DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH METHODS

Week 4, Lesson 4: Conducting case studies and maintaining field diaries

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What we will cover in today's lecture

1. What is case study method and when to use it?
2. Different types of case study research designs.
3. Stages of doing case study research.
4. What are field diaries? How to maintain field diaries?
5. Diaries as a research method.

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Let us look at some examples of case studies based on events, situations, programmes and activities…

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Example of Case study: Events

- Asmussen, K. J., & Creswell, J. W. (1995). Campus response to a student gunman. Journal of Higher Education, 66(5), 575–591

A detailed description of the gunman incident; a chronology of the first 2 weeks of events following the incident; and details about the city, the campus, and the building in which the incident occurred. Findings resulting from data collection through multiple sources of information, such as interviews, observations, documents, and audiovisual materials, are presented. From the data analysis, denial, fear, safety, retriggering, and campus planning emerge as prominent concerns. These themes are combined into two overarching perspectives, an organizational and a psychological or social-psychological response, providing “layers” of analysis in the study and broader interpretations of the meaning of the case.

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Example of Case study: Situations

- Hughes, M. (1998). Turning points in the lives of young inner-city men forgoing destructive criminal behaviors: A qualitative study. Social Work Research, 22(3), 143–151.

In-depth interviews with the men were used to examine their life courses from the time of their earliest memories. Personal and environmental transitions that contributed to their decisions to change were uncovered. Factors affecting their transition experiences included maturation, respect and concern for children, fear of physical harm or incarceration, contemplation time, and support and modeling by others. Implications for social service providers, policymakers, and youth program staff are discussed.

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Example of Case study: Programs

- D'Emidio-Caston, M., & Brown, J. H. (1998). The other side of the story: Student narratives on the California Drug, Alcohol, and Tobacco Education programs. Evaluation Review, 22(1), 95–117.

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The constant comparative method was used to analyze 40 focus group interviews of at-risk and thriving groups conducted in 11 high, middle, and elementary school districts. Results suggest that students use "story" to make sense of prevention education and distinguish use from abuse. High school students believe that hearing only one side of the substance use/abuse story and strict expulsion policies alienate students most in need of help. Implications for the use of story as an assessment tool are discussed, as are implications for substance use prevention policy.

Example of Case study: Activities

- Horn, E., Lieber, J., Li, S., Sandall, S., & Schwartz, I. (2000). Supporting young children's IEP goals in inclusive settings through embedded learning opportunities. Topics in Early Childhood Education, 20(4), 208–224.

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The studies were conducted in three separate inclusive early childhood education programs located in three different states on four children with disabilities and their classroom teachers. The examination of the ELO procedure included assessment of teachers' planning and implementation, the impact on child performance of specific learning objectives, and the teachers' perceptions of the ELO strategy. Data collection was done through a variety of collection techniques, including direct observation using strict protocols and interviews of teachers. The results revealed that all teachers demonstrated increases in use of instructional behaviors toward targeted objectives, and the children showed concomitant increases in performance of targeted objectives.

What is a case study?

1. An empirical investigation of a contemporary phenomenon within its natural context using multiple sources of evidence.
2. A catchall category for research that is not a survey, an observational study, or an experiment and is not statistical in nature.
3. Often used as a form of investigation aimed at informing development policy and public action. Helps in shaping projects sensitive to particular historical, political, and cultural contexts.

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Philosophical underpinnings

- Case study research is effective when it is rooted in theory- that is, an idea about why things happen as they do.
- Approach to case study is based on a constructivist paradigm.
- Constructivist paradigm recognizes the importance of the subjective human creation of meaning, but doesn't reject some notion of objectivity.
- Constructivism allows close collaboration between the researcher and the participant, while enabling participants to tell their stories.

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Some characteristics of Case Studies

1. Case studies ask the questions ‘How?’ and ‘Why?’ about a contemporary set of events over which the investigator has little or no control.
2. Case studies try to cover contextual conditions because they are relevant to the phenomenon under study.
3. The phenomenon being researched is studied in its natural context, bounded by space and time.
4. Case studies are richly descriptive, because it is grounded in deep and varied sources of information.
5. Creates opportunities for the researcher to explore additional questions by the act of investigating a topic in detail.

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When to use a case study approach? An instance

- A study is conducted of the decision making of nursing students that will determine the types of decisions made by nursing students and the factors that influenced the decision making. The case would be the decision making of nursing students, and since the case cannot be considered without the context, which would be The school of Nursing, and more specifically the clinical and classroom settings.

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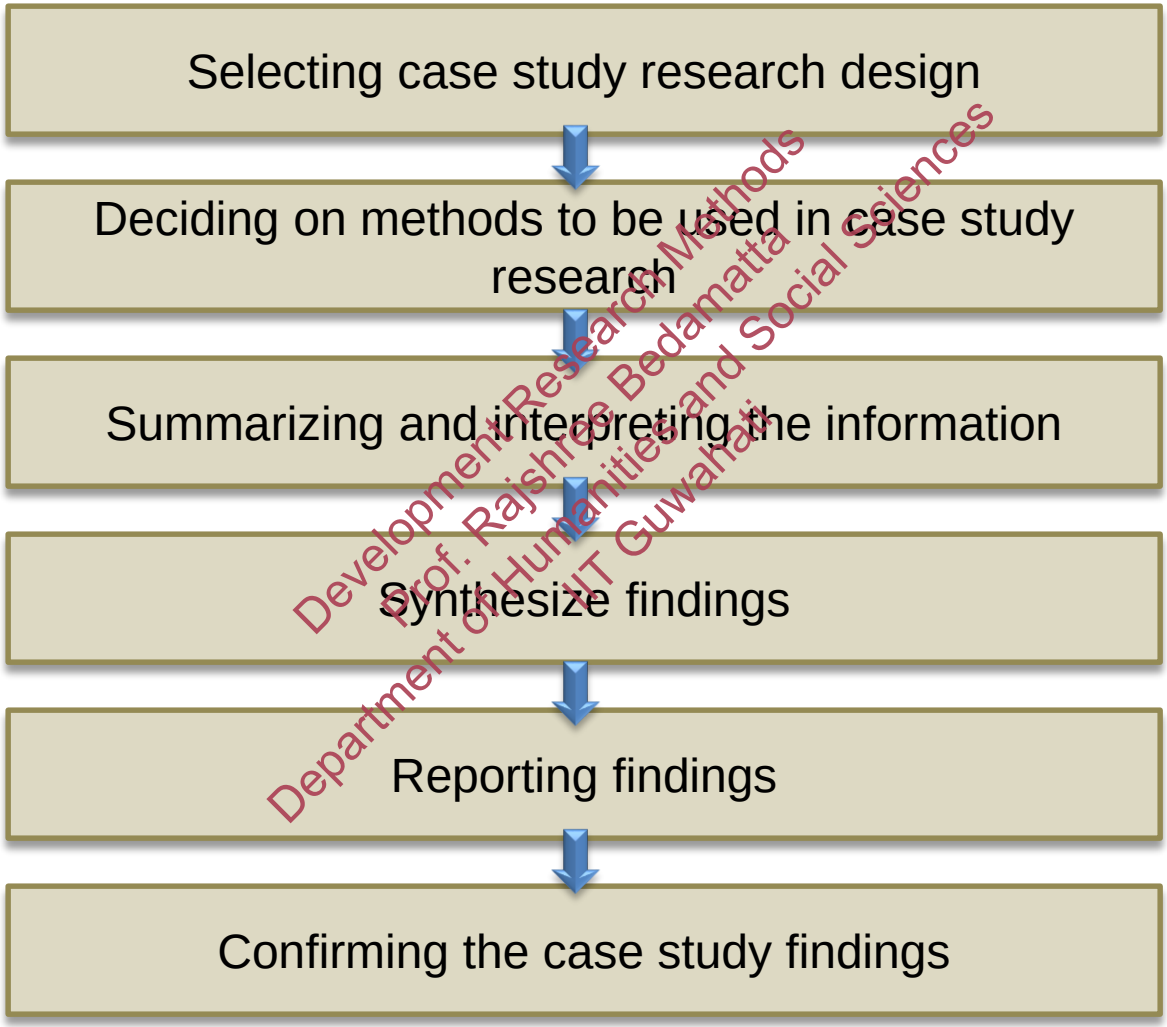
Different kinds and strategies of case study

1. Individual case study
2. Set of individual case studies
3. Community studies
4. Social group studies
5. Studies of organizations and institutions
6. Studies of processes, events, roles and relationships

- **Single case strategies**
- **Multiple case strategies**

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Stages of case study research



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Error correction of slide 13

Stunting: Height for age (Moderate and severe - below minus two standard deviations from median height for age of reference population.)

Wasting: Weight for height (Moderate and severe - below minus two standard deviations from median weight for height of reference population.)

Underweight: Weight for age (Moderate and severe - below minus two standard deviations from median weight for age of reference population; severe - below minus three standard deviations from median weight for age of reference population.)

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Procedures commonly used in case studies

Procedure	
Intent, appropriate design, and how intent relates to research problem are defined.	The problem focuses on developing an in depth understanding of a “case” or bounded system.
The plan to receive approval and gain access to study sites and participants is defined.	Approval from institutional review board is obtained. A research site is located using purposeful sampling procedures.
Data are collected emphasizing time in the field, multiple sources of information, and collaboration.	Extensive information is gathered using multiple forms of data collection (observations, interviews, documents), including audiovisual materials and other relevant sources.
Data are analyzed and interpreted relative to the design.	Data are reviewed to develop an overall understanding.
Research report suitable for dissemination is prepared.	Reporting focuses on describing the case with description, analysis, and interpretation addressed differently or equally.

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Case study characteristics and data collection questions

Characteristic	Data collection questions
A bound “case,” such as a process, activity, event, program, or multiple individuals, is investigated.	What is studied? (Define the case.)
A gatekeeper provides access to information and assistance in gaining confidence of participants.	What are any concerns related to access and rapport? (Establish access and rapport.)
A “case” or “cases,” an “atypical” case, or a “maximum variation” or “extreme” case is defined.	What sites or individuals are going to be studied? (Sample with purpose.)
A collection of forms, such as documents and records, interviews, observations, or physical artifacts, is compiled.	What type (s) of information will be collected? (Delimit data.)
A variety of approaches (e.g., field notes, interviews, and observations) are used to gather data.	How is information compiled? (Record information.)
Concerns may emerge related to intensive data gathering.	Is data collection difficult? (Address field issues.)
A large amount of data (e.g., field notes, transcriptions, computer databases) is typically collected.	How is information stored? (Store data for analysis.)

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Types of case study research design

Types	Uses	Examples
Intrinsic case study	To know more about a particular individual, group, event, or organization.	Teacher exploring extracurricular activities of a poorly performing student.
Instrumental case study	Better understand a theoretical question or problem.	To know how college students acquire technology knowledge.
Collective case study	Address an issue in question while adding to the literature base that helps us better conceptualize a theory.	Studies designed to explore one of the seven intelligence forms contained in Gardner's theory of multiple intelligence.
Exploratory case study	seek to define research questions of a subsequent study	Exploratory study of a company's ethical climate to determine how business practices normally occur.
Explanatory case study	seek to establish cause-and-effect relationships.	Identify students' home environments that affect their classroom performance.
Descriptive case study	Attempt to present a complete description of a phenomenon within its context.	Gain a thorough description of hospital's emergency room procedures when admitting incoming patients.

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Summarizing and interpreting the information- Guidelines

Ongoing refinement of the study's fundamental research questions in light of data obtained early in the investigation

- E.g. A teacher interested in factors that contribute to student attrition

Constant focus on the research questions being investigated

- E.g. A nurse exploring his hospital's employment practices may generate a lot of transcribed interview data, and field notes

Collection and interpretation of potentially meaningful data

- E.g. A technology specialist seeking insights into her company's software adoption policies

Develop a method for labeling, storing, and gaining access to information acquired during the research effort

- E.g. Creation of a sound information management system

Use of all available resources that can assist in the collection and interpretation of information

- E.g. Computer software programs, such as NUDIST and The Ethnograph

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How to synthesize findings

- What information from different sources goes together?
- Within a source, what information can be grouped?
- What arguments contribute to grouping information together?
- What entities bounded by space and time are shared?
- How do various sources of information affect findings?
- What information links various findings together?
- What previous work provides a basis for analysis?
- What questions are being answered?
- What generalizations can be made?

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Reporting findings-1

1. Strategies.

- Thematic Analysis, Categorical Analysis, Narrative Analysis
  - Thematic analysis
  - Tentative answers are categorized into themes.
  - Themes supported by available information are retained and reported as findings.

2. Determination of information-supported themes.

- Addressing research questions is a critical endeavor.

3. Identifying themes accurately and comprehensively.

- Must reflect the purpose of the research.
- Respond to the questions under investigation.
- Must evolve from a saturation of the collected information.
- Represent separate and distinct categories of findings.
- Specific and explanatory as is allowed by the data.

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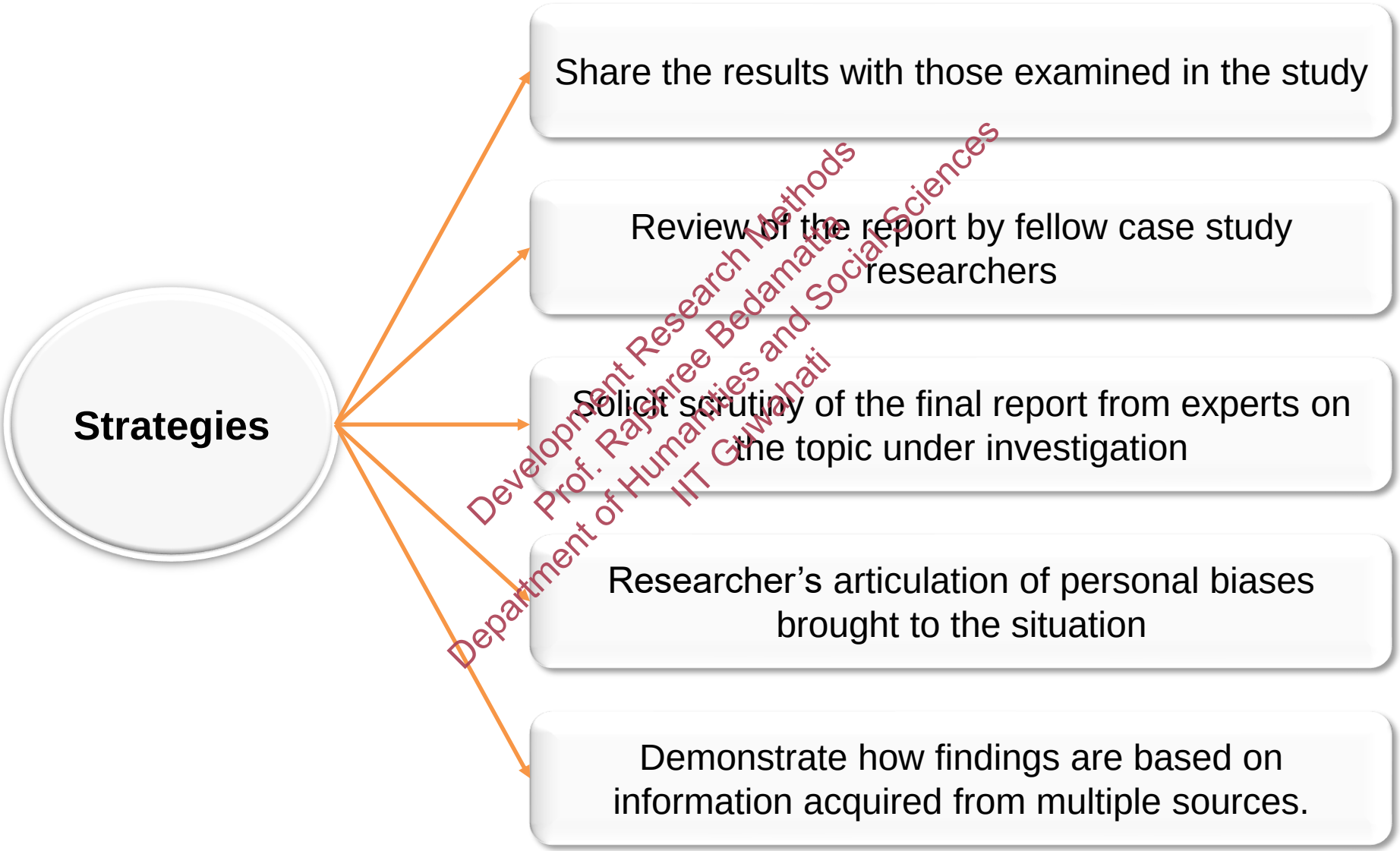
Reporting findings-2

4. Components commonly found in most reports

- Should articulate the event, situation, program, or activity under investigation.
- Should reflect the literature related to the topic under investigation.
- Information related to data collection strategies should be included.
- Should be richly descriptive and include key participants' statements.
- Include strategies used to interpret, report, and confirm the case study's findings.

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Confirming case study findings



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An example of a summary form

- Title of project
- Time period of research
- Date of ethics approval
- Identification of researchers
- Literature used to provide background and justification for research
- Description of research hypotheses
- Sample or population studied
- Explanation of all information collection procedures
- Findings
- Interpretation of findings
- Conclusions and recommendations based on findings

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Maintaining Field Diaries: As Field Notes and as a Research Method

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What is a field diary?

- 'External memory': recording daily observations in the field.
- Include both 'data' and 'pieces of reflection, interpretation and analysis'.
- Diaries invite 'miscellaneous entries'.
- As a researcher's diary (field notes):
  - documents the development of perceptions and insights across various stages of the research.
  - enable ongoing analysis throughout data collection.
- As a research method:
  - one of a portfolio of methods in in-depth case study research.
  - used in ethnographic fieldwork, feminist research, sociologists of health and in AIDS research.

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Suggestions for writing research diaries

1. Write regularly.
2. Experiencing a difficult period before diary writing becomes personally satisfying is normal.
3. Collaboration does not take away from the private nature for a diary.
4. Structure and space can make orientation and data analysis easier.
5. Include information for understanding the situation and for reconstructing it later.
6. There is a challenge of coping with fuzzy borderline between description and interpretation.
7. Do a provisional analysis of the diary entries.

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Points to include in field notes (researcher's diary)

- Data obtained by observation, interviews and informal conversations;
- Additional 'found items', such as photographs, letters and so on
- Contextual information about the ways these data were collected;
- Reflections on research methods;
- Ideas and plans for subsequent research steps.

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Some components of Field Notes

Memos

- Produced when trying to recall experiences over specific periods of time (E.g. During a classroom lesson, a court session, etc.).
- Written primarily to describe and document events after they have taken place.
- Descriptive sequences and interpretative sequences.

Theoretical notes

- Put forward explanations relevant to the research question being investigated.
- Useful for making connections between various accounts and other bits of information.

Methodological notes

- Contain the researcher's observations and reflections on research strategy, methods and activities.
- Help to develop the quality of the research project.

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Diaries as a Research Method

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Diary as a research method

1. Holds importance alongside a range of other research methods, particularly as part of in-depth case studies.
2. Means of accessing information which can not be accessed through conventional methods.
3. Used as one of a portfolio of methods in the context of in-depth case study research.
4. A useful means of deepening cultural insight into the places of study.
5. Sometimes the diaries are open and unstructured, sometimes they are characterized by tightly defined activities.
6. Usually combined with preliminary interviews or focus groups to introduce the idea of the diary.

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Implications for research design

- Research diaries are useful where a person or a group is trying to make sense of experience.
- Diaries are subjected to procedures of qualitative analysis as part of a comprehensive process of data analysis.
- Diaries can be particularly useful for making detours.
- In quantitative research, diaries may be employed as log books.
- Helps the researcher not only to document the action, but to capture interpretations at points along the way.

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Advantages and drawbacks of research diaries

Advantages	Disadvantages
1. An interactive method. The diary-keeper has time to reflect on what she/he wishes to record.	1. Time-consuming and laborious.
2. Empowering or therapeutic for the writers.	2. Undermines the potential for a 'representative' sample of diary-keepers.
3. Build relationships of trust between researcher and researched.	3. The diary-keeper may deploy considerable self-censorship.
4. Provide the researcher with a record of daily activity and reflection.	4. May not keep a regular or daily record.
5. Can enhance the researcher's depth of cultural, political and social understanding.	5. The contents of solicited diaries can be subjective and idiosyncratic.

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Application of research diaries in development research

Bodily health practices and attitudes

- The use of sexual diaries as a research tool alongside interviews now in AIDS research.
- More reliable and valid information than interviews.

Aftermath of war, conflict and violence

- Writing diaries as a therapeutic process.
- A better space for raising traumatic personal issues than a focus group, and provided valuable research material.

Marginalized social groups

- A means of building a relationship with a marginalized and stigmatized social group.
- Raises important issues that the research does not plan to address.

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Leisure period durations in minutes per day by employment and child status

	Weekdays		Weekends	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Employed full time				
Young children	142	124	195	176
Older children	186	151	283	190
No children	202	166	314	246
Employed part time				
Young children		140		138
Older children		139		185
No children		139		192
Other				
Young children	249	132	292	143
Older children	322	137	318	176
No children	265	195	336	258

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Source: Jonathan Gersbuny and Oriel Sullivan (1998), “The Sociological Uses of Time-use Diary Analysis”, European Sociological Review.

Please fill out during YOUR Diary Day

#	Start Time	Activity (Please don't record travel)	End Time
1	3:00am		
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			

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Please turn to the next pages for more help and fill in each Activity Page and "How I Got Here" page for each line you filled in on this page.

An example of a daily food diary

Daily Food Diary

By Vertex42.com

https://www.vertex42.com/ExcelTemplates/food-diary-template.html

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References used for this lecture

- Vandana Desai and Robert B. Potter, “Doing Development Research”, 2006, Sage Publications.
- Dawson R. Hancock and Bob Algozzine “Doing Case Study Research A practical Guide for Beginning Researchers”, 2006, Teachers College Press, Columbia University.
- Sophie Laws, Caroline Harper and Rachel Marcus, “Research for Development A Practical Guide”, 2003, VISTAAR Publications.
- Bridget Somekh and Cathy Lewin, “Research Methods in the Social Sciences”, 2005, Sage Publications.

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For a comprehensive literature on the topics covered in this lecture it is also suggested that students go through the reference list of the above cited papers.