the text should vary from the conversation on the grounds of grammar and syntax. While majority of funded studies (Stuckey, 2015) opt for a professional transcriptionist who transcribes the data, it is crucial to hire an efficient transcriptionist. This is because as mentioned earlier, transcription is not just mechanical reproduction of the text, but involves subjective and intelligent decisions regarding things to include and exclude in the transcript. In fact, if two people are given the responsibility of transcribing the same data, the final transcript would vary greatly each transcriber would interpret the audio or video recordings differently (McMullin, 2021). Many large-scale research projects that sometimes hire more than one transcriber face this problem of transcription because two different transcribers have interpreted differently various aspects of the same conversation (McMullin, 2021). In such a situation, it is advisable to create certain specific formats regarding transcription so that uniformity is maintained throughout the process of transcription. Since no universal guidelines exist regarding transcription, researchers can come up their own rules for maintaining quality of the transcription. These may include the following-

1. Preferably, transcribers having good knowledge about the research topic should be hired. Furthermore, they should be provided with crucial information such as goals of the research project, research questions, crucial terms and acronyms (McMullin, 2021).
2. The transcription should be suitable for researcher as well as computer use (McLellan et al., 2003).
3. Another useful suggestion for the transcription would be that instead of handing over the entire responsibility of transcription to the transcriber at the outset, the researchers can transcribe certain specific portions of the interview so as to set an example to the transcriber, thereby also demonstrating what protocols to follow during the transcription process (McMullin, 2021).
4. Another good way of encouraging transcribers to immerse themselves fully in the research project is to hire them prior to the interviews. This gives the transcribers a good opportunity to understand the context and objectives of the research. This in turn, can make the process of transcription easier and simpler (McMullin, 2021). Of course, it may not be always possible to hire a transcriber prior to the interview. In such a scenario, the transcriber should be provided with as much information

about the research project as possible.

5. Another effective way of maintaining the quality of transcription is to ask transcribers to maintain memos, notes or contextual observations that may not be available in the written text. For example, the respondent may be tired, nervous or distracted and thereby responding inattentively. The settings of the interview is equally important. If the interview has taken place in a public area, the respondent might have been more guarded in responding (McMullin, 2021). Alternatively, women respondents may hesitate in responding to sensitive questions even while sitting in their homes because there would be male members around. Maintaining a memo of such observations is crucial because it would add richness and depth to an otherwise mundane data.

Transcription is a subjective process (McMullin, 2021) and since it is crucial to ensure that the final transcription highlights the social reality of the participants or captures the unexplored aspect of a phenomenon. Overall, the researcher, along with the transcriber should ensure that the level of transcription and thematic analysis are complementary towards each other (McLellan et al., 2003). More specifically, if the analysis aims to describe a phenomenon in details or the perception, values or experiences of an individual or a group of people, the transcript should include greater chunks of data. On the other hand, if the researcher doesn't require such in-depth analysis, transcripts with lesser text may be undertaken (McLellan et al., 2003). Whatever the decisions are, it is important that the researcher should effectively communicate with the transcriptionist and discuss about the crucial aspects of transcription (Stuckey, 2015). Overall, it can be said that such decisions regarding transcriptions should be taken carefully after thoroughly examining and re-examining research questions and approach. Ethical considerations are important during the transcription process and for the sake of maintaining anonymity and confidentiality of the respondents, it is suggested that the participant's name, place of work, birth or any other identifiable variables should be removed from the transcripts. Researchers should cross-check the final transcripts for ensuring that confidentiality of the respondents are maintained throughout the transcription process.

In certain cases, transcription can involve ethical or moral dilemmas as well. While transcribing data about disadvantaged groups, it is important to avoid using words that might strengthen the stigmatization of the already disadvantaged groups. Sometimes participants may use slangs that may be difficult to publish, but crucial for understanding their social reality as well. Some researchers try to overcome this moral dilemma by

sending the final transcript to the respondents so that they can give their informed consent about the information that are to be published (even anonymously). Sometimes, researchers also send their transcripts to the respondents for ensuring that the transcription has been executed correctly or for balancing the power equation that exists between the researcher and the respondents (McMullin, 2021).

30.6 Definition and Steps of Data management

Qualitative research usually yields large amounts of complex data that might be available in different formats such as recorded interviews, field notes and documents. In most cases, though these information lack any consistent structure organizing these huge data sets is crucial. This is because in case of thematic analysis, it is impossible to identify meaningful patterns across unorganized data sets (Nowell et., 2017). In fact, unorganized data sets would complicate the data analysis process and may also negatively affect trustworthiness of the entire research.

The best way to manage qualitative data is to create a data management plan at the outset (Neale & Hughes, 2020). In qualitative research, data management can be defined as "a designed structure for systematizing, categorizing, and filling the materials to make them efficiently retrievable and duplicable". The importance of data management lies in the fact that it allows researchers to collect, store and retrieve information from multiple locations and at any time, without compromising with security of the data (Lin, 2009). Ideally, the data management should start as soon as the research project has been approved. Depending on the requirement of the specific project, researchers can add, delete or edit the following steps of data management.

Step 1: Creating a data management plan- The main purpose of the first step is to prepare a rough plan of how the data is to be collected, assessing the pre-existing data and create a data log that will keep track of the growing dataset.

Step 2: Acquiring informed consent- At this step, the researchers should focus on acquiring informed consent from participants and arranging them in the proper way so that these can be accessed as and when required.

Step 3: Preparing high quality data files- This step involves reviewing the audio/video recordings and photos so that it is easier to use them, while preparing for the transcription stage.

Step 4: Creating an online storage system- At this stage, the researchers should aim to

create a storage system that will allow them to store, identify, store as well as share the crucial files.

Step 5: Ethically representing the qualitative data in publications, public forums and data sets-

The main purpose of this step is to present data that respects privacy of the respondents, while adding value to the existing literature. The best way to achieve this is to anonymise respondents or use pseudonyms (Neale & Hughes, 2020).

While these above-mentioned steps are useful for all research projects, it may not be possible for researchers conducting small-scale or individual projects. In such a scenario, researchers can start managing the data prior to conducting the interviews. For instance, before starting the conversation, the researchers can assign a number to the respondent's interview. This number can also be useful for easily finding out the transcription and other documents related to the respondent during the later stages (Stuckey, 2015). Once the interviews are completed, all the raw data can be incorporated in files and stored in a central repository. Furthermore, these files should be archived with dates so as to create an audit trail and simplifying the process of data analysis and interpretations at later stages of the research (Nowell et., 2017).

30.7 Storing data with and without qualitative software

It is important for the researchers to understand that storing data is only one aspect of the research data management system. Cross-checking whether all data have been taken into consideration and analyzed and quickly retrieving the necessary information are crucial aspects of the data management system. An efficient and planned data tracking and processing system saves the researcher a lot of time and effort, thereby allowing to concentrate on other aspects of the research. Backing up is another crucial aspect of the data management system. Backups should be updated regularly and simultaneously while analyzing the data (Mclellan et al., 2003). Another important issue that is often overlooked by the researcher is that for how long this data will be stored. Depending on the protocol issued by the specific research agency, data can be stored up to five years or more. Once this phase has lapsed, researchers can destroy the hard copy data.

30.8 Conclusion

While it is true that qualitative research methodologies have become popular over the years due to their flexible and interpretative nature, surprisingly very little discussion has been done on the importance of transcription, cleaning, preparing and storing qualitative data. It is important to discuss these issues in greater details so that it becomes easier for the researcher to prepare for the transcription as well as data management processes. Transcribing visual and audio data into written text is a continuously interpretative process that involves taking crucial judgements. The situation is further complicated by the fact that there exists no standard rules for transcription, which essentially means that the same data can be interpreted in different ways. Researchers, along with transcribers need to decide what level and type of transcription is required for the particular project. Similarly, researchers also need to create an extensive data management plan at the outset so that is easier to handle the burgeoning data set, updating the system as and when required and also to distinguish between unabridged and abridged files. Overall, it can be said that if the step of data transcription is implemented properly, it will be easier for the researchers to handle the other steps of data analysis.

30.9 Summary

Transcription represents one of the most challenging and yet, crucial steps of qualitative research because the quality of the transcription largely affects the quality of analysis (Stuckey, 2015). While the pace, quality and style of transcription may vary from one person to another, the primary goal in the end is to present experiences of the respondents with as much authenticity as possible (Guest et al., 2013).

30.10 Questions

1. What is qualitative research?
2. Define transcription.
3. Point out the challenges of transcription.
4. Discuss the steps of data management
5. What are the advantages of transcription?

30.11 References

- Aspers, P., & Corte, U. (2019). What is qualitative in qualitative research. *Qualitative sociology*, 42(2), 139-160. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11133-019-9413-7>
- Bailey J. (2008). First steps in qualitative data analysis: Transcribing. *Family practice*, 25 (2), 127-131. <https://doi.org/10.1093/fampra/cmn003>
- Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2012) Thematic analysis. In H. Cooper, P. M. Camic, D. L. Long, A. T. Panter, D. Rindskopf, & K. J. Sher (Eds), *APA handbook of research methods in psychology*, vol. 2. Research designs: Quantitative, qualitative, neuropsychological, and biological. American Psychological Association. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/13620-000>
- Christou, P.A. (2023). How to use thematic analysis in qualitative research. *Journal of Qualitative Research in Tourism*, 3 (2), 79-95. <https://doi.org/10.4337-jqrt.2023.0006/article-10.4337-jqrt.2023.0006.xml>
- Cresswell, J. (2013). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches*. Sage Publications.
- Downe, S., Finlayson K., Tunçalp Ö., & Gülmezoglu A. M. (2017) Factors that influence the provision of good?quality routine antenatal services: a qualitative evidence synthesis of the views and experiences of maternity care providers. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Review*, 8. <https://doi.org/10.1002/2F14651858.CD012752>
- Guest, G., Namey, E., & Mitchell, M. (2013). Qualitative research: Defining and designing. In *Collecting Qualitative Data: A Field Manual for Applied Research* (pp.1-40). Sage Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781506374680>
- Hancock B., Windridge K., & Ockleford, E. (2009). An Introduction to qualitative research. National Institute for Health Research. <https://dl.icdst.org/pdfs/files3/315d0c3a18c9426593c9f5019506a335.pdf>
- Hammersley, M. (2013). What is qualitative research? Bloomsbury Academic. <https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/58723/1/9781849666077.pdf>
- Jenkins, N., Monaghan, K., & Smith, M. (2021). Did they really say that? An agential realist approach to using computer assisted transcription software in qualitative data analysis. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 26(1), 97-

109. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2021.1965037>
- Kiger, M. E., & Varpio, L. (2020). Thematic analysis of qualitative data: AMEE Guide No. 131. *Medical teacher*, 42(8), 846-854. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0142159X.2020.1755030>
- Lin L. C. (2009). Data management and security in qualitative research. *Dimensions of critical care nursing : DCCN*, 28(3), 132-137. <https://doi.org/10.1097/DCC.0b013e31819aeff6>
- Mack, N., Woodsong, C., MacQueen, K., Guest, G. and Namey, E. (2005) Qualitative research methods: A data collector's field guide. Family Health International (FHI). <https://www.fhi360.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Qualitative-Research-Methods-A-Data-Collectors-Field-Guide.pdf>
- Maguire, M., & Delahunt, B. (2017). Doing a Thematic Analysis: A Practical, Step-by-Step Guide for Learning and Teaching Scholars. *All Ireland Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (AISHE-J)*, 8 (3), 3351-33514. <http://ojs.aishe.org/index.php/aishe-j/article/view/3354>
- Mason, J. (2002). Qualitative researching. Sage Publications. <https://eclass.uoa.gr/modules/document/file.php/MEDIA494/Qualitative%20Research/methodological%20handbooks/Jennifer%20Mason%20Qualitative%20Researching%202002.pdf>
- McLellan, E., MacQueen, K. M., & Neidig, J. L. (2003). Beyond the qualitative interview: Data preparation and transcription. *Field Methods*, 15(1), 63-84. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X02239573>
- McMullin, C. (2023). Transcription and qualitative methods: Implications for third sector Research. *Voluntas*, 34, 140-153. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-021-00400-3>
- Mohajan, H. (2018): Qualitative research methodology in social sciences and related subjects. *Journal of Economic Development, Environment and People*, 7 (1), 23-48. https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/85654/1/MPRA_paper_85654.pdf
- Neale, B., & Hughes, K. (2000). Data management planning: A practical guide for qualitative longitudinal researchers. University of Leeds institutional repository. <https://timescapes-archive.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/47/2020/12/Data-Management-Planning-2020.pdf>

- Nkwi, P., Nyamongo, I., & Ryan, G. (2001). Field research into socio-cultural issues: Methodological guidelines. International Center for Applied Social Sciences, Research, and Training.
- Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847>
- Ospina, S. (2004). Qualitative research. In G. R. Goethals, G. J. Sorenson, & J. MacGregor Burns (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of leadership* (pp. 1279-1284). Sage.
- Stuckey, H. L. (2015). The second step in data analysis: Coding qualitative research data. *Journal of Social Health and Diabetes*, 3 (1), pp.7-10.
<https://doi.org/10.4103/2321-0656.140875>
- Tenny, S., Brannan, J. M., & Brannan, G. D. (2022). Qualitative study. In StatPearls. StatPearls Publishing. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK470395/>
- Thorne, S. (2000). Data analysis in qualitative research. *Evidence Based Nursing*, 3, 68-70. DOI: 10.1136/ebn.3.3.68.
- Wickham, H. . (2014). Tidy data. *Journal of Statistical Software*, 59(10), 1-23. <https://doi.org/10.18637/jss.v059.i10>

Unit 31: Qualitative Data Analysis (II): Thematic Analysis

Structure of the Unit

31.1 Learning Objectives

31.2 Introduction

31.3 Philosophical underpinnings

31.3.1 Epistemological Flexibility of Thematic Analysis

31.4 Scholars and their Contributions in Thematic Analysis

31.4.1 Braun and Clarke- Systematic Thematic Analysis

31.4.2 Nigel King - Template Analysis

31.4.3 Rice and Ezzy - Iterative Thematic Analysis

31.5 Steps in Conducting Thematic Analysis

31.5.1 Data Familiarisation

31.5.2 Initial Coding

31.5.3 Searching for Themes

31.5.4 Reviewing and Refining Themes

31.5.5 Defining and Naming Themes

31.5.6 Writing the Report

31.6 Strengths and Limitations of Thematic Analysis

31.6.1 Strengths of Thematic Analysis

31.6.2 Limitations of Thematic Analysis

31.7 Conclusion

31.8 Summary

31.9 Questions

31.10 References

31.11 Suggested Readings

31.1 Learning Objectives

- Understand the concept of thematic analysis and why it is used in qualitative research.
 - Explore the different philosophical underpinnings or epistemological approaches and understand how thematic analysis varies based on different research paradigms.
 - Learn and apply the steps of thematic analysis.
 - Identify the strengths and limitations of using thematic analysis in research.
-

31.2 Introduction

Thematic analysis is a research method used in qualitative research to systematically identify, organize and analyse complex data set. According to King (2004) and Rice and Ezzy (1999), it involves a careful reading and re-reading of the transcribed data to recognize recurring ideas and concepts. When applied rigorously, thematic analysis can lead to insightful and reliable findings (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017). Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that thematic analysis is theoretically flexible. Due to its flexibility, it can be adapted to various research perspectives and epistemological approaches. It allows researchers to identify, describe, and interpret themes in detail. This approach is particularly useful for qualitative studies that aim to explore complex social issues. Despite its advantages, one challenge of thematic analysis is that its methodology is not always clearly reported, even though it is widely used in qualitative research. Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that thematic analysis increases the validity of research due to its accessibility, transparency, and flexibility, thus making it a valuable tool for sociological studies.

- According to Nowell et al. (2017, p. 2): "Thematic analysis is a qualitative research method that can be used to identify patterns or themes within data. It provides a systematic yet flexible approach to analysing qualitative data and is useful for understanding complex social phenomena."
- According to Rice & Ezzy (1999, p. 258): "Thematic analysis involves a constant moving back and forward between the entire data set, the coded extracts of data that you are analysing, and the analysis of the data that you are producing."
- According to King (2004, p. 257): "Thematic analysis is a process of encoding qualitative information. The encoding requires an explicit 'code,' which may be a list of themes or categories that emerge from the data."

31.3 Philosophical Underpinnings

Thematic analysis is widely recognized for its epistemological flexibility. This means that it can be applied across different research paradigms without being restricted to a specific theoretical framework. This adaptability makes thematic analysis a preferred choice for qualitative research, since it allows researchers to systematically explore complex social phenomena while maintaining an open-ended approach

31.3.1 Epistemological Flexibility of Thematic Analysis

Epistemology is the theory of knowledge and deals with how knowledge is gathered and from which sources. While doing research, our view of the world and its knowledge strongly influences our interpretation of data and therefore our philosophical standpoint should be made clear from the beginning. According to Carter & Little (2007, p. 1317), "Epistemology is the study of the nature of knowledge and justification. It informs the researcher's decision about what kinds of knowledge are possible and how we can ensure that our knowledge claims are credible." In research, epistemology influences the way data is collected, analyzed, and interpreted. Different epistemological perspectives shape how researchers understand reality and construct knowledge from their data.

One of the key points in thematic analysis is that it is epistemologically flexible, which means that it is not limited to a single way of understanding knowledge. It can be used within different philosophical perspectives, including:

- **Positivism** - It is an epistemological position which assumes that reality exists independently of human perception and can be discovered through rigorous objective analysis. It views themes as objective patterns within the data. For example: A study using structured interviews to identify common themes in job satisfaction among employees.
- **Interpretivism and Constructivism** - This is another epistemological position that argues, reality is socially constructed through human interaction. It views knowledge as subjective and socially constructed. Themes are interpreted by the researcher based on participant experiences and contextual meanings. For example, a study done to explore and understand how women in the tech industry perceive workplace challenges through open-ended interviews.
- **Critical Realism** - This epistemological position combines elements of both realism and interpretivism. Thus, it acknowledges an external reality while recognizing that knowledge is shaped by social and cultural contexts. In critical realism, thematic

analysis is used to understand the underlying social structures, such as power relations, inequality, and discrimination. It is often applied in feminist research, critical race studies, and social justice-oriented studies. For instance, a study analyzing television or advertisement narratives about gender roles and its portrayal in order to uncover the stereotypes in representation.

This flexibility allows thematic analysis to be used for a variety of research questions and in various methodological traditions.

31.4 Scholars and their Contributions in Thematic Analysis

Many scholars have played a significant role in the development and refinement of thematic analysis, making it one of the most widely used qualitative research methods today. Their contributions have helped shape the methodology, ensuring its systematic application, reliability, and flexibility in research.

31.4.1 Braun and Clarke- Systematic Thematic Analysis

Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke are the most influential scholars in thematic analysis, having introduced it as an important qualitative research method in their 2006 paper, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology". Before them, thematic analysis was often not recognized as a distinct method. Their work helped formalize it and establish clear guidelines for researchers. They emphasized that thematic analysis is not tied to any specific theoretical framework, making it suitable for various qualitative research approaches.

Braun and Clarke talked about a six-stage approach in doing a systematic rigorous analysis:

- First step: Familiarization with Data
- Second Step: Generating Initial Codes
- Third Step: Searching for Themes
- Fourth Step: Reviewing Themes
- Fifth Step: Defining and Naming Themes
- Sixth Step: Producing the Report

These are discussed in detail in the subsequent sections of this unit.

31.4.2 Nigel King - Template Analysis

Nigel King (2004) introduced Template Analysis, a structured variation of thematic analysis that involves using a coding framework (or template) to analyse data. His approach is particularly useful when researchers have a prior understanding of a theoretical understanding of their area of study.

Unlike Braun and Clarke's flexible approach, the Template Analysis approach begins with a preliminary set of codes that are refined during data analysis. The process involves hierarchical coding, where broad themes are further divided into subthemes. Researchers create an initial coding framework based on literature and theory before beginning with the research. Later, this template is revised and updated as new data is analysed. An example of this can be research on studying leadership behaviours. A study can be done using interview transcripts to develop a template for analysing different leadership styles in organizations.

The use and applicability of Template Analysis is generally seen in applied research, organizational studies, and health sciences. It provides a structured yet flexible way to analyse qualitative data.

31.4.3 Rice and Ezzy - Iterative Thematic Analysis

Philip Rice and Douglas Ezzy (1994) developed thematic analysis by emphasizing its iterative nature. They argued that thematic analysis is not a linear process; rather a continuous cycle of data engagement and refinement.

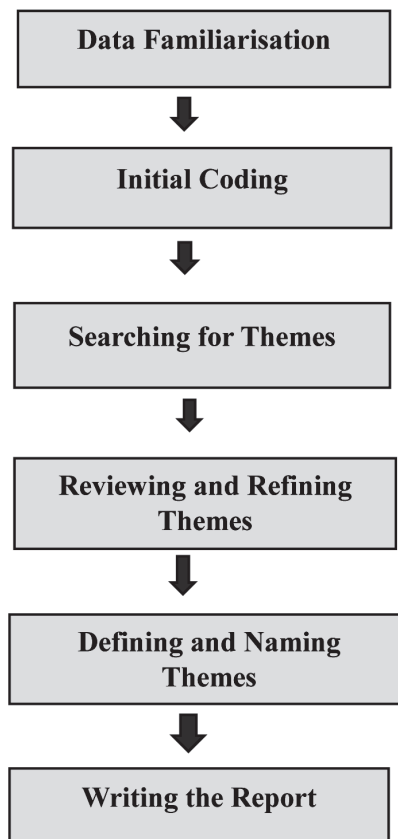
Unlike the traditional step-by-step methods, Rice & Ezzy argued that researchers have to continuously revisit and refine their themes. This implies that coding is not only a one-time activity; it evolves as new patterns emerge. They further say that researchers must engage in deep reading and re-reading of data to refine their interpretations. For example, in a study on mental health and well-being, researchers might adjust themes after additional interviews provide new insights.

Rice and Ezzy also talked about the thorough documentation that is highly essential for validity. Researchers must justify their coding decisions and provide examples from the data to support their interpretations. Their approach is widely used in sociological research, especially in studies on identity, health, and well-being. Their emphasis on continuous engagement has influenced modern qualitative research practices.

Therefore, each of these contributions has made thematic analysis a valuable tool for qualitative research in sociology, psychology, and other social sciences.

31.5 Steps in Conducting Thematic Analysis

As discussed above, thematic analysis is a structured yet flexible method for identifying patterns (themes) in qualitative data. Braun and Clarke (2006) provided a six-step process that ensures systematic analysis while allowing for interpretive depth. Below is a detailed explanation of the steps, that are generally followed in a thematic analysis (summarised in Fig 1).



(Fig 1. Steps in Thematic Analysis)

30.5.1 Data Familiarization

In this step, the researchers are thoroughly involved with the raw data (as gathered from interview transcripts, field notes, focus group discussions). This step involves reading and re-reading the data to get an overall sense of key ideas, patterns, and insights. The aim is to develop an initial understanding of recurring words, phrases, and concepts. For example, a sociology student conducting research on gender roles within family

can conduct an interviews with 10 participants, both men and women, about their household responsibilities. In the data familiarization stage, the student reads the transcripts multiple times to note common patterns. It can be phrases like: "I do most of the cooking," or "My husband takes care of finances". Even the emotional tones of the participants may be noted, like their feelings of frustration or conflicting emotions about their roles. At this stage, no formal coding is done-just noting potential areas of interest.

30.5.2 Initial Coding

In this stage, researchers highlight and label meaningful sections of text (coding). Codes are short labels summarizing key concepts, experiences, or observations. Coding can be semantic (explicit meanings) or latent (underlying meanings). For example, in the study on gender roles the researcher creates initial codes from the transcripts. A few codes from possible transcript excerpts are given below for illustration (Fig 2):

Transcript Excerpt	Initial Code
"I wake up early to make lunch for the kids and my family before going to work."	Women's unpaid labour
"My brother was never expected to clean the house or learn to cook, but I was."	Gendered expectations in families
"My husband helps with household chores, but only when I ask."	Unequal division of labour

Fig 2. Explanation of Stage two with an example

Such codes help the researchers break down the raw data into smaller analytical pieces that can be further explored with theories.

30.5.3 Searching for Themes

In this stage, similar codes are clustered together to form potential themes. Here it is important to note that a theme represents a central idea or pattern that captures multiple coded excerpts. Themes should address the research question. For example, taking forward the previous study on gender roles, the researcher can group and code the data into broader themes, as illustrated in Fig 3.

Codes	Themes
Women's unpaid labour, Unequal division of labour, Gendered roles and expectations in families	Invisible Labor and Household Expectations
Feeling frustrated, Sense of duty, Sacrificing personal time	Emotional Burden of Gender Roles
Challenging stereotypes, Negotiating shared responsibilities	Changing Gender Norms

Fig 3. Explanation of Stage three with an example

So, in this stage, the researcher begins to see how patterns emerge in participant narratives.

31.5.4. Reviewing and Refining Themes

In this stage, the researchers evaluate themes to check if whether they are able to accurately represent the data; whether they are distinct but connected to the broader research question and whether they need to be merged, split, or removed. This process may require going back to the data for validation. For example, during the reviewing process, the researcher notices that a theme titled "Changing Gender Norms" is too broad and may be split into two: one can be Women Negotiating Change in Families and the second can be the structural Barriers to Equality. So, few overlapping themes might need merging or refining.

30.5.5 Defining and Naming Themes

In this step, the themes are clearly defined, ensuring that each has a distinct focus. The researchers will name themes in a way that conveys their essence. For example, final themes and definitions for the gender roles study can be presented in this way as presented in Fig.4:

Theme	Components
Invisible Labor in Households	Women's unpaid domestic work remains unnoticed and undervalued.
Emotional Burden of Gender Roles	Women experience psychological stress due to social expectations of caregiving.
Negotiating Gender Norms	Some women challenge gender roles, but social barriers persist.

Fig 4. Illustration of stage five of thematic analysis

Therefore, the themes should be concise and meaningful, that would capture the key patterns in the data.

30.5.6 Writing the Report

In this stage, the researchers write up their findings, presenting each theme in detail, supporting quotes from participants. It has an analysis that links themes to theory and existing research. Also, the findings should answer the research question in a clear, coherent narrative.

There are some final considerations to be made while preparing and writing the report:

- Ensuring that there is coherence between themes and research objectives.
- Using quotes by participants to support the derived interpretations.
- A detailed discussion of how findings contribute to sociology (for instance, by linking to theories of gender, labor, and power).

Thus, each phase of thematic analysis -from data familiarization to report writing-helps researchers develop meaningful insights from complex narratives.

31.6 Strengths and Limitations of Thematic Analysis

As discussed above, thematic analysis is a widely used qualitative research method due to its flexibility, transparency, and accessibility. However, like any research approach, it has certain challenges.

31.6.1 Strengths of Thematic Analysis

The strengths or advantages of thematic analysis are listed below:

- i. **Flexibility:** Thematic analysis is not simply tied to a specific theoretical framework. This implies that it be used in various research paradigms (for example in positivist, interpretivist, or critical approaches). It can be applied to different types of qualitative data, such as interviews, focus groups, and textual sources. For example, a sociology student researching on gender roles can use thematic analysis to explore both individual experiences (subjective meanings) and broader societal patterns (structural influences).
- ii. **Transparency and Systematic Process:** Braun and Clarke (2006) developed a clear six-step framework, which helps researchers to do a thematic analysis systematically. Researchers can document their coding and theme development process, making the analysis transparent and replicable. For example, if a researcher follows step-by-step coding and theme development, others can understand how conclusions were drawn, improving the study's credibility.
- iii. **Accessibility for Researchers and Readers:** Thematic analysis is relatively easy to learn and use, even for researchers new to qualitative methods. It does not require specialized software, making it cost-effective and widely applicable. Also, the findings are easily understood by both academic and non-academic audiences. For instance, a study on student experiences in online learning can present clear themes (like: challenges of online interaction) with direct quotes, making it easy for policymakers to use the findings.

30.6.2 Limitations of Thematic Analysis

- i. **Lack of Clear Guidelines:** Unlike the qualitative methods (such as, grounded theory or content analysis), thematic analysis does not have strict rules for data coding and theme development. This can lead to variability in how different researchers identify and define themes. For example, two researchers analysing gender-based workplace discrimination can develop different themes based on their individual interpretations, leading to inconsistent findings.
- ii. **Risk of Subjectivity and Bias:** Since thematic analysis depends on interpretation, there is a risk of researcher bias influencing the identification of themes. Personal beliefs, assumptions, and expectations may shape how data is analysed and categorized. For example, a researcher studying women's career advancement might unintentionally emphasize themes related to discrimination while overlooking themes about agency and resilience.

- iii. Difficulty in Establishing Rigor and Reliability:** Without a clear coding framework, thematic analysis may lack consistency in how themes are developed. The subjective nature of theme identification makes it difficult to achieve intercoder reliability (agreement between different researchers analysing the same data). For example, if two researchers are independently analysing interviews about work-life balance, one might identify 'job flexibility as a coping strategy', while another might consider it as 'employer support systems.' So, in the absence of a clear coding criteria, the findings might be inconsistent.

31.7 Conclusion

Thematic analysis is a useful method in qualitative research that helps students/researchers to identify and interpret patterns within data. It is flexible and this allows it to be applied across different research perspectives, making it a valuable tool for studying social issues. Scholars like Braun and Clarke, King, and Rice and Ezzy have led to its development by providing structured approaches to ensure systematic and reliable analysis. While thematic analysis is widely used because of its clarity and accessibility, it also has some challenges, such as the risk of subjectivity and a lack of standardized guidelines. However, when applied carefully, it enables researchers to gain meaningful insights, making it an important method for studying various topics in sociology.

31.8 Summary

In this unit, we have seen that thematic analysis allows researchers to explore social issues in depth by systematically coding and organizing themes. This method comes under qualitative research approach and is adaptable. It can be applied within different epistemological perspectives, including positivism, interpretivism, and critical realism. Thematic analysis is widely used in sociology due to its accessibility and systematic approach, though it requires careful application to ensure reliability and minimize researcher bias.

31.9 Questions

Answer in very short

1. What is thematic analysis?
2. Name the scholars who contributed to thematic analysis.
3. List the steps in Braun and Clarke's six-step process of thematic analysis.

Answer in short

1. Why is thematic analysis considered flexible?
2. How does initial coding help in thematic analysis?
3. State the differences between a code and a theme in thematic analysis.

Answer in detail

1. Explain the six-step process of thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke.
2. Discuss the strengths and limitations of thematic analysis in qualitative research.
3. Analyse the ways in which different epistemological perspectives (positivism, interpretivism, and critical realism) influence thematic analysis with few relevant examples.

31.10 References

- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Guest, G., MacQueen, K. M., & Namey, E. E. (2012). *Applied thematic analysis*. SAGE Publications.
- King, N. (2004). Using templates in the thematic analysis of text. In C. Cassell & G. Symon (Eds.), *Essential guide to qualitative methods in organizational research* (pp. 256-270). SAGE Publications.
- Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847>
- Rice, P., & Ezzy, D. (1999). *Qualitative research methods: A health focus*. Oxford University Press.

31.11 Suggested Readings

- Carter, S. M., & Little, M. (2007). Justifying knowledge, justifying method, taking action: Epistemologies, methodologies, and methods in qualitative research. *Qualitative Health Research*, 17(10), 1316-1328.

- Maguire, M., & Delahunt, B. (2017). Doing a thematic analysis: A practical, step-by-step guide for learning and teaching scholars. *All Ireland Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (AISHE-J)*, 9(3), 3351-3364.
- Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1), 1-13.
- Terry, G., Hayfield, N., Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2017). Thematic analysis. In C. Willig & W. Stainton Rogers (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research in psychology* (2nd ed., pp. 17-37). SAGE Publications.

Unit 32 Content Analysis and Narrative Analysis

Structure

- 32.1 Learning Objectives**
- 32.2 Introduction**
- 32.3 Justifying the Methods through Writing**
- 32.4 Narrative Analysis**
- 32.5 Content Analysis**
- 32.6 Conclusion**
- 32.7 Summary**
- 32.8 Questions**
- 32.9 References**
- 32.10 Suggested Readings**

32.1 Learning Objectives

- Recognize the importance of qualitative research in developing complex narratives about social structures through fieldwork.
- Explore the integration of macro, meso, and microanalysis to enhance sociological scholarship.
- Examine the influence of postmodernism on academic writing and its potential for transformative change.
- Analyze the role of narratives in shaping modern academic discourse.
- Understand the use of content analysis in order to shape sociological discourse

32.2. Introduction

Qualitative research is all about the analysis of the data that is collected from the fields. While the field can be a social setup, espousing human activities, structures, and networks, it can also be an archive or secondary content such as books, films, performances, etc. One of the best ways to portray the complexities of a field in sociology

is to resort to content or narrative analysis. As authors, we can maintain a degree of partial autonomy while introducing our field or area of problem and in deciding the course of narration that will grasp the reader's attention and help them connect and think about the research problem at hand. The ways of analyzing and representing a field or phenomenon can vary depending upon the kind of methods we have chosen to carry out the research work. In case of writing ethnographies, there is a tendency for the researcher or observer to assume a superordinate position and impose a "gaze" over the field and represent the field in a singular voice, which is the voice of the interpreter. Most of the earlier ethnographies were based on the observer's notes, and the White man's gaze was evident in such writings. There was monograph-style writing depicting the field as an exotic place filled with unique symbols and cultural practices, which were interpreted, many times misinterpreted, and thereby misrepresented by such writers. The works on caste and tribes of India by Sir Herbert Risley and William Crooke proved to be of great interest to British scholars but had little whatsoever importance for metropolitan anthropologists (Fuller, 2017). This result was the outcome of the elitist view by which Crooke and Risley had approached the field, their partial understanding of the functioning of the caste system and their resultant misrepresentation of the institution of caste in Indian society.

With the cultural turn, in writing, there came a debate surrounding the single and dominant voice of the writer, which suppressed the voices of 'Others' that emerged from the field (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). An academic text with an ethnographic inclination would be more multiform, mixing diverse voices, concepts that emerge from the field itself, literary philosophies and perspectives. This method has been subsumed under a broader "postmodern" conception of social science that seeks to foster varied experimental and non-traditional textual forms. In contemporary Post-modern times, many Feminist scholars, environmental researchers, medical researchers and others working with specific communities or in a specific field often choose to represent the voice of "Others" and engage in a method of narrative analysis. Another way of dealing with data that emerges from the field is to code them as per relevant points of study, and observe emergent trends, patterns, comparisons, or fit the concepts into the analytical framework. This is a bottom-up or an inductive approach of doing research (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

32.3. Justifying the Methods through Writing

Writing academic research also involves employing the correct choice of methods for data collection. In representing a work that has been done using a qualitative method of inquiry, the use of unambiguous and clearly specific words should be used, especially if there are no graphs or tables to provide for a backdrop to the data collected. Whatever maybe the choice of methods, a clear and concise justification needs to be provided for choosing the method and its relevance for understanding the research problem. There are several types of qualitative research methods and ways of writing about them, which include ethnographic writing, case studies, content analysis, writing narratives, or autobiographical narratives. For instance, (Riessman, 2015) employed a method of narrating her story of cancer, which was written down in her journals. As a researcher, it was her responsibility to articulate her life story, keeping in mind her target audience. While penning down her journey as a cancer patient, Riessman had targeted her words to an invisible audience who shared her struggles or would empathize with her situation. Eventually, as an academic researcher who embarked upon writing about her illness narrative, the choice of words evolved to target an academic audience comprising of academicians, writers, scholars, researchers, and students. Her work encapsulates the essence of time and the dynamism of identity that each person undergoes in their life. As Reissman writes, "The beginning of a story is necessarily rooted in the particular perspective of its narrator. The story's point is likewise dependent on perspective: the story means different things to its various participants. But this is my story, and where I chose to begin it is significant." (Reissman, 2015, pp- 1059) It is upon the narrator, or in our case, the academic writer, who has the command over the representation of the field. It is us who can decide how to introduce a field and at which time. Equally significant is the shifting meanings of concepts that emerge from the field. This is equally true for conducting long-term ethnographies over a particular area where development has taken place and resulted in a more complex understanding of social phenomenon, as observed by (Jeffrey et al., 2004). For a long time, the Chamar caste, who are traditionally Dalits and hence at the receiving end of the caste system in India have been suppressed under the dominant caste of the district. Eventually, upon receiving education, the Chamars were emancipated. However, a few years ago, Jeffrey et al. observed a significant change in the social position of the Chamars with a clear disjuncture between their aspirations and their marked social position. So the understanding of the caste system in India, the position of the Chamars, and the social

problems that they faced a few years ago have clearly undergone a change over time. Now, if we were to write an ethnographic article about the same community in contemporary times, then we would need to provide a well-articulated history and backdrop in order to convey the meaning of the social phenomenon clearly.

Going back to the example of Reissman, suppose one of her doctors had been asked to provide details of their patients; then maybe we could have observed Reissman's journey through a more epidemiological lens. Reissman's journey would have been one case, amongst many others, for her doctor. This is the case study method and the way of presenting a case study should be far from just a mere summarization and a blatant linking to general theories. The roles of omniscient narrator and summarizer, which authors adopt in writing up case studies, can be eschewed. Instead, authors can choose to narrate the story in its full complexity and let it arise from the multiform, intricate, and even conflicting descriptions the actors have provided to the researchers of the case. It is also important that case study writers should refrain from binding their work to the theories of a particular scientific field. They may, however, choose to connect the instance to more general philosophical standpoints which transcend specialisations. Writing a case study should be a way to enable all sorts of readers to interpret the case in any possible way and reach different types of conclusions about what sort of case it is (Flyvbjerg, 2011).

Finally, when coming to content analysis, there can be several types of content analysis including discourse analysis, conversation analysis, rhetorical analysis or social constructivist analyses (Krippendorff, 2004). Content is not just limited to literary texts but it can also include a range of other contents such as field notes, journal entries, interviews, performances and so on. The flexibility of using a content analysis, in both quantitative as well as qualitative approaches, makes it cater to a variety of materials, whether they are verbal or visual, self-generated (via focus groups or interviews, for example), or selected from publicly accessible sources (websites, newspapers, magazines, blogs, letters, etc.). The method's intrinsic adaptability has allowed it to be used in a variety of fields such as Education research, psychology research, sociological research, political science research, the empirical study of literature, and health-related research (Schreier, 2014).

What is important is to note that the way of representing each type of analyses is different. For instance, according to Van Dijk (1991), a way of portraying a discourse analysis would be to write in details the way in which minorities are represented in newspapers,

the manner in which explanations of ethnic disputes are provided, and how preconceptions creep into news reports. Yet, such writing should not merely be a summary; rather, it should consist of a specific problem that will arouse interest among readers, following a comprehensive and chronological presentation of the cases and their findings and, finally, a future way for further research on such topics. The different ways of analyzing research while writing will be dealt with in the next section. Similarly, a way of portraying a narrative analysis can be to look into the form and content of the narrative, as well as include the researcher's own observations, while the very act of coding and segmenting data under themes forms the representation for a researcher undertaking content analysis.

32.4. Narrative Analysis

Perhaps the most important section of any academic work is the part dealing with analysis. How we analyse a field depends upon our ability to interpret the field and make sense of the emergent concepts. The social constructionist paradigm is where the narrative analysis usually fits in (Earthy et al., 2008). Social constructionism began as an effort to understand the nature of reality and is generally linked to the Interpretivist school of thought. In essence, social constructionism is a relativist, anti-realist position (Weinberg, 2009). Numerous methods of gathering and analysing data, such as autobiography, life history, oral history, auto-ethnography, life narrative, biography, and the sociology of storytelling, can be grouped together under the umbrella term of narrative analysis. According to Rosenwald & Ochberg, (1992) story analysis challenges conventional social science analysis, which is predicated on information gathering and realist presumptions. The emphasis switches to examining how narratives are constructed in the first place, as well as how they contribute to the social construction of identity. For instance, when interviewing homeless persons, it became clear to Earthy et al., (2008) that participants were sharing tales about their experiences and "doing" identity work in addition to providing information about homelessness. Social researchers will pay attention to the social production of qualitative accounts if they are aware of their "narrative potential." For instance, models that are closely related to literary theory or culture and media studies often focus on the narrative structures that are seen in stories. The storyline, setting, and character development of the story may be the main focus of a researcher engaged in narrative analysis, which will assist in highlighting how a story is built and developed by the selective inclusion (and thus exclusion) of certain historical

events.

One of the most important challenges of doing a narrative analysis is to deal with the problem of Representation. According to Riessman (2022), representation is ambiguous and subject to several interpretations. Five levels of representation are present in the gathering and analysis of data, which include attending, telling, transcribing, analysing, and reading of the narratives. The researcher is involved in the process of interpreting a life that they are unable to access at every level. A narrative approach considers the social interactions between the interviewer and the interviewee that support and impact the presentation of an account in addition to the story-telling elements or traits of the account (Earthy et al., 2008). Instead of concentrating only on the content of the interviewees' statements or the conversational forms and conventions that underpin the interaction, a narrative method chooses to analyse the interview or other data from that perspective. Even in cases when the narratives appear to be spontaneous, a careful reading of the transcript might portray the researcher's enquiries and verbal and nonverbal cues of interest and encouragement that come before the tale is told and influence how the researcher presents it in their writing. The same incident or life story may be told differently on another occasion with various people in attendance, such as in group discussions. That is when narratives are said to be co-authored. When crafting our interview questions, we must keep in mind that we have the power to either encourage or discourage the act of narration.

Forms of Narrative Analysis

Other techniques that use narrative analysis include the oral history, which seeks to document and preserve a cohort's memories while they are still living, as well as to investigate what it was like to live in a bygone era. For example, interviews with senior citizens provide a major resource in the local history collections of many public libraries and certain museums, offering rich information about facets of daily life like childhood, family, employment, religion, and shopping. The goal of this type of research is to document the experiences of "ordinary" people in order to give them a voice. Another technique often used is the life story study method. In general, life-story study focusses on the relationship between an individual's biography and historical and contemporary social processes (Earthy et al., 2008). These could entail changing a location, a sector of the economy, or a style of life. In addition to being crucial to the way we naturally tell stories, chronology is also crucial for social researchers who trace society and personal change.

The narrative analysis espouses a range of other analysis-including structural analysis, performative and conversation analysis (Riessman, 2005). The narrative focuses more on the ideas, life episodes or instances of the respondents facing a similar situation rather than the narrator's own dominant voice. For instance, (William, 1984) uses three examples as exemplars to create a typology based on an investigation into how thirty people explain the origin of their sickness. Cases like these show variations in the theme and expansion of ideas, which contribute to the notion that chronic illness is a biographical disruption.

In structural analysis, emphasis is on the way a story is told. So apart from themes, language and the careful choice of words also assume importance. For instance, James Gee (1991) analyzes a story that a woman tells in a mental health hospital and finds the discourse to be both logical and poetic. Gee proceeds to order the story into idea units, stanzas, strophes, and parts in episodic (as opposed to chronologically) ordered form based on the way the story was told in order to bring out the meaning of the story as narrated by the woman.

In a performative analysis, storytelling itself becomes a form of art or performance where a dialogue is created between the "self" as narrator with a wider audience. Perhaps the most appropriate example of such a method of writing would be the works of Alexander Craft et al., (2007) titled "The Quilt Towards a twenty-first-century black feminist ethnography". Craft et al. presented the article in the form of a group conversation between four black women, each of whom shared their life experiences of being a female scholar of colour and exploring the meaning of sisterhood/motherhood. The entire article was presented as a literary treat, presenting a performative aspect of storytelling and making it more engaging for the audience/readers.

Finally, we have the conversation or interaction analysis, where interest is on storytelling as a process of co-construction, where the teller/ respondent and listener/ author create meaning collaboratively. The use of language and the importance of themes are still recognized, in addition to featuring stories of personal experiences or observations in between questions and answers between the two. Transcriptions become important here as both the verbal accounts as well as the non-verbal cues are accounted for while writing the narrative.

Forming the interview questions

Most of the qualitative researchers aiming for narrative analysis ask the primary questions

about time and chronology, in both casual conversations as well as research interviews. The majority of academics who conduct interviews that are pre-planned to elicit narratives advise combining extremely general questions (such as knowing about life details) with prompts that stimulate the sharing of particular examples. However, the narrative data that is already present in text format can be accessed from a variety of sources. These consist of fiction, autobiographies, biographies, newspapers, periodicals, blogs, and online discussion boards. This makes it easier to integrate narrative analysis with quantitative techniques like content analysis. (Earthy et al., 2008).

Analysis

According to (Lieblich et al., 1998), there are two intersectional approaches to narrative analysis: one is the holistic approaches aimed toward comprehending how a specific textual passage is a part of a life story told during a single interview or multiple interviews with the same person, and the other is the categorical approaches which compare all references to the selected phenomenon within one interview or across various interviews. Lieblich et al., also mentioned that the narrative's content can be divided into two categories: surface content (related to the what, who, and how part of any event) and underlying or latent content (what were the participants' intentions or motivations, what might particular objects represent for the narrator or others, and what does this story mean and mean to the narrator?). On the other hand, if we are interested in the narrative's form, we focus on elements like the plot's organisation, the events that occur, and the language employed. Therefore, there remains a good chance of any one of four alternative combinations to arise from different decisions on the unit and analysis focus: holistic-content, holistic-form, categorical-content, and categorical-form (ibid.).

Establishing Credibility

The issue of validity is something that should not be missed while conducting a narrative analysis. According to Riessman (2022), the researcher's explicit recognition that their study is the creation of certain discourses or theoretical frameworks must be the first step in assessing the validity of a narrative analysis. This allows the researcher to reject validity criteria that are predicated on realism presumptions since the entire social constructionist paradigm is anti-realism (Weinberg, 2009). The next step of the researcher is to recognise that an alternative theoretical framework may yield a different analysis. As a result, the foundation for evaluating the validity of an analysis now focuses on the idea of "trustworthiness" rather than the impossibility of expressing the "truth." The trustworthiness of the research lies in the process of gathering narratives, the

transcriptions and the emergent analyses, which are connected to theoretical frameworks or form the ground for creating/ advancing existing frameworks.

32.5. Content Analysis

Another equally method to carry out a qualitative research is to engage with the qualitative content analysis. The quantitative form of this procedure gave rise to qualitative content analysis. This began in the early part of the 20th century, when the media landscape was expanding and there was a corresponding interest in studying media effects on larger society (Krippendorff, 2004). Qualitative researchers look for multiple interpretations by taking into account opposing readings (critiques), alternative viewpoints (from other ideological orientations), diverse voices (readers), or diversified uses of the materials under study (by different groups). In order to bolster their interpretations, qualitative researchers establish parallelisms, triangulate, elaborate on any analogies they find, and incorporate excerpts from the texts they have analysed and literature about their environments into their conclusions. Qualitative content analysis is used to analyse latent and more context-dependent meaning, while quantitative content analysis still focuses on the manifest meaning. The qualitative version of this form of data analysis treats consistency to be of subsidiary importance since hidden meaning is more difficult to define in a consensus. Complete coding frames may be constructed to test hypotheses in cases of quantitative analysis, whereas providing a thorough description of the data under study is frequently the main goal of qualitative content analysis (Schreier, 2014).

Forming the interview questions

The inductive approach is one where parameters are created from observations of phenomena that occur in the field or are found in some secondary literature such as newspaper archives, books, etc. These parameters are then applied to the original data for purposes of classification or comparisons. The results are penned down by researchers in particular chapters, pertaining to the objectives of the research. A Qualitative content analysis looks at information gathered using open-ended methods that are more focused on depth and detail than measurement. For instance, to understand the levels of trust that patients have in doctors, a qualitative content analysis may prove to be more helpful. By employing a closed-ended survey, a researcher can gauge the degree to which patients trust their doctors. As an alternative, the topic of trust can be explored using open-ended interviews, where participant replies are not limited by closed-ended categories

(Susan Dorr Goold et al., 2007, pp. 39-42). A closed-ended survey might offer an evaluation of patient trust. Still, it doesn't reveal anything about how patients learn to trust or mistrust their doctors or what trust means to them. In contrast, an open-ended interview schedule can generate a variety of answers and more concepts can be derived from the wide range of answers obtained. The answers can then be codified according to the theme or objective of the research and presented in the form of a coherent chapter. It is necessary to create a codebook in order to arrange codes and guarantee their consistent use.

Analysis

In Content Analysis, the collected data is first categorised using parameters that are created, at least partially, inductively (Morgan, 1993). The process of data interpretation and analysis is interlinked as researchers can arrange data while at the same time obtaining more clarity on it. The researcher can use coding as a stage to find trends, test hypotheses, give specific findings context, and situate data within an analytical framework (Sandelowski, 1995). Once the researcher has decided to use inductive content analysis, the next step is to organise the qualitative data using open coding, category creation, and abstraction. Open coding involves taking notes and headings while reading the text, and category creation aims to increase understanding, generate knowledge, and provide a way to describe the phenomenon. When using inductive content analysis to create categories, the researcher uses interpretation to decide which items to place in the same category (Dey 1993). A codebook is particularly crucial for projects that include several people working on large-scale data with multiple variables (Susan Dorr Goold et al., 2007). After completion of the coding process, the text or original data is reorganised into the specific codes. Care should be taken to include only such content that will give enough context for the code to be understood when applying it to a text segment. Data ordering and interpretation take place within the analysis process since there is no distinct boundary between the two. However, once the data has been coded and arranged, and the emergent trends, themes, or observations have come about, the writer can then proceed to present their findings through the process of writing an academic report. (ibid.).

Initially, researchers aim to categorise primary themes/ headings that ought to address a single facet of the content. Second, it is also necessary to define subcategories inside a major category that are mutually exclusive (requirement of mutual exclusiveness). Finally, the researcher must check whether a category encompasses every pertinent

component of the content (requirement of exhaustiveness). Usually, the researcher keeps reading the content until they come across a relevant idea that is noted under a heading or subheading and taken into consideration. After every category has been created and specified, a re-examination of the coding frame's structure is carried out to "tidy up" any loose ends (Schreier, 2014)

Susan Dorr Goold et al., (2007) also mention the use of certain software by qualitative researchers to handle data and make analysis and interpretation easier, which includes the ATLAS.ti (<http://www.atlasti.com/index.php>), MaxQDA (<http://www.maxqda.com/>), and NVivo (www.qsrinternational.com). While such software offers the ease of coding the data and arranging it accordingly, the analysis is carried out by the researcher/s. In content analysis, the data is not only used to generate in-depth details of a phenomenon, but it can also be used to look into the data obtained from secondary literature like books, films, letters, journals, collection of photographs, etc. which can then be coded and arranged for further analysis. The method's intrinsic adaptability and flexibility to be used in both quantitative and qualitative analysis has allowed it to be used in a variety of fields, expanding beyond its initial application in communication studies.

Establishing credibility

The validity of the results and interpretations must be demonstrated in order for another researcher to follow the steps and methods of the investigation. When approving study findings, qualitative researchers frequently use standards other than validity and reliability since this approach is also based on the interpretive paradigm and has an anti-positivist stance. Replicability is also not deemed to be a major concern in qualitative research, especially where analysts are working alone. On the other hand, when working in research teams and dealing with higher text volumes, content analysts must break a body of texts into manageable chunks and assign analytical assignments to team members for ease of data interpretation and organization. According to (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) the process of qualitative content analysis includes trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, embodiment, responsibility, reflexivity, and emancipatory goals as some of the numerous alternative criteria put out by qualitative scholars who are engaged in qualitative content analysis. Tables and appendices can be used to show how the data and findings are related. The researcher should clearly explain the background, participant selection and characteristics, data collection, and analysis procedure in order to promote transferability (Graneheim & Lundman 2004).

Genuine citations can also be employed to boost the research's credibility and inform

readers of the sources or types of original data categories that are developed (Patton 1990, Sandelowski 1993).

32.6. Conclusion

To write qualitative research academically means to create elaborate narratives or observe emergent patterns or trends about the structures of society, its interactions, and its organisations-a view of which was obtained from the fieldwork and not through experimental/survey research. In doing this procedure, strict word choice and literary talent are required to communicate such complex reality of the phenomena under study. Theories from an array of disciplines, such as text linguistics, rhetoric, and literary studies, should be combined for a more reflexive and analytically complex approach toward academic writing. This move toward postmodernism has changed sociological writing to include more various styles. Most importantly, it has achieved this by combining macro, meso, and micro levels of analysis that emphasise the performative nature of research. Both methodologies, shaped by the interpretivist paradigm play a crucial role in the enhancement of knowledge and the facilitation of social transformation. By employing either the depth of narrative analysis or the flexibility of content analysis, researchers can derive important understandings of social frameworks and dynamics. Ultimately, the decision regarding the adoption of these approaches is contingent upon the research inquiry, the characteristics of the data, and the intended degree of intricacy and adaptability. A mixed-method approach can also be adopted in the future, especially with the aid of new technology that facilitates the arrangement and segmentation of huge qualitative data sets, along with the calculability and precision of quantitative data sets.

32.7. Summary

Qualitative research requires creating detailed narratives and in-depth content analysis about social structures, often relying on fieldwork or digging into secondary literature and using precise language and literary techniques. The influence of postmodernism has expanded sociological writing, incorporating macro, meso, and microanalysis, particularly in critical ethnography, which emphasizes social change. While narrative analysis can offer more flexibility from an array of methods to choose from, the content analysis is useful for digging deep into a phenomenon and make sense concepts that

emerge from the ground. Researchers use both techniques to advance or create new forms of knowledge in the discipline or make changes in the societal level through an action research process. A mixed- method approach can also be opted by researchers in future.

2.8. Questions

1. In what ways does qualitative research differ from experimental or survey research in terms of its approach to studying social structures?
2. How has the postmodern turn influenced sociological academic writing, particularly in relation to critical ethnography?
3. What is the significance of integrating macro, meso, and micro levels of analysis in sociological research writing?
4. How do critical ethnographic narratives contribute to social change, and what role do they play in representing silenced groups?
5. What is the method of carrying out a narrative analysis and a content analysis?
6. What is the key difference between a narrative and a content analysis?
7. Write a note on issues of validity and reliability for both the methods of analysis.

32.9. References

- Craft, A.R, Mc ne a l M., M w a n g o l a, M.S., & Zabriskie, E. (2007). The Quilt Towards a twenty-first-century black feminist ethnography. https://research.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/CCM3_033310.pdf
- Denzin, Norman K., & Lincoln, Yvonna S. (2000). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In Norman K. Denzin & Yvonna S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 1-28). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Dey, I. (1993). *Qualitative Data Analysis*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203412497>
- Earthy, S., Cuncev, A., & Cronin, A. (2008). Narrative Analysis. In N. Gilbert & P. Stoneman (Eds.), *Researching Social Life* (pp. 461-485). Sage. <https://books.google.co.in/>

books?hl=en&lr=&id=Ff6ICwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=Researching+Social+Life+book+&ots=f_Kuqj_eco&sig=TmYC-K2glZyM3cV0j1GjcQmCXw&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=Researching%20Social%20Life%20book&f=false

- Fuller, C. J. (2017). Ethnographic inquiry in colonial India: Herbert Risley, William Crooke, and the study of tribes and castes. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 23(3), 603-621. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9655.12654>
- Flyvbjerg, B. (2011). "Case Study," in Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, eds., *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 4th Edition (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2011), Chapter 17, pp. 301-316.
- Gee, J.P. (1991) "A linguistic approach to narrative", *Journal of Narrative and Life History*, 1: 15-39.
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory : Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Aldine Transaction
- Graneheim, U. H., & Lundman, B. (2004). Qualitative Content Analysis in Nursing research: concepts, Procedures and Measures to Achieve Trustworthiness. *Nurse Education Today*, 24(2), 105-112. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2003.10.001>
- ammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (2007). *Ethnography: Principles in practice* (pp. 198-214). Routledge.
- Jeffrey, C., Jeffery, R., & Jeffery, P. (2004). Degrees without Freedom: The Impact of Formal Education on Dalit Young Men in North India. *Development and Change*, 35(5), 963-986. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7660.2004.00388.x>
- Krippendorff, K. (2004). *Content analysis an introduction to its methodology*. (2nd ed.). Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Lieblich, A., Tuval-Mashiach, R., & Zilber, T. (1998). *Narrative research : reading, analysis, and interpretation* (Vol. 47). Sage, Cop. [https://books.google.co.in/books?hl=en&lr=&id=fl88W52Kx04C&oi=fnd&pg=PP11&dq=Lieblich+et+al.+ \(1998\)&ots=PhOA5qP6k&sig=k2m7kL5-0Avigi60pOkXdC9z-Tk&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=Lieblich%20et%20al.%20\(1998\)&f=false](https://books.google.co.in/books?hl=en&lr=&id=fl88W52Kx04C&oi=fnd&pg=PP11&dq=Lieblich+et+al.+ (1998)&ots=PhOA5qP6k&sig=k2m7kL5-0Avigi60pOkXdC9z-Tk&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=Lieblich%20et%20al.%20(1998)&f=false)
- Morgan, D. L. (1993). Qualitative content analysis: A guide to paths not taken. *Qualitative Health Research*, 3(1), 112-121
- Patton, M. Q. (1990, January 1). *The Evaluation of Qualitative Research Methods*.

- Research Gate. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/201382074_The_Evaluation_of_Qualitative_Research_Methods
- Riessman, C. K. (2005, April 1). Narrative Analysis (N. Kelly, C. Horrocks, K. Milnes, B. Roberts, & D. Robinson, Eds.). Eprints.hud.ac.uk; University of Huddersfield. <http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/id/eprint/4920/>
- Riessman, C. K. (2015). Ruptures and sutures: time, audience and identity in an illness narrative. *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 37(7), 1055-1071. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9566.12281>
- Riessman, C. K. (2022). Narrative Analysis. SAGE Publications. https://eprints.hud.ac.uk/id/eprint/4920/2/Chapter_1_-_Catherine_Kohler_Riessman.pdf
- osenwald, G. C., & Ochberg, R. L. (1992). *Storied lives : the cultural politics of self-understanding*. Yale University Press. https://www.google.co.in/books/edition/Storied_Lives/WTF7WMHItO0C?hl=en&gbpv=0
- Sandelowski, M. (1993). Theory unmasked: The uses and guises of theory in qualitative research. *Research in Nursing & Health*, 16(3), 213-218. <https://doi.org/10.1002/nur.4770160308>
- Sandelowski, M. (1995). Qualitative analysis: What it is and how to begin. *Research in Nursing & Health*, 18(4), 371-375. <https://doi.org/10.1002/nur.4770180411>
- Susan Dorr Goold, Damschroder, L. J., & Baum, N. M. (2007). Deliberative Procedures in Bioethics. In Elsevier eBooks (pp. 39-42). Research Gate. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s1479-3709\(07\)11010-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/s1479-3709(07)11010-4)
- Van Dijk, Teun A. (1991) . *Racism and the press*. New York: Routledge
- Weinberg, D. (2009). Social Constructionism. In B. S. Turner (Ed.), *The New Blackwell Companion to Social Theory* (pp. 281-287). Wiley- Blackwell. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Daniel-Chernilo/publication/227991721_Cosmopolitanism_and_Social_Theory/links/5bcde137a6fdcc204a000699/Cosmopolitanism-and-Social-Theory.pdf#page=294
- Williams, G. (1984) "The genesis of chronic illness: Narrative reconstruction", *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 6(2): 175-200.

32.10. Suggested Readings

- Lahiri, S. C. (2020). *Doing Social Research: Qualitative Methods of Research in Sociology*. Orient Blackswan
- Small, M. L., & Calarco, J. M. (2022). *QUALITATIVE LITERACY : a guide to evaluating ethnographic and interview research*. Univ Of California Press.

Unit 33: Academic Writing of Research Report

Structure

- 33.1 Learning Objectives**
- 33.2 Introduction**
- 33.3 Read Right to Write Right**
- 33.4 Biases in Writing**
- 33.5 Minding the Ethics**
- 33.6 Conclusion**
- 33.7 Summary**
- 33.8 Questions**
- 33.9 References**
- 33.10 Suggested Readings**

33.1 Learning Objectives

- Understand the significance of the IMRAD structure in organizing academic research systematically.
- Identify the role of precise word choice and literary artistry in effectively communicating complex research findings.
- Acknowledge the importance of ethical considerations, including proceduralist and situational issues, in reducing biases in research.
- Apply critical reflexivity to ensure fidelity and integrity in research representation.

33.2. Introduction to Writing Academic Reports

Academic research writing is not a simple task as it involves the complex and continuous representation of the field. Such writings have their own benefits and challenges. This is so because qualitative academic writing does not resemble experimental or survey research, which are more formal literary categories. In fact, the traditional definition of "writing up" the field is wrong in many ways. In reality, we rarely present our "results."

The art of writing lies in striving to develop detailed stories regarding complex social organisation, interactions as well as structures. While actions and spoken words may offer the space for a transparent medium of communication, written language requires the careful choice of words, phrases and emotions. Academic reports can never be reduced to merely writing out a set of prescriptions. Good academic work requires careful planning of the research design and an even more robust form of literary skills. To that end, academics and researchers need to take into account the contributions from various theories which may be literary, rhetoric, text linguistics, and other related fields. Textual reflexivity becomes an unavoidable part of academic research writings, especially for presenting ethnographies (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, pp. 198-214). Reflexivity goes beyond fieldwork and data collection in ethnography. We also do this while writing to convert the social reality into words and address our research issues. Therefore, writing is also closely related to the art of analysis. Analysis involves an in-depth and critical understanding of the field. For instance, when we write ethnography, we are also continuously reconstructing the social phenomena through the ways we choose to write about them. The words carry a power of their own.

With the coming of postmodernism in sociological writing, new forms of writing styles are observed which combine the macro, meso and micro domains of a field and bring out the performance, performativity, and the performative aspects of a researcher conducting research in their own community, as an insider, yet maintaining a balance to retain the justified and fair way of presenting the social phenomenon without turning the academic work into an action research report (Henson, 2019). In recent times, with the rise of 'new social movements' such as Feminist movements, Environmental movements, movements for recognising the sexual identity, dignity and associated rights of people, disability movement or mental health movements, there has also been a shift in the ways of presenting an ethnographic account in a more critical manner, by consciously adopting a stand for the marginalised groups in question and calling for a future change through critical writings (Gitlin et al., 1989; Kemmis and McTaggart, 2005). Such critical ethnographers have promoted ethnographic action research through their writings (Akom, 2011).

This chapter aims to set out the general forms of writing an academic research report and identify the new shifts and trends in presenting the field and dealing with the new emerging concepts that arise from it. As we shall outline in this chapter, there are different genres of planning and structuring the writing of an academic research report, each of

which can imply a different kind of representation. Any sociological academic research can either be quantitative, using tables, graphs and statistical analysis to arrive at a conclusion, qualitative, as shall be explored in this chapter, or employing a combination of both methods. The general structure for writing any academic report is starting with the Introduction, followed by Materials and Methods, Results, and finally Discussion-abbreviated IMRAD-which would become a standard for theses and research publications. Most of the academic publications and conference organizers begin accepting the IMRAD framework for their papers (Thomas, 2021).

Finally, the importance of reading cannot be undermined. The individual scholar does not create their theories afresh. It is only by taking into account the textual conventions of the past, including the careful analysis of the language used in academic texts, concepts, images, and metaphors, can we truly appreciate an academic research work. The good researcher must form the habit of reading across a variety of texts and comparing the different field locations, contexts, concepts and issues. This is how the writers can effectively link the macro and micro elements of their field into a concrete whole. For instance, we may refer to Clifford Geertz in his book in trying to understand how the local culture of Cockfight which is a banned sport of Bali in Indonesia, is related to the broader government system prevailing at that point in time (Geertz, 2005). Geertz, in his writing, tried to decode how the local people conduct Balinese cockfights as their means of leisure and negotiate with the Police when they are caught. His representation of the field portrays how the micro intersects with the macro to constitute the everyday experience of the people of Bali. It is only by reading such works that we can learn to think on a broader aspect and portray our respective fields and associated variables in a coherent light. At the same time, the importance of ethics cannot be overlooked. Ethics can be of two types-one that is followed in general by all researchers which are the universalistic or proceduralist approaches, and the other are the situationist or contextualist ones, where specific ethical concerns arise in a field (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Such ethical concerns are also reflected while writing research papers, which shall be outlined in further detail later.

33.3. Read right to Write right

The power of reading should never be undermined. According to Ntarangwi (2021), reading is a form of listening to ethnographic stories, while writing is a form of narrating the story of the researcher's findings. Reading should not only be limited to works of

academic importance; it may also extend the parallel genres of fiction and nonfiction. According to Paul and Criado (2020), systematic reviews integrate the body of existing literature, synthesise previous studies, identify knowledge gaps, and establish new theoretical frameworks to provide several critical debates on a particular study issue. In general, a review of the last academic works pertaining to the topic in concern can be divided into a domain-based review, a theory-based review and a method-based review. Domain-based reviews can include reviews based on methods, charts and tables of a particular academic work, a bibliography at the end of the work, or the future direction in which that work may guide other researchers. A theory-based review is one where existing theories are taken into account and integrated with the current field. This ensures the writers to get unfamiliar with their field by reading works set in different locations. For instance, a brilliant short essay by Horace Miner entitled "Body ritual among the Nacirema" (1956) offers a simplistic, almost 'primitive' and 'barbaric' representation of the culture of Nacirema, which is just America spelt backwards. The fact is that Miner took a step back and used an "etic" lens to view his own American society and lifestyle in order to produce a work that represented a complex and industrial society through a primitive lens which felt convincing to the readers. It is only by reading such texts can we understand the importance of stepping back and observing one's own field through an unfamiliar lens. Hearing other's field stories in the form of written academic texts often compels the researcher in us to not take our field concepts for granted. Reading aims to push us out of our comfort zone and break down the assumed biases that we tend to have towards our fields. Such assumptions, in turn, are reflected in the process of writing. If we are not careful from the very inception of an idea of research and strive to continuously step back and reflect upon our knowledge of the field, we cannot produce truly sociological works.

As students and researchers in the field of Sociology, we must carefully distinguish our knowledge from common sense. Since the study of society often invites the unsolicited views of all other members who are part of it, we, as researchers, must be extra careful while representing the social phenomenon. We are currently living in a crisis which results from a lack of self-awareness or critical thinking (Alvarez, 2023; Bauman and May, 2001). A major reason for the lack of critical thinking emerges from the lack of ability to read carefully and analyse the gaps in previous research. While it is often easier to take the field for granted, the danger remains of succumbing to the use of common sense in representing a social phenomenon rather than going the extra mile to read about the various theories, methods, and conclusions to identify the deep-rooted

unfamiliarity of our research field. For instance, any medical student studying about the medical system of Indian society may tend to take certain practices or concepts for granted. It is only by reading about the medical setting of other countries like Ireland can he or she be able to compare and contrast the medical scenarios of both countries. Moreover, each social phenomenon of the present must take into account the historical dynamics, particular to that location and culture, in order to make complete sense. Thus, it is only through a careful reading of past articles presented on the same phenomenon or digging up into historical records that are unique to our research topic can we truly understand our field and the inherent complexities of it. For instance, any student aiming to work on the social factors underlying the reservation system of India, cannot start the topic without a thorough literature review of India's history, the caste system, the notable figures associated with the debates surrounding the system and so on. Sometimes, academic articles also point out the methods used in their particular study of the same phenomenon, which we may undertake as our research. This brings me to the third type of review, which is the method review.

Review articles that employ an underlying technique (either quantitative or qualitative) to synthesise and expand on a corpus of literature are called method-based reviews (Paul and Criado, 2020). The methods used in a study often point to the likely conclusion that we, too, can obtain by employing similar methods for our work. While this may help us identify the shortcomings of the previous research and help to strengthen the methodological base of our research by avoiding methodological pitfalls, it is also beneficial to employ such methods especially for conducting longitudinal studies. For instance, longitudinal qualitative studies that involve repeated data collection and a focus on temporality are called qualitative longitudinal research. QLR finds increasing application to a plethora of health topics because the topics under study involve change. It is in this aspect that, through a method study, an in-depth understanding in relation to its use, trends, and diversity in the application can be gained (Auduly et al., 2022). Therefore, the paramount importance of conducting a robust review of existing literature proves to be of crucial importance before embarking on any research work. In fact, the process of reviewing is continuous, and it is followed right from the conception of a research topic till the end of writing it. Only a continuous and in-depth reading of other works can provide us with the necessary skills to write a proper academic research report.

33.4. Biases in Writing

Writing flares up the sociological imagination. Writing involves a delicate balance between formal (transactional) and informal (expressive) writing. According to Grauerholz et al. (2012), transactional writing includes paying special attention to defining problems, justifying the proper choice of methods for carrying out the research work, avoiding extra complication or oversimplification of language while analyzing the field and emergent concepts, being aware of subjective biases, or the lack of them, in writing, and finally, keeping in mind the question of ethics. On the other hand, expressive writing can bring out the creativity of the writer and depict a picture of the field that can almost visually strike the mind of the readers. Expressive writing helps the reader to connect with the setting of the field in order to truly understand and critically think about the research problem. Such expressions, using metaphors and literary devices, can capture the essence of the field and present it to the readers. For instance, Lawrence Cohen (2006) in his ethnographic account of widows of Benaras, in India, in the book "No Aging in India : Alzheimer's, the Bad Family, and Other Modern Things" have used beautiful metaphors of street dogs to portray the senile old widows who roamed the streets of the holy city and were objected to humility and shame by the people. Similarly, Sarah Lamb (2000) in her ethnographic accounts of old widows of West Bengal in the book "White Saris and Sweet Mangoes : Aging, Gender, and Body in North India" came across the sensitizing concept of "Maya" (or attachment that people have with other people, animals and nature as a whole) which she described beautifully through the simplistic yet coherent use of her language. Both these works are a delicate balance between formal and expressive writing, providing a sense of literary and academic delight for their audience.

It should be noted that while conducting research, it is often easy for a researcher to get swayed by their own subjective biases, presupposed notions of the field, or political inclinations (Grauerholz et al., 2012). While a researcher should always be conscious of the biases creeping into the work, it is of utmost importance that such biases not get reflected in writing. A constant and critical evaluation of the writing is needed at all points in time to ensure that value neutrality is maintained. However, in the postmodern phase, and with the cultural turn in writing, a subjective consciousness of the researcher is acknowledged and even welcomed to provide for an action-oriented goal. A good example of positing an emic approach in the field is provided by Tripura (2023) in his works on the tribes of North-Eastern India, who have been viewed uncritically and

without reflection in the colonial ethnographic works by White anthropologists. Tripura attempted to provide an alternative indigenous methodology comprising conversation analysis, participatory ethnography and in-depth interviews as a tool to bring out the essence of tribal features of North Eastern India. Being a member of the tribal community himself, his emic stance in the field enriched the depiction of the community. Yet, while writing, he maintained a constant textual reflexivity, lest the work should be termed as utterly biased. Such reflexivity and critical re-evaluation of our own writing can only arise through an in-depth reading of other academic works and maintaining the process of conducting a thorough review of the literature at all phases of doing research.

33.5. Minding the Ethics

As said earlier, under the introductory segment of the chapter, ethics can be of two types- universalistic or situationist (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Universal ethics are the ones which apply to all researchers, especially when writing about sensitive contexts or communities, such as research conducted on special children, specially-abled people, old and mentally ill people and so on. Five basic categories-informed consent, privacy, harm, reciprocity and exploitation, and implications for future research-are where ethics is involved. For instance, Brijnath (2014), in her work on old Alzheimer's patients, obtained prior consent from their family members to represent their lives and their dynamics with their caregivers, in order to safeguard the privacy of the patients and not bring upon any form of unwanted harm or exploitation of the patient or their family. In this way, Brijnath ensured the dignity of the individual and ensured informed reciprocity from her respondents. Situationist ethics is when a researcher is supposed to make judgments that feel right in that particular context and time.

Ethics are not only regulated by the researcher alone; they are also decided by the funding agency, higher authorities in the case of government-regulated projects, private firms, and academic boards. Ethics should also be maintained while writing, such as refraining from plagiarizing content blatantly or not recognizing the efforts of others involved in a team research activity and providing them with due credit in writing. Breach of anonymity while writing or the improper representation of words, as said by respondents, also accounts for bad representation and problems of biases. Clear and proper language should be used to avoid any misrepresentation of facts and analysis while writing.

33.6. Conclusion

Academic research writing is such a dynamic and diverse enterprise that falls beyond the notion of recording a mere set of findings. Primarily, the IMRAD format is where one structures their academic research report in the order of- Introduction, Materials and Procedures, Results, and Discussion. These formats are standardised for theses and publications of research work. This framework makes arranging the study findings methodically coherent and clear. It is, however, in the more stringent syntheses of prior research and the embedding of discoveries within larger theoretical frameworks that lies the heart of academic writing.

Ethical issues also play a significant role in writing an academic report and conducting proper research. Besides navigating both proceduralist and universalistic ethical standards, the researchers also deal with particular situational issues that come up in the field. The representation of the field is also done through practices of constant re-evaluation and critical reflexivity to avoid unwanted biases in writing.

33.7. Summary

Academic research writing is a dynamic process that goes beyond merely documenting findings. The IMRAD structure (Introduction, Materials and Procedures, Results, and Discussion) ensures clarity and coherence. Ethical considerations, both proceduralist and situational, require constant re-evaluation. Critical reflexivity is essential in minimizing biases and ensuring the integrity of research representation, creating a more complex and transformative scholarship.

33.8. Questions

1. Why is a particular writing structure required in academic research writing?
2. Why are precise word choice and literary skills essential in effectively communicating the complexities of qualitative research?
3. What are the ethical challenges that researchers face in academic writing, particularly regarding proceduralist and situational issues?
4. How do constant re-evaluation and critical reflexivity help reduce bias and ensure accuracy in representing fieldwork findings?

33.9. References

- Akom, A. (2011) 'Black emancipatory action research: integrating a theory of structural racialisation into ethnographic and participatory action research methods', *Ethnography and Education*, 6, 1, 113-131.
- Alvarez- Alvarez, E. (2023). *The International Journal of Critical Cultural Studies*. *The International Journal of Critical Cultural Studies*, 20(2). <https://doi.org/10.18848/2327-0055/cgp>
- Audulv, Å., Hall, E. O. C., Kneck, Å., Westergren, T., Fegran, L., Pedersen, M. K., Aagaard, H., Dam, K. L., & Ludvigsen, M. S. (2022). Qualitative Longitudinal Research in Health research: a Method Study. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, 22(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12874-022-01732-4>
- Bauman, Z., & May, T. (2001). *Thinking sociologically*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Brijnath, B. (2014). *Unforgotten*. Berghahn Books. <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/9781782383550/html>
- Cohen, L. (2006). *No aging in India : Alzheimer's, the bad family, and other modern things*. Berkeley, Calif. Univ.Of California Press.
- Geertz, C. (2005). Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight. *Daedalus*, 134(4), 56-86. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20028014>
- Gitlin, A. D., Siegel, M., and Boru, K. (1989) 'The politics of method: from leftist ethnography to educative research', *Qualitative Studies in Education*, 2, 3: 237-53.
- Grauerholz, L., Eisele, J., & Stark, N. (2012). Writing in the Sociology Curriculum. *Teaching Sociology*, 41(1), 46-59. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0092055x12461453>
- Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (2007). *Ethnography: Principles in practice* (pp. 198-214). Routledge.
- Henson, B. (2019). "Look! A Black Ethnographer!": Fanon, Performance, and Critical Ethnography. *Cultural Studies ? Critical Methodologies*, 20(4), 153270861983858. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1532708619838582>
- Kemmis, S. and McTaggart, R. (2005) 'Participatory action research: communicative action in the public sphere', in Denzin and Lincoln (eds) (2005).
- Lamb, S. (2000). White saris and sweet mangoes: aging, gender, and body in North

India. University Of California Press.

Miner, H. (1956). Body Ritual among the Nacirema. *American Anthropologist*, 58(3), 503-507. <https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.1956.58.3.02a00080>

Ntarangwi, M. (2021). Listening to disrupt ethnographic representations. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, 11(1), 273-280. <https://doi.org/10.1086/713741>

Paul, J., & Criado, A. R. (2020). The art of writing literature review: What do we know and what do we need to know? *International Business Review*, 29(4). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ibusrev.2020.101717>

Thomas, C. G. (2021). *Research Methodology and Scientific Writing* (2nd ed.). Springer International Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-64865-7>

Tripura, B. (2023). Decolonizing ethnography and Tribes in India: Toward an alternative methodology. *Frontiers in Political Science*, 5. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2023.1047276>

33.10. Suggested Readings

Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2016). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2011). *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2015). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (4th ed.). Jossey-Bass.