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RESEARCH NOTES

Collecting information in the field:

The field worker must use a system that will help the memory to retain these images. It is important that the field researchers record what they have seen before engaging in other activities.

Whatever has been observed in field can be recorded using many ways like: tape recorder, video cameras, still cameras or by taking notes, are all excellent tools.

Cameras can be used to record field situation and thus video cameras can offer excellent means of capturing for both sound and screen in field setting. Still cameras can be used to set down views on the field. Photographs may also help the researcher to remember people and how things looked on a specific day.

Note taking is considered as the backbone of collecting field data. It can be done in several ways. The key of taking notes will lie with the role of researcher and the field. If researcher is a participant in a field, it is much more difficult to take notes because it will not be part of his participating role.

In most cases, detailed notes are required to be taken after leaving the field. In the field, notes are mostly taken in the form casual jotting/references whose primary purpose would be to help researchers later on while making detailed notes afterwards.

Thus casual jotting/references should be concentrated mostly on details which would spark the memory later while making notes later.

The field observation includes several key points, some of them are mentioned below:

- 1) The crew members or the list of people present at the field.
- 2) Some unusual details which might be present at the site location.
- 3) Verbatim comments that seem critical for describing the situation observed.
- 4) Incongruent Aspects of the scene: In this case, researchers may note down about their doubts over the situation observed. The doubts could be like: Why did something occur? What was X trying to accomplish by doing what he or she did? What Y meant by describing that? Why wasn't Z in the field today?

These points would help researchers to prepare a more detailed and complete report about the overall situation of the field. This would also help in highlighting some key points with significant moments with reference to the scenario observed.

After leaving the field: The field researchers mostly make detailed notes after returning home or next morning. The general rule is that while preparing notes, the time taken to make a complete note should be equivalent to the time spent on field itself. However this might vary depending on what had been occurring on field before.

Although writing notes is time consuming but without them, researcher's ability to write a final report with detailed description might be jeopardized.

It is good to take down notes separately under separate headings. It is useful to have multiple copies of the notes so that researched material could be filled under different heading.

The information recorded in field is to be compiled in computer as personal data, which is to be used in final reporting by transferring information from the note file to report file.

Types of note materials:

Lofland (1971) suggested five type of materials that should be included in notes:

- 1) **Running descriptions:** As lofland describes these, they include “events, people, things, heard and overheard, Conversations among people, conversations with people “. Every time a new person enters the scene or a different scene is encountered, new notes should be taken. The observer should make distinctions in the notes themselves as to how exact they are, whether they are verbatim quotation from conversation.
- 2) **Recalled material that had been forgotten:** As one moves along a field project, one day’s observation may help to recall earlier incidents. This recalled material should be put into each day’s notes, but clearly labelled as recalls of earlier material.
- 3) **Ideas that interpret the meaning of a situation:** Whenever a researcher visits the field, they observe and note it. Again, after a week they note about other situation. So early interpretation may vary from those which were made after a week of observation. So, it is necessary to put these into the notes, their ideas of what is happening in the field. Their analytical ideas to be put into the notes altogether
- 4) **Personal impression and feelings:** These impressions are the subjective reactions of the observer. They may be an emotional state or personal reaction to a situation
- 5) **Notes for additional information:** The observer may make special notes as a reminder to take an extra look at something or to speak to someone about something etc.

Organizing the field notes: The notes are used to develop themes to build analytic arguments to make points. If the notes are rich and informed, they will help to form a better final result. Their order and organization will facilitate putting them into final result.

A reading of the notes will inevitably suggest taking in research, so by finding the gap researcher can use it to visit the field again so that gap of observation is fulfilled.

Analyzing the results:

Once all the data are gathered and organized, they must be analyzed. In a field study where notes are the depository of the data, the plan to create meaning out of the material must be carefully structured. As the field research is so varied, only general device can be offered here. The task of analysis is to bring order out of the chaos of their notes, to pick out the central themes of his study and to carry them across to their written work. It is to be considered that field work is at its most ambitious, theory building.