

PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

about this setting. (This works best with two or more people, but one person may play both roles.) One of you observe only, and the other one of you observe and make notes of what transpires. After two or three days, have the person who simply observed write up what he or she observed. Compare and contrast these two methods. In what ways are they different? Is one set of notes better or worse than the other? If so, in what ways is one set of notes better than the other?

2. Select a setting of observation (a school, bank, park, bar, courtroom, or the like), participate and observe briefly, making notes. Try several different methods of recording observations, such as paper-and-pencil notes, audio recordings, and still photography. Compare and contrast these procedures for making notes, and discuss the relative merits of them.
3. Try keeping a running account, logbook, or journal of your everyday life experiences (or focus specifically on a particular aspect of your existence such as school, family, or job). Describe and discuss how you did this, paying special attention to difficulties you encountered. What did you do to overcome problems? How is this exercise relevant to participant observation?
4. Select an article or book exemplifying participant observation. Review the means used to construct notes and files. Were these methods effective? Why or why not? What, if anything, would you do differently?

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Jorgensen Analyzing and Theorizing

This chapter discusses and illustrates principles and procedures for analyzing and theorizing from the standpoint of the methodology of participant observation. Strategies for coding, filing, disassembling, arranging, organizing, and otherwise making sense of information collected in the field are presented. Different conceptions of theory and theorizing are reviewed and discussed critically.

THE ANALYTIC CYCLE

Analysis is a breaking up, separating, or disassembling of research materials into pieces, parts, elements, or units. With facts broken down into manageable pieces, the researcher sorts and sifts them, searching for types, classes, sequences, processes, patterns, or wholes. The aim of this process is to assemble or reconstruct the data in meaningful or comprehensible fashion. In making sense of the data, you are engaged in theorizing—the construction of meaningful patterns and organizations of facts. A theory is an arrangement of facts in the form of an explanation or interpretation.

From the standpoint of the methodology of participant observation, analyzing and theorizing are part of a larger process of inquiry. The collection of information, particularly in the form of notes and files, is sufficient to initiate the cycle of analysis. During the early stages of inquiry, you generally concentrate on gaining entrée, developing and sustaining field relations, participating, observing, and gathering information while engaging tentatively in analysis and theorizing. Analysis at this point is focused on uncovering specific issues of study and/or refining the research problem. As the issues and problem of study become more clearly defined, data collection becomes the primary activity. As you amass materials and analyze them, the collection of additional information generally becomes less important, giving way to a growing need to concentrate on the analysis of these materials.

CODING AND FILING

The analysis of data collected in the field is greatly facilitated by having this information in the form of notes that may be arranged and rearranged, coded, and collected in files. Notes should be reviewed on a regular basis, identified and labeled whenever possible as being related in particular ways to the emergent issues of study. Your reasons for collecting the information and making notes provide a basis for identifying and labeling these materials as a member of some class, type, or set, as part of or related to a sequence, process, or pattern. In other words, you need to specify how a fact or set of facts is related to the issues you are studying. Facts do not speak for themselves! They do not make sense except by reference to some intellectual context or framework you employ to render them sensible and meaningful. The range of possible meanings ultimately is limited; however, there usually are several possible readings of the data. You may need to establish the grounds for deciding among different possible interpretations of the data. In spite of tremendous differences among research topics, problems, frames of reference, and so on, it is possible to raise a set of questions useful for coding and labeling your field notes.

One analytic strategy is to identify and label a phenomenon in terms of its basic components. In doing this, you may be able to identify what parts are more and less essential to the phenomenon. Can you, for instance, identify certain features, pieces, components, or elements making up a phenomenon. Is it possible to identify and label constituent elements? Are some of these parts more or less important or essential? If you remove a particular element (perhaps only imaginatively) of some phenomenon, does it change or remain the same? If it changes, what does this involve? For instance, take a belief or ideology (such as "women are superior to men," "delinquency results from bad homes," "Americans are superior to other people") and see if you can identify its basic components by references to some body of data (what some collection of people say and do). Damrell (1977) extensively employs the analytic strategy of examining phenomena for their essential features in a participant observational study of seeking spiritual meaning through Hindu (Vedanta) religion.

Looking for patterns and relationships among facts is another analytic strategy. Put simply, do the facts you are analyzing constitute or form some discernible pattern? What, if any, are the connections or relationships among particular pieces of information? It frequently is

useful to ask whether or not the matter in question is part of some larger sequence of events or process, and where it does or does not fit into this larger scheme.

Spradley (1970), for instance, found that tramps (urban alcoholics) experience getting put in jail (called making the bucket) as a ritual, a sequence composed of distinctive stages. Making the bucket involves (1) the street (pinch); (2) call box (shake down by cops); (3) paddy wagon (pick up); (4) elevator (work over by cops); (5) booking desk (shake down); (6) padded drunk tank (throw in); (7) x-ray, mug, and print room (work over); (8) cement drunk tank (stall); (9) court docket (call name); (10) courtroom (give time); (11) holding tank (make a lockup); (12) delousing tank (sit bare ass); (13-a) trusty tank (bust); (13-b) time tank (lock up); and (14) booking desk (make a kickout).

Comparing and contrasting is another valuable analytic strategy. Is the fact in question the same as or similar to other phenomena? Is it different from other facts? Identifying similarities and differences among phenomena generally enables you to arrange facts into classes, types, or sets. On this basis, you will be able to apply an emergent typology to analyze further additional phenomena. It also is useful to inquire whether or not the types you have identified are related to other forms. In other words, are there linkages or relationships among or between classes of facts?

Manning (1980), for example, found two contrasting types of organizational control of drug investigations among police assigned to narcotics. An *organizational*-centered type of control may be distinguished from an *investigator*-centered type of control. Each of these forms of controlling drug investigations is identified by a set of contrasting characteristics, such as whether or not a written record is required, whether or not cases are officially opened or closed, whether or not it is possible to calculate clearance rates, the use of informants, and whose approval or supervision is required.

It is helpful when engaging in analysis to ask different questions and to phrase these questions in different ways. For instance, ask a question in a positive fashion and then turn it around and ask it negatively. Spradley might have asked, for instance, how many ways are there of making a bucket? Or he might have questioned: Which of these materials I have been examining are not part of or related to making a bucket? It sometimes is useful, furthermore, to try a different order of question, or a different logic. To illustrate, Manning might have asked: How are drug investigations accomplished organizationally? What are

the steps of a drug investigation? Or perhaps, In what ways do narcotics investigations differ from one another?

Initial efforts to code and label notes commonly involve a single word or phrase used to mark pieces of field data. As your problem of study is refined and focused, a general schema for coding frequently emerges, and you become more proficient at its use. The codes or key words used, in other words, will become more precisely defined, you will begin to develop connections among them, and you will develop greater facility in applying the labels to research materials. Efforts to code field notes eventually will result in more lengthy discussions of relevant issues as you review and work with these materials.

SORTING, SIFTING, CONSTRUCTING, AND RECONSTRUCTING

Efforts to code data will lead to sorting, sifting, organizing, and reorganizing these materials, usually into larger units and components. Sometimes this involves flashes of insight about how things fit together, while at other times it depends on less dramatic hunches, or simply hard work. Is a pattern or type discernible? Is some sequence or process apparent? Can you ascertain connections or relationships among concepts? Is some sequence or process apparent? Can you ascertain connections or relationships among concepts?

As different ways of arranging materials are explored, you may find it useful to consult or revisit existing literature and theories related to your problem. Hayano (1982), for instance, was thoroughly immersed in the world of professional gamblers and deeply involved in observing and describing the insiders' world of meaning and experience when he began comparing his data with existing literature and theorizing. In working with data on occultists, I (1979) found it necessary to revisit literature as different issues emerged from analysis. While it is important to consult existing literature, you should not be constrained by what other people have done. Use your imagination! The analysis of data leading to discovery requires creativity.

The analysis of qualitative data is dialectical: Data are disassembled into elements and components; these materials are examined for patterns and relationships, sometimes in connection to ideas derived from literature, existing theories, or hunches that have emerged during fieldwork or perhaps simply commonsense suspicions. With an idea in

hand, the data are reassembled, providing an interpretation or explanation of a question or particular problem; this synthesis is then evaluated and critically examined; it may be accepted or rejected entirely or with modifications; and, not uncommonly, this process then is repeated to test further the emergent theoretical conception, expand its generality, or otherwise examine its usefulness.

Early in fieldwork on occultism, I (see Jorgensen, 1979, 1982, 1984) identified three distinctive networks of local occult practitioners and groups through an analysis of field data. Much later, in-depth interviews were conducted with tarot card readers. In analyzing the interview data, I applied the previous concept of segments of occultists in the local community. I reasoned that if this concept were correct, it would be possible to locate tarot card readers in this context. It was possible to locate tarot card readers in this scheme, but there were certain exceptions, leading me to question certain aspects of the conceptual framework. It consequently was necessary to rethink this framework and modify it based on the interview data. Hence, an emergent analytic scheme (the ideological orientations of three segments of what occultists called the "esoteric community") was used (and tested) by in-depth interview data. In turn, the interview data required that the original analytic frame be modified, clarifying the concept of the community, networks, and ideology, and how these components were connected in the everyday life existence of occultists.

THEORY AND THEORIZING

As you sort, sift, arrange, and rearrange the data and analytic labels and comments about them, it will be increasingly necessary to become more directly and explicitly involved in theory and theorizing. The methodology of participant observation involves several different forms of theory and theorizing. These forms include analytic induction, sensitizing concepts, grounded theory, existential theory, and hermeneutic (or interpretative) theory.

Analytic Induction

Znaniecki (1934, 1952, 1965) advanced a very influential conception of theory as constructed through a process of "analytic induction." He