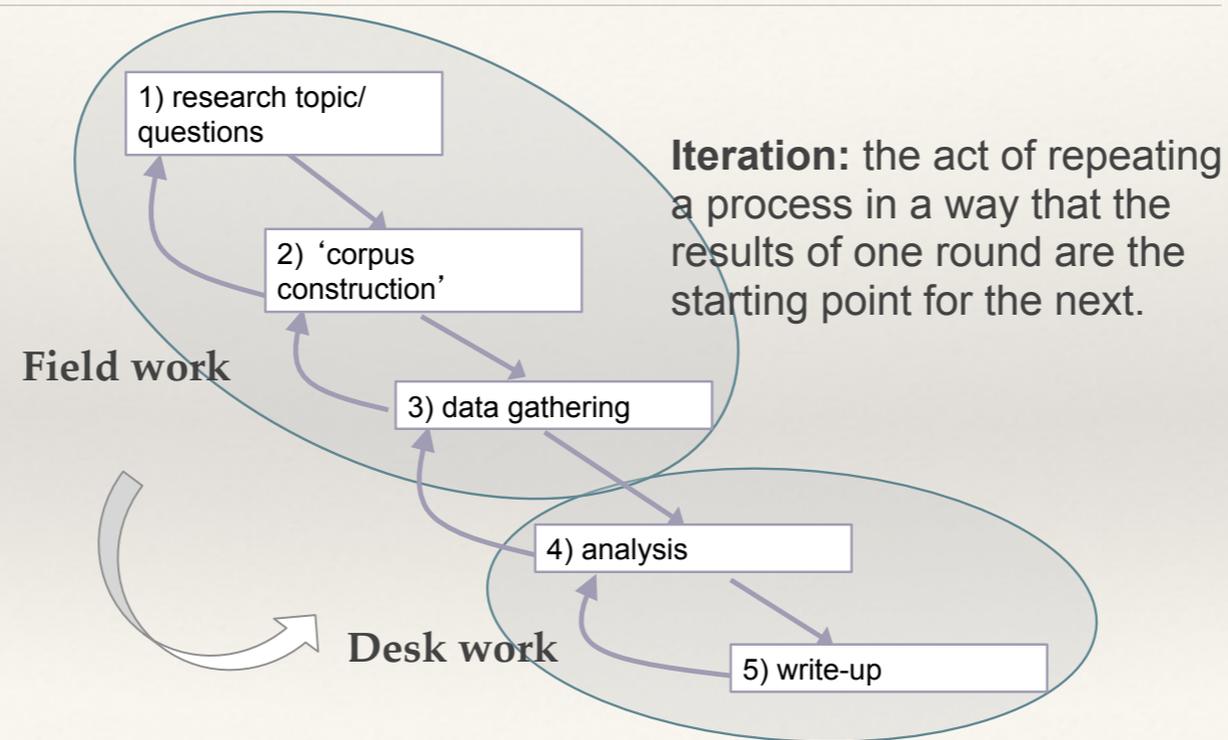


INFO 272. Qualitative Research Methods

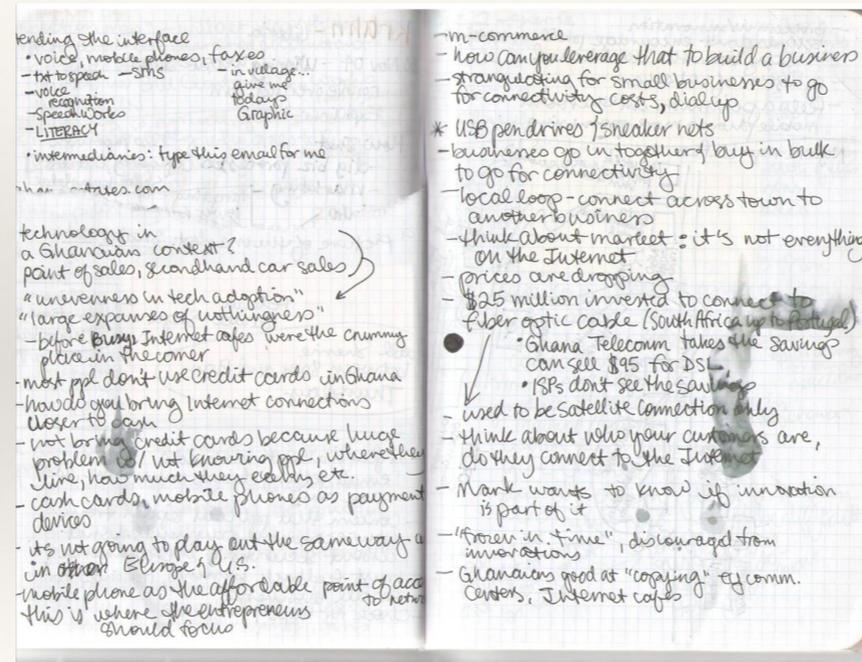
**‘Corpus Construction’ as
an Alternative Logic of
Sampling**

Fall 2014

The Iterative Model



Corpus Construction



Corpus Construction

Defining the sites and subjects of field-based research:

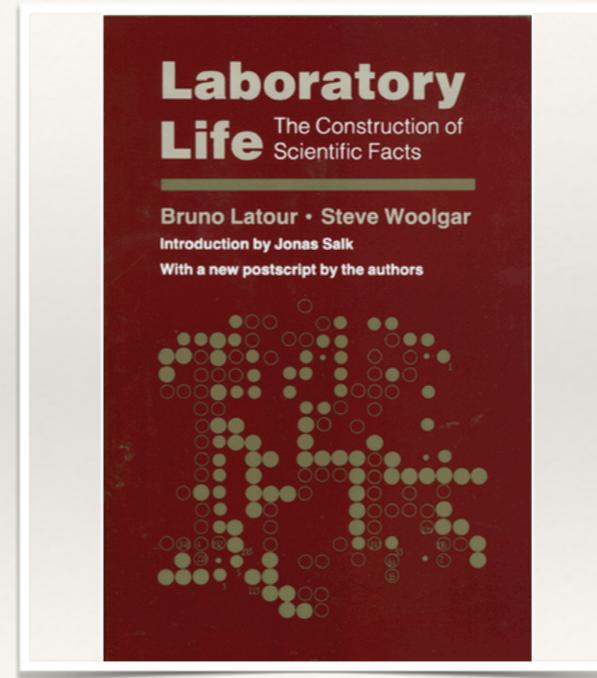
- ❖ Making decisions about your **field site(s)** – how a social phenomenon of interest is mapped out onto spatial terrain
- ❖ **Selecting people** to follow, observe and / or interview
- ❖ **Selecting media / artifacts** from the setting for further analysis

Competence and Innovation

- ❖ Competence (Bauer and Gaskell, Small)
 - ❖ Systematic
 - ❖ Issues of Public Accountability
- ❖ Innovation (Lofland and Lofland)
 - ❖ Challenge Conventional Thinking

Doing *Innovative* Research

- Starting Where You Are (Lofland and Lofland)
 - Commitment and Curiosity
 - Access and 'Getting in'
- Willingness to go where others won't
 - The inconvenient and uncomfortable
 - The illegitimate



Approaches to Sampling Populations

- ❖ Total enumeration (i.e. census)
- ❖ Statistical random sample
- ❖ Snowball sample (*iteration* again)
- ❖ Convenience sample (bad)

Random vs. Systematic

Random Statistical Sampling:

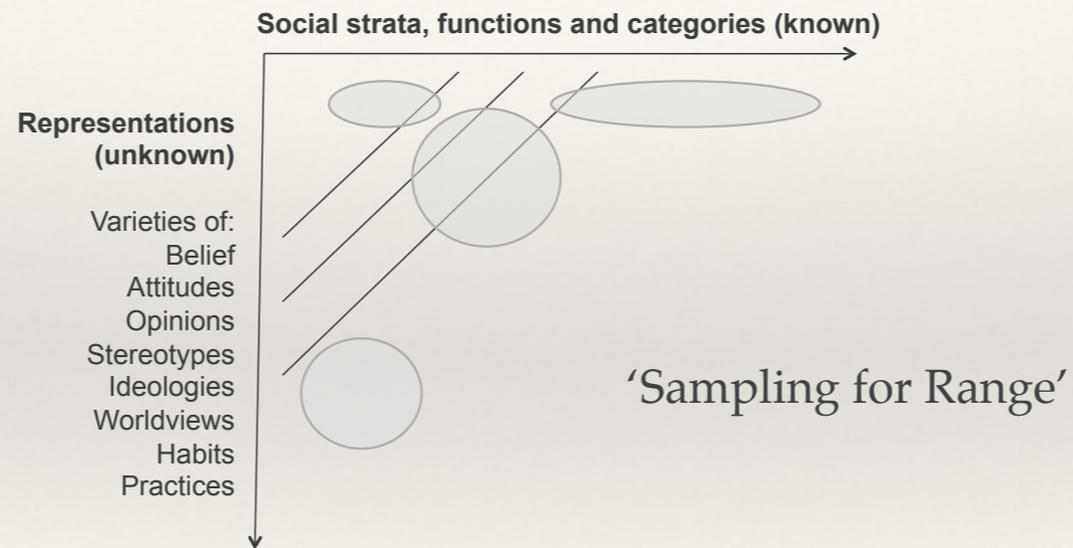
- ❖ Distribution of already known attributes
- ❖ What can be said about the sample generalizes to the whole population
- ❖ Popular misconception – the greater the # in the sample, the more accurate

'Corpus Construction':

- ❖ Typifies unknown attributes
- ❖ Systematic selection to an alternative rationale (*not* a convenience sample)

Diminishing returns with greater and greater numbers (sample size) in statistical research

Systematic Population Selection



[Source: Bauer and Gaskell]

The challenge of mapping unknowable populations

Systematic Population Selection

- Iteration until Saturation
- Don't collect too much data [logistical limits]

Problematic Approaches

Reading 'Case Selection in Field-Based Research'

- ❖ A small-n 'random' sample
 - ❖ response rate
 - ❖ in-network selection (snowball sample)
 - ❖ a biased sample?
- ❖ Seeking out a typical case ("the representative neighborhood")

how to think about moving from the specific to the general (according to this reading):

- (1) extended case method ... look at 'societal significance' rather than 'statistical significance' Unique cases are especially interesting to develop or extend theories
- (2) sequential interviewing (essentially iterative interviews in the mode that Bauer and Gaskell propose)

Example: Typology of Livelihoods



Initial strata (occupation) for a study of mobile phones and livelihoods in Uganda. (my own research 2007-2008)

also had to purposefully select for women many of whom did not fit into these (occupation) categories but still had a livelihood sensibility through their relationships with providers (and mobile phone use was important to this)

Selection of Villages



Village C:
- Rakai district
- farming and trade
- school, health, banking facilities

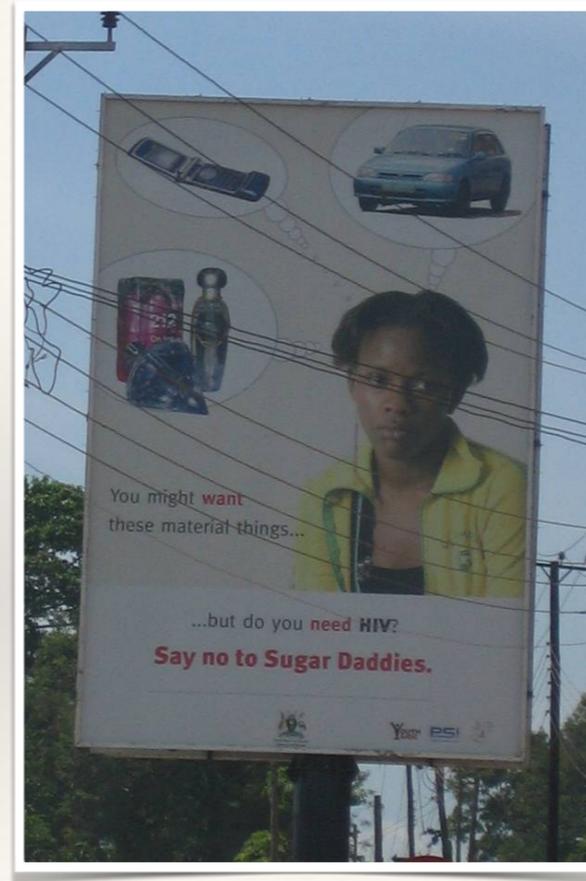


Village A:
- Kamuli district
- fishing village
- very remote



Village B:
- Rakai district
- trading town

Problems of Social Strata in Cross- Cultural Research



Demographic Form

Research Project Demographics		Date:
<input type="checkbox"/>	Name	
	Gender	
	Age	
	Ethnic Group	
	Lives (village)	
	Religion	
	Family	
	Lives (type of home, with whom)	
	Highest Education	
	Profession	
	Notes/reminders	

Selection From Observation

- ❖ Description (in field notes) is a selection from what is observed – we do this implicitly
- ❖ Done well creates new categories and ideas that get around conventional thinking
- ❖ *More on Thursday*

So far we have been talking about 'selecting' or 'sampling' from total populations. But the human individual shouldn't always be the default 'unit of analysis' in a study

Selecting Field Sites

- ❖ Some work is clearly 'sited'
- ❖ Some is not (amorphous social settings) – and therefore *locating* such work will be more involved
- ❖ Sites may be 'open' or 'closed'

In Conclusion - Representativeness?

- ❖ Not with 'small-n'
- ❖ The problem of unknowable populations
- ❖ **Rather than 'representativeness'** we are **seeking** to grasp the **range** and **diversity** in the social phenomenon under study
- ❖ For what purpose? Challenging notions of what is 'natural' or 'universal' about a phenomenon – theory building rather than theory testing/refinement

For Thursday

- ❖ Blomberg on 'Ethnography' (pgs. 965-973 only!)
- ❖ Lofland and Lofland section on logging data
- ❖ Boellstorff - thinking about data collection from observation online (screen shots, etc)
- ❖ Read UC guidelines for protection of human subjects
- ❖ **We will discuss your first activity – a participant-observation exercise**