

Ethnographic Research Methods

Anth (321)-322

THIS COURSE introduces the theoretical foundations and basic tools used to conduct professional field studies in anthropology. Topics for Anth 321 include: culture theory, research design, identification and critique of the assumptions, methods, and conclusions of research reports, the moral and ethical dimensions of fieldwork, and how to design, conduct, and analyze informal and semistructured interviews. Topics for Anth 322 include: grant proposal writing, how to design, conduct, and analyze structured interviews, data management on computers, summary statistics and graphics, identification and interpretation of random variation, and both the modeling and testing of explanations. We will emphasize intensive class discussion of key issues.

Empirical anthropology of whatever kind seeks to both describe and explain phenomena in the world of our experience. If you complete this course, you will have acquired a core of basic research tools upon which you can draw to formulate and conduct research. Moreover, you should be able to read anthropological reports of any nature and be able to recognize and critically evaluate the methodological assumptions, research techniques, and results of these reports.

READINGS: find books and articles online.

YOUR SPRING GRADE will come from 3 sources.

- (1) 20% of your grade will come from a formal research proposal for a short (3-month?) ethnographic study. Half of this grade will come from your Literature Review section, in which you critically evaluate the methods, assumptions, and conclusions of pertinent articles and books, and half will come from your Methods section, which will explain how you plan to do it better – i.e., present research designs that would yield more credible findings. Write your proposal in the format required by NSF. NSF limits your proposals to 15 single-spaced pages (not counting References Cited).
- (2) 70% of your grade will come from your demonstrated ability to use key methods for data analysis.
- (3) 10% of your grade will come from my personal evaluation of your progress (preparation, interest, and other contributions to the course).

PART I: RESEARCH DESIGN

WEEK 1 (JAN 23): VARIABLES & DATA FILES

Readings:

Handwerker QE (Chapter 3); Bernard RMA (Chapter 5)
NSF Grant Proposal Guide (www.nsf.gov)
Successful NSF proposals by UConn Anthropology graduate students.

Variables: Nominal (Binary, Multinomial); Ordinal (Ratings, Likert Scales); Ratio; Similarities (triads, successive pile sorts)

Data Files:

- Cross-Sectional: CHILD, BAJAN
- Panel: XNMORT
- Time series: ANTIGUA
- Construct: FALLOW from the following data

fallow	density
16.00	24.80
18.00	16.80
20.00	13.30
20.00	6.20
17.00	17.30
22.00	4.50
24.00	5.00
17.00	15.60
17.00	35.80
14.00	25.60
22.00	2.90
11.00	42.90
16.00	23.20
15.00	16.50
13.00	56.20

New Variables from Old

PART II: DATA COLLECTION & EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS

WEEK 2 (JAN 30): STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS (BINARY, RATINGS, RATIOS)

Required reading:

Handwerker, QE (Chapter 5); Bernard RMA (Chapters 10, 11, 12)

#1. Produce a structured interview.

WEEKS 3-4 (FEB 6, 13): UNIVARIATE PICTURES & NUMBERS

Pictures: stem-and-leaf, box, and dot density plots; quantile plots

Numbers: Modes, medians, means; sums of squares, standard deviations, standard scores (z); proportions, rates, and indexes.

Readings:

Handwerker QE (Chapter 6: 153-162); Bernard, RMA (Chapter 19:516-550)
Wilkinson et al: Statistical Methods in Psychology Journals (AP 1999).

#2. Hand calculate – or show each step in a spreadsheet -- the mean, the sum of squares, the standard deviation, and draw-by-hand stem-and-leaf plots and box plots for the variables Fallow and Density. Rationalize the

procedures and explain your findings. Hand calculate – or show each step in a spreadsheet -- standard scores for Fallow and Density. Rationalize the procedure.

WEEKS 5-6 (FEB 20, 27): BIVARIATE PICTURES & NUMBERS

Pictures: scatterplots

Numbers: Pearson's correlation coefficient, simple matching coefficient; Jaccard's coefficient

Readings:

Handwerker QE (Chapter 6:164-182); Bernard, RMA (Chapter 19: 550-560, Chapter 20)

- #3. Draw-by-hand a scatterplot of Fallow*Density, and hand calculate a Pearson's correlation coefficient for Fallow*Density. Explain the scatterplot and the meaning of Pearson's r.
- #4. Use SYSTAT to log-transform Fallow and Density, to produce a scatterplot of the log-transformed Fallow and Density variables, and to calculate Pearson's r. Compare and contrast these findings with those in Assignment #3.
- #5. Create binary variables out of Fallow and Density. Rationalize the procedure. Hand construct a 2x2 table for Fallow*Density. Compare and contrast the 2x2 table and the scatterplots from Assignment #s 3 & 4.
- #6. Create a profile matrix for 2 informants; transpose the matrix; hand construct a 2x2 table for the informants; calculate a Simple Matching Coefficient (SYSTAT's S4) and Jaccard's Coefficient (SYSTAT's S3). Interpret your findings and explain both the differences and the implications of the differences for assessing similarity.
- #7. Examine random samples of 10 variables for 10, 100, and 1000 cases. Generate sets of means, SD, dot density, and box plots and interpret your findings; generate scatterplots and correlation matrices and interpret your findings.

PART III: DESCRIBING & EXPLAINING CULTURES

WEEKS 7-8 (MAR 13, 20): CONSTRUCT VALIDITY & RELIABILITY

Readings:

Handwerker QE (Chapter 7); Bernard, RMA (Chapter 21; Chapter 8:193-202)

LAB: similarity matrices, factor analysis, multidimensional scaling, cluster analysis, correspondence analysis, reliability measures.

- #8. Collect data.
- #9. Conduct a construct validity & reliability analysis of a multidimensional variable.
- #10. Conduct a construct validity & reliability analysis of similarity data.

Mar 27: SfAA

WEEKS 9-10 (APRIL 3, 10): INTRACULTURAL VARIATION

Readings:

Handwerker QE (Chapter 8:219-231);

LAB: Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression & diagnostics

- #11. Use OLS regression to assess intracultural variation.

WEEKS 11-12 (APRIL 17, 24): INTERCULTURAL VARIATION

Readings:

Handwerker QE (Chapter 8:231-249);

LAB: Logistic regression & diagnostics

- #12. Use logistic regression to assess intercultural variation.
- #13. Summarize your findings from #s 10, 11, & 12 in a research report.

Research Proposal Format

Summary: Organize your summary with these subheads: Intellectual Merit, Broader Impacts.

- A. Specific Aims (1p) Begin with a sentence like: “Proposed research [you fill in the blank, but do so in no more than a short paragraph and, in the first sentence, state plainly and simply your research question, hypothesis, or goal].” Use the remainder of this section to summarize sections B, C, and D, to alert the reader to the broader theoretical and practical issues that warrant your specific aims. If you did not state your specific research aims at the beginning of this section, state them at the end. List specific, clearly attainable research aims; *number* the list.
- B. Background and Significance (2-3pp) Critically evaluate the pertinent literature to explain what we (think we) know, what we do not know (sufficiently clearly) and, thus, what we now need to find out. Use subheadings to help your reader identify each key topic and move from one to another. Make sure that this section clearly explains why your specific research aims are worth spending time and money on.
- C. Preliminary Studies (1-2pp) Provide a warrant for you to conduct the proposed study with a summary of findings from your earlier research.
- D. Research Design & Methods (up to whatever remains of the 12pp limit) Begin this section with a paragraph that provides an overview of what you plan to do. Make sure you make direct, clear linkages between your stated research aims and each method used to collect and analyze data. Spell out the criteria that you will apply to your analytical results to judge whether or not a research question has been answered in one way or another, a research hypothesis has been validated or not, or a research aim has been met or not. After the introductory paragraph, use subheadings like these:

Population Characteristics

Population Access

Sample Design (differentiate sample sizes for informal, protocol-based, and structured interviews; rationalize explicitly)

Data Collection (differentiate for informal, protocol-based, and structured interviews; identify explicit relationships between or among the different means of collecting data and specific research goals)

Data Analysis (differentiate for informal, protocol-based, and structured interviews; identify explicit relationships between or among the different means of analyzing data and specific research goals)

Time Line (you may use the time line to lay out your plans for data collection and data analysis in sequential steps, with appropriate iterative feedback)

Dissemination of Findings

- E. Human Subjects Protection

1. Risks

Description of Population

Sources of Research Materials

Potential Risks

2. Adequacy of Protection

Recruitment and Informed Consent

Protection Against Risk.

3. Potential Benefits

- F. References Cited