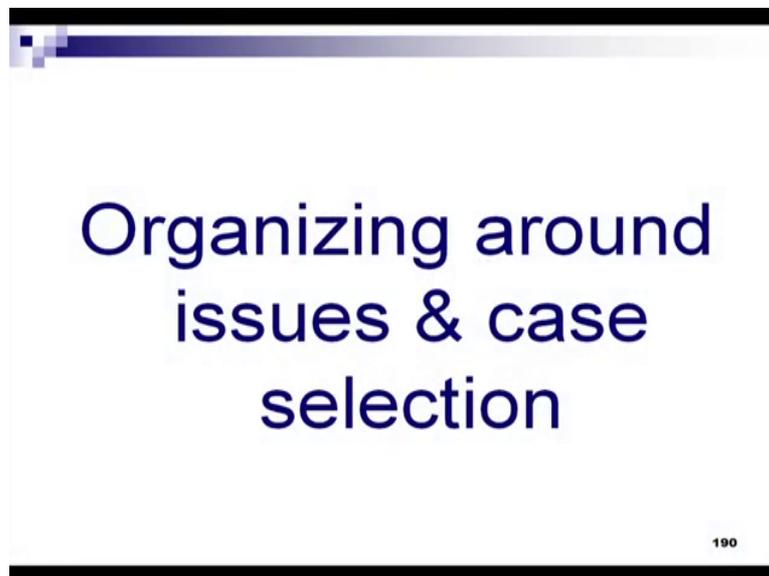


Qualitative Research Methods
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Lecture 22
Case Studies (Contd.)

Welcome back to NOC course on qualitative research methods, my name is Aradhna Malik and I am helping you with this course and in the previous lecture we had started the discussion on case studies as a strategy of inquiry into qualitative research methods. In this lecture we are going to continue with the discussion that we started on, in the last lecture so let's move on.

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We were talking about what case studies were, in this lecture we will discuss the organization of a case study and case selection and will wind up with some ethical concerns about case studies, okay so the conceptual structure of the case.

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Conceptual structure of the case

(Stake, 2000)

- A typical case study is organized around a number of research questions or issues which center around a common theme. It is a holistic, wholesome unit within itself with its own complexities in terms of different influences, subsections, etc.

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A typical case study is organized around the number of research questions or issues with centre around a common theme. It is a holistic, wholesome unit within itself with its own complexities in terms of different influences, subsections etc. So there is an issue that is not highlighted, there is an issue that is implicitly brought out through the description of the situation that we are dealing with.

But there is a central theme or a set of themes that emerged out of this case study, there is a central issue along with its own complexities, along with us own chaos that is the way it appeared, as close to the way it appears in real life. And we presented in a manner that is as close to a real life representation of that issue as possible.

So it's wholesome unit, it is a holistic, wholesome unit within itself with its own complexities in terms of different influences, subsections, impacts, actors, participants, you know stakeholder, tangential, issues, etc., and this whole complexity focused around the central theme forms the case study. So the case study is primarily a description of or a very, very in depth inquiry into a particular issue that is bothering us that we would like to bring out and that we would like to resolve through in and through discussion.

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Choice of issues (Stake, 2000)

- The choice of issues depends upon the questions the researcher wants answers to
- “To treat the case as an exemplar, researchers ask, Which issues bring out our initial concerns, the dominant theme? To maximize understanding of the case, they ask, Which issues seek our compelling uniqueness? For an evaluation study, they ask, Which issues reveal merit & shortcoming? But in general, they ask, Which issues facilitate the planning & activities of inquiry, including inspiring & rehabilitating the researcher?”
- If the study is to be representational or instrumental, former sampling is required to choose a case that represents maximum characteristics of the population.

The choice of issues depends on the questions the researcher wants answers to, “to treat the case as an exemplar, researchers ask, which issues bring out our initial concerns, so which of these issues I really related to our initial concerns the dominant theme? To maximize understanding of the case, they will ask which issues seek our compelling uniqueness. So to find out you know what is unique about the case or to exemplify something in the case, we say okay.

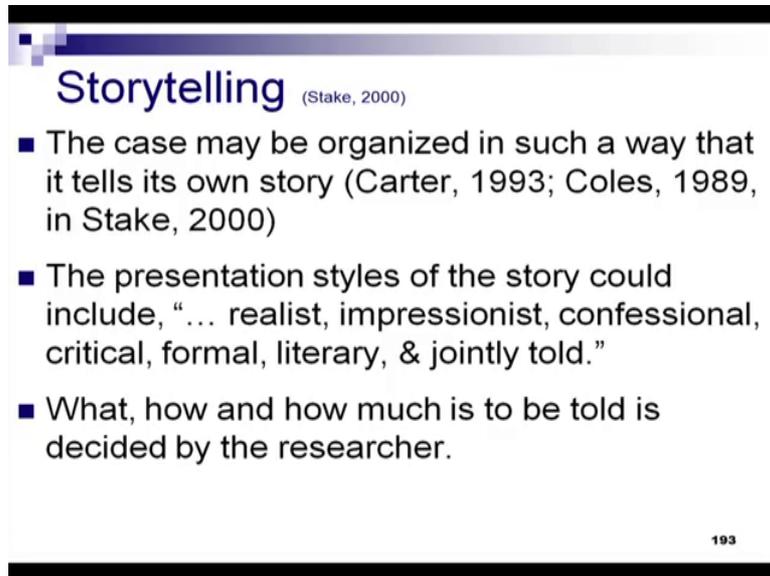
What is it that you are dealing with? What are the different issues that we are dealing with? Then what is the dominant theme here? To maximize understanding of the case is which issues seek our compelling uniqueness? For an evaluation study, they ask, which issues reveal merit and shortcoming? you just to find out then but in general we ask which issues facilitate the planning and activities of inquiry including inspiring and rehabilitating the researcher?

So what is it that you want to deal with, what is it that you want to bring out, what is it that you want to inquire into, what is it that we are trying to you to highlight, what is it that we want resolved. If the case study is to be representational or instrumental, former sampling is required to choose a case that represents maximum characteristics of the population.

So if it is representational, if its instrumental, if it is going to highlight the characteristics of a population, then we need to pick the case that really incorporates or that represents as many of the characteristics of the general population, as possible. So a former sampling is required, so various ways in which we pick cases. The main question is what is that we want to talk

about? What should our story reveal? What should our story bring to the fore? What should our story focus on? That focus, the determination of that focus is absolutely essential here.

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Storytelling (Stake, 2000)

- The case may be organized in such a way that it tells its own story (Carter, 1993; Coles, 1989, in Stake, 2000)
- The presentation styles of the story could include, "... realist, impressionist, confessional, critical, formal, literary, & jointly told."
- What, how and how much is to be told is decided by the researcher.

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Storytelling, the case may be organized in such a way that it tells its own story. So bring out the theme and then we narrate the incidents, we build a story in such a way we build the narration, in such a way that the case itself leads the reader to the central theme without the author having explicitly to mention it. The presentation styles of story "could be realist, could be impressionist, could be critical, formal, literary and jointly told." So different ways in which we can tell the story.

Then what, how and how much is to be told is decided by the researcher, depending on the issue that is being explored and what the researcher wants done, by the case studies, so if you are writing a case study for discussion in a management program, in a post graduate management programs, then maybe a different kind of input would be required.

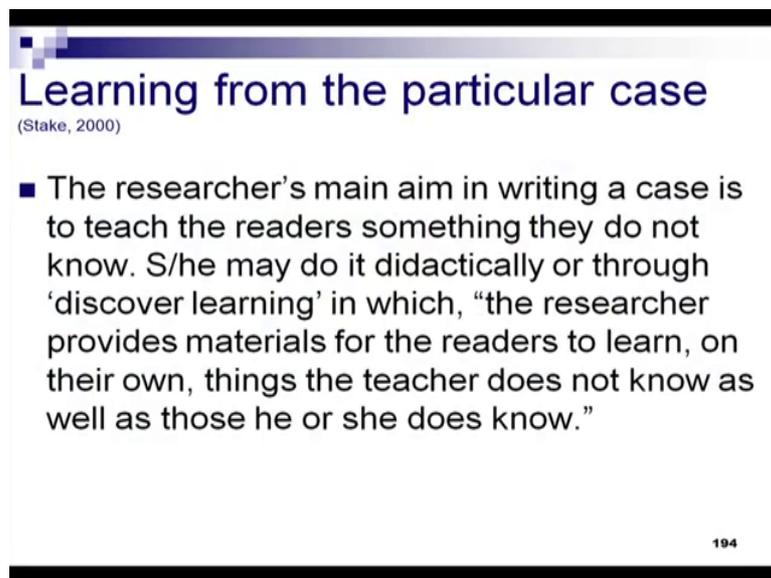
If you writing a case study just to highlight the issues experienced by a situation, just so that these things come to the fore they can be applied across the industry, then the case study would need to be written differently. The volume the quality and quantity of what you say, depends on you as a researcher depends on the theme that you are talking about and the ultimate goal of the case study, what you want the case study to be used as.

So that will really determine what you do and of course these things go hand-in-hand you can't say that I am going to write a teaching, case and then do it, I mean things evolve you

know so I guess having some sort of an idea and the beginning helps. But then as we write the case study, we realize that there are things that evolve as we get more and more information and the way we structure it will depend on information that is available to us.

How we interpret that information, how we are able to express it, whether or not be able to tighten properly with each other, different parts of the information and tied in with each other or not, so how compelling the story is, will determine what is ultimately used for. But at the same time same focus needs to be there regarding what you would like it to be used for.

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Learning from the particular case
(Stake, 2000)

- The researcher's main aim in writing a case is to teach the readers something they do not know. S/he may do it didactically or through 'discover learning' in which, "the researcher provides materials for the readers to learn, on their own, things the teacher does not know as well as those he or she does know."

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Learning from the particular case, what do we learn from a particular case? The researcher's main aim in writing a case is to teach the readers something they do not know. The case study doesn't you know we say okay case study highlights a slice of life, but then it has to be something unique, something special, the in-depth inquiry brings to the fore things that are not easily accessible by the general population, so there has to be something new in the case study.

The author may do it or the researcher may do it directly or through discover learning in which "the researcher provide materials for the readers to learn, on their own, things the teacher does not know as well as those he or she does know." So you time the new things with whatever you know and you time the new things out with whatever your students with no or with whatever your readers may know and then you take the reader from what is known, to what can be known and you extend the body of knowledge.

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Knowledge transfer from researcher to reader (Stake, 2000)

- Through a case, the researcher starts from a point of knowledge that is common to both & then takes the reader to observe, accept & appreciate the unknown.

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Knowledge transfer from researcher to reader, through a case, the researchers start from point of knowledge that is common to both and then takes the reader to observe, accept and appreciate the unknown. So the reader is taken to a point, where the reader first sees what is out there, reader first receives, becomes alert to whatever is out there, then the reader becomes receptive to the new information that is out there.

And then the reader imbibes the new information that is out there, so these are the three stages of observance, acceptance, observation, acceptance and appreciation of the unknown. So something new that the reader could be interested in, the interest is built along with the story and the reader is tuned to something new that is being shown to the reader and then it has to be so compelling, so new, so rooted in the old, you know.

It can't be totally rooted in the old, because the reader will lose interest, it can't be totally new so that they will not be able to relate to it, it has to be rooted in the old and stretched into the new and the finesse or the expertise of the researcher lies in taking the reader from what is known to what is not known and helping the reader appreciate the unknown and the value of the unknown.

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Triangulation (Stake, 2000)

- A technique used for case studies wherein the researcher uses, "... multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, by identifying the different ways the phenomenon is being seen, verifying the repeatability of an observation."

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Triangulation is something we discussed earlier also, it's a technique used for case studies where in the researcher uses "multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, by identifying the different ways the phenomenon is being seen, verifying the repeatability of an observation."

Triangulation is very, very important, very critical towards case study, where the researcher observes the same phenomenon from different perspectives and includes different perspective into the observation, into the way the cases is portrayed to the audience.

So you use describe a situation then you validate with facts and figures, then you may be add on the opinions of people who have been in that situation, then you could also you know add your own informed judgment, so different ways of looking at the same situation form a triangulate the information that is presented.

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Comparisons (Stake, 2000)

- When the case is used to compare two phenomena, the comparison is substituted for the case as the focus of the study.

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Comparisons are when the case is used to compare two phenomena, the comparison is substituted for the case as the focus of the study. So the case highlights something that can be that is different from the others in the general population, so it's a unit and whatever is described highlights the differences between what is described and what it is a part of, what it is similar to.

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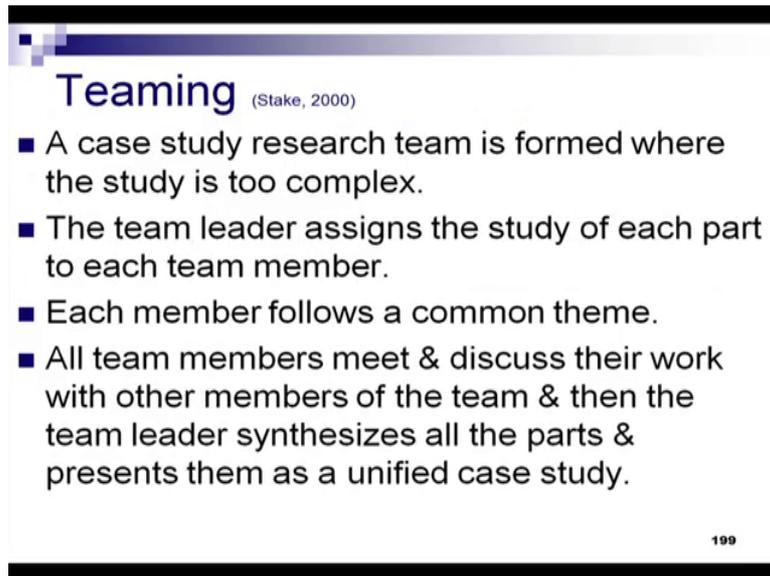
Arrangements of the study (Stake, 2000)

- The work of a researcher is “observational & reflective”. S/he observes the situation & then draws out local, foreshadowed & consequential meanings which form a part of the case record.

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Arrangements of the study, the work of a researcher is “observational and reflective.” Here she or he observe the situation and then draws out local, foreshadowed and consequential meaning which form a part of the case record. So we find out we observe the situation and then we draw the meanings, we draw, we find out what kind of meanings emerge from the case record after the analysis of the situation.

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Teaming (Stake, 2000)

- A case study research team is formed where the study is too complex.
- The team leader assigns the study of each part to each team member.
- Each member follows a common theme.
- All team members meet & discuss their work with other members of the team & then the team leader synthesizes all the parts & presents them as a unified case study.

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Teaming, a case study research team is formed where the study is too complex. We need people, we need informants, we need people to collect data depending on the volume of data we are collecting, depending on what we are studying, depending on the issue we are trying to highlight, we may require a team of people working that we work with, in order to draw out this information, in order to put this information together, in order to interpret the information that we have garnered, so if the research team is formed.

The team leader assigns the study of each part to each team member, and then each member follows a common theme. We worked like a team and each member follows the theme of the study, all team members meet and discuss their work with other members of the team and then the team leaders synthesizes all the parts and presents them as a unified case study.

So the work is divided up, knowing full well, that this work is going to, go in as a common unit, common body of work. So the theme is primary and all the members of the research team remember the theme and collect information along the same theme.

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Ethical concerns in conducting case study research (Stake, 2000)

- Informed consent
- Anonymity
- Very limited public access
- Minimization of risks associated with participation & disclosure of case results & interpretation.

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Ethical concerns in conducting case study research, some concerns in conducting a case study research as first is informed consent, now when we talk about cases we are talking about real life, we are talking about real situation, we are talking about a slice of life of the people who are being affected by that situation, so they need to know we are studying them, people in that situation need to know that we are studying them.

We need to get informed consent in writing from the people whose lives we are observing this is absolutely critical, this cannot be missed. The case study should not begin till informed consent is sort, until the conditions under which the information is being given is respected, the way or is the conditions are met, the way they need to be met, the requirements of getting that information are fulfilled and we cannot just take the information.

And then do whatever we want for, that absolutely unethical, if somebody gives us information on the condition that their identity will not be revealed, we should not reveal the identity of the informant, till we get a written consent from them. If the informant says please don't reveal the identity of my organization fair enough, we will write up the case in such a way that the identity of the organization is masked to such an extend the people cannot even guess it.

Now if people can get it then that's very inappropriate way of handling information and that should not be done if it is so critical is the organization can be on danger that then we must find other ways to approach the same information. But at no cost should we break the trust that the informant has placed in us that the participants of the case study have placed in us.

Anonymity maybe a conditions, may be required, it is depends on what one is trying to highlight, what one is trying to bring to the fore, again informed consent is required, should be honored you know.

If we are getting information from people, or if we are describing something likely to harm and hamper the core, disturb the current situation of the participants involved. So we must maintain absolute confidentiality, wherever there is slightest risk of the current situation of the participants being disturbed, so we must be very careful.

Very limited public access to the records that can disturb the current situation, we must at all times again I'm going to keep repeating this till you, my students, still my listener believe this, we cannot not disturb the current situation, the stability in the current situation, so we must limit the access, to records we have that are not in public domain, for with the explicit aim of protecting the stability of the situation that we have studied.

Then minimization we must to our best to minimize the risks associated with participation and disclosure of case results and interpretation. We must realize that once we get this information and publish it different people, with different background, with different interpretations, with different filters are going to have access to it and we must anticipate these risks, to the extent possible ahead of time and we must to our best to minimize these risks to the extent possible.

And we must inform our participants about the risks that are involved, if information we generating becomes public, it always helps to get to keep the informants and the participants in the loop when we are writing the case, so that they can guide us as to what can and cannot be put out in the public domain, what can and cannot be shared with people outside of their organization, what should and should not be a part of our case study, so we must not breach there or we must not break the dishonor the faith they have in our.

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Ethical issues in case writing (Stake, 2000)

- Personal Bias: Personal biases & attitudes may affect the choice of issues & the treatment of those issues by the researcher
- Subjectivity: Since the scope of the case is limited, & except in large cases, only one researcher observes the situation for a long time, it becomes very difficult to write the case in an objective opinion-free manner. Hence the problem of subjectivity is likely to creep in.

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Ethical issues in case writing another set of issues in out the issues that emerged in case writing are the first one is personal bias. We may be biased you know that our personal biases and attitude may affect the choice of issues and the treatment of those issues by the researcher. So we must acknowledge the basis that we bring to the fore or to the case study and we must try and minimize the interference or the effect of the filters that we see the world through.

Subjectivity is the other issue in case writing, since the scope of the case is limited and except in large cases only one researcher observe the situation for a long time, it becomes very difficult to write the case in an objective opinion free manner. Hence the problem of subjectivity is likely to creep in. So this is the other ethical issues in case writing, now subjectivity is the lack of objectivity, it is the multiple, it is the possibility of multiple interpretation of a case study, of the way this information is presented

And if you observe a situation for a long time then the possibility of us observing the situation in an opinion free, in an objective, in an unbiased manner are reduced, we become attached, we become connected to the situation, so that is another problem with writing of case studies and that is another ethical issues that need to be very, very careful of and I think that is all we have time for in this particular class, we will take up some more issues on the strategies of inquiry in qualitative research methods in the next class, thank you very much for listening.