

# RES 712: Qualitative Research and the Question of Human Subject Level Characteristics



Topics—The Ethnographic and Case Study Qualitative Traditions

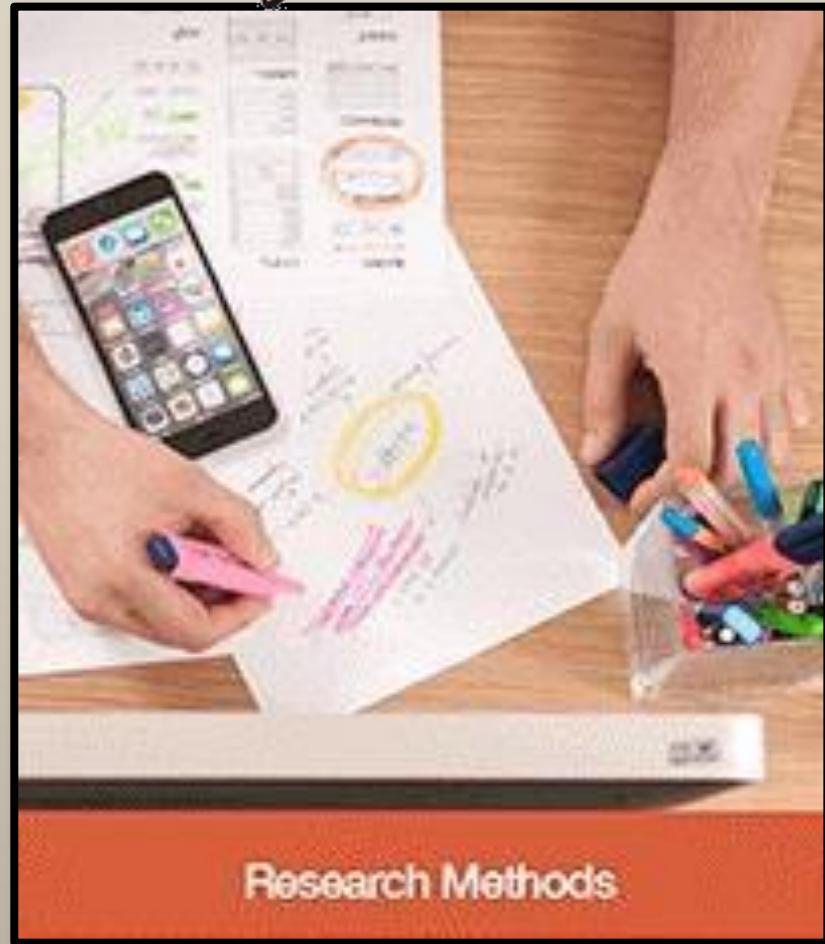


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# Qualitative Research and the Question of Human Subject Level Characteristics: The Ethnography and Case Study Traditions

- The Mock Focus Group Exercise (Assignment 3)
- Human Subject Characteristics and the Qualitative Approach
  - Human Context
  - Human Culture
  - Human Environment
  - Qualitative Interactive Effects
- The Ethnographic Tradition (Cultural Groups and the Environment)
- The Case Study Tradition (Deep Understanding on a Single Subject)

# Agenda!



# The Mock Focus Group Exercise— Some Reflections



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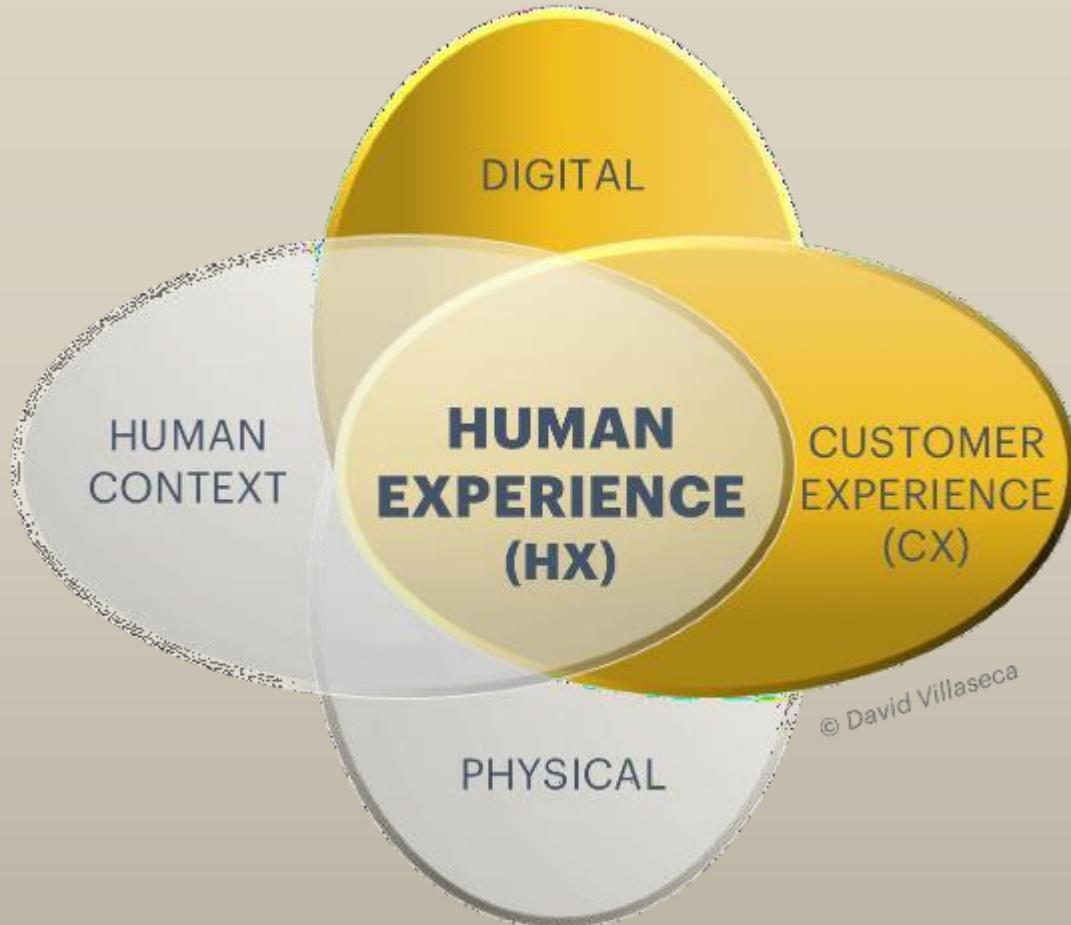
# The Qualitative Approach and Traditions: Human Subject Level Characteristics



- The Individual Human Level: Physical, Emotional, and Rational
- The social/societal human level: context, culture, and environment
- The interaction of the individual and social/societal characteristics
- The individual and social/societal characteristics and their impact on the individual micro, meso societal, and macro systemic levels (level of analysis problem)
- Dealing with level interactions within the qualitative approach
- Operationalizing human characteristics across the multiple human levels

# Human Characteristic I: Human Context

- The human subject in his/her context—what is a “context” – why is it important
- From the psychology and anthropology disciplines
- The power of context and qualitative assessment—in the moment and across time
- Human context within the qualitative and quantitative frameworks—formal variables
- Context: human emotions vs. human rationality
- The human situation: past, present, and future (the temporal factor)
- Understanding the ‘current situation’ and placing human assessment into perspective—past, current, and future



# Human Characteristic II: Human Culture

- The critical nature of culture and its impact on the human subject
- Elements of culture
  - ethnic background
  - social status/demographics (SES)
  - Belief systems
  - Religion
  - Education
  - Learned behavior/Experienced behavior
  - History (personal and societal)
- The interaction of culture and the individual human subject
- The impact of culture on the qualitative approach
- Measuring culture within the qualitative approach



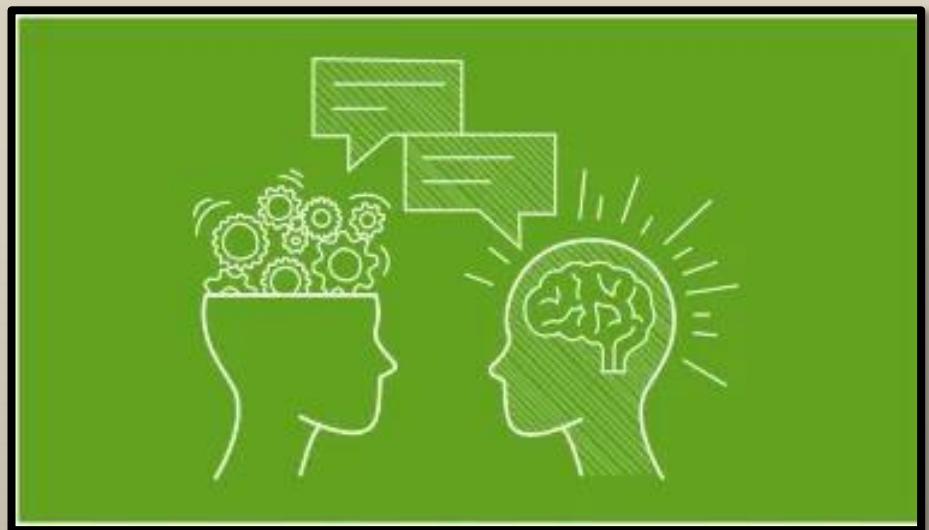
# Human Characteristic III: The Environment



- The physical, social, and cultural environments
- Key environmental attributes
  - Location
  - Composition (human)
  - Climate (physical environment)
  - Economic system
  - Political system
  - Social system
  - Cultural system
  - Technology
  - SES factors
  - Living arrangements
  - Lifestyle
  - Workstyle

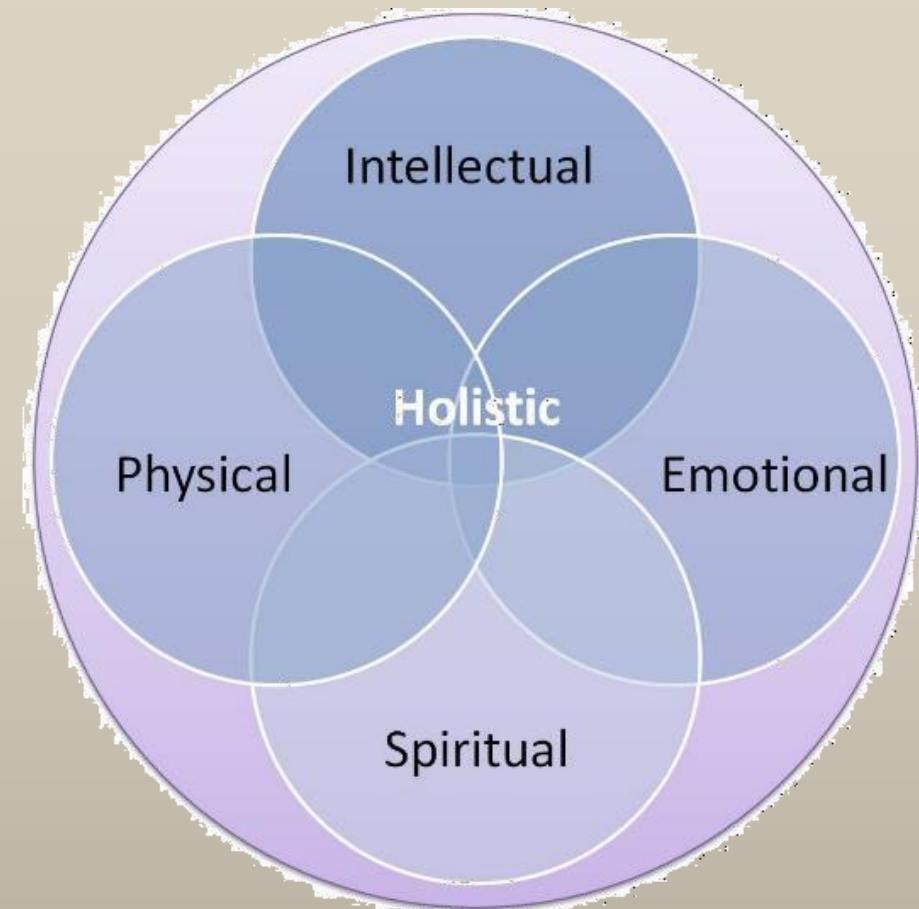
# The Qualitative Approach and the Application of “Interactive” Effects

- Interactions: what are they and how are they used in research?
- Interactions in the quantitative approach—the creation of formal variables
- Interactions in the qualitative approach—conceptual development
- The role of interactions in the qualitative approach
- The power of interactions
- Interaction as a multiplicative factor of input attributes—from literature, concepts, theory, empirical reality
- The role of interactions in defining variables of interest
- The dynamic nature of interactive effects—the role of the researcher

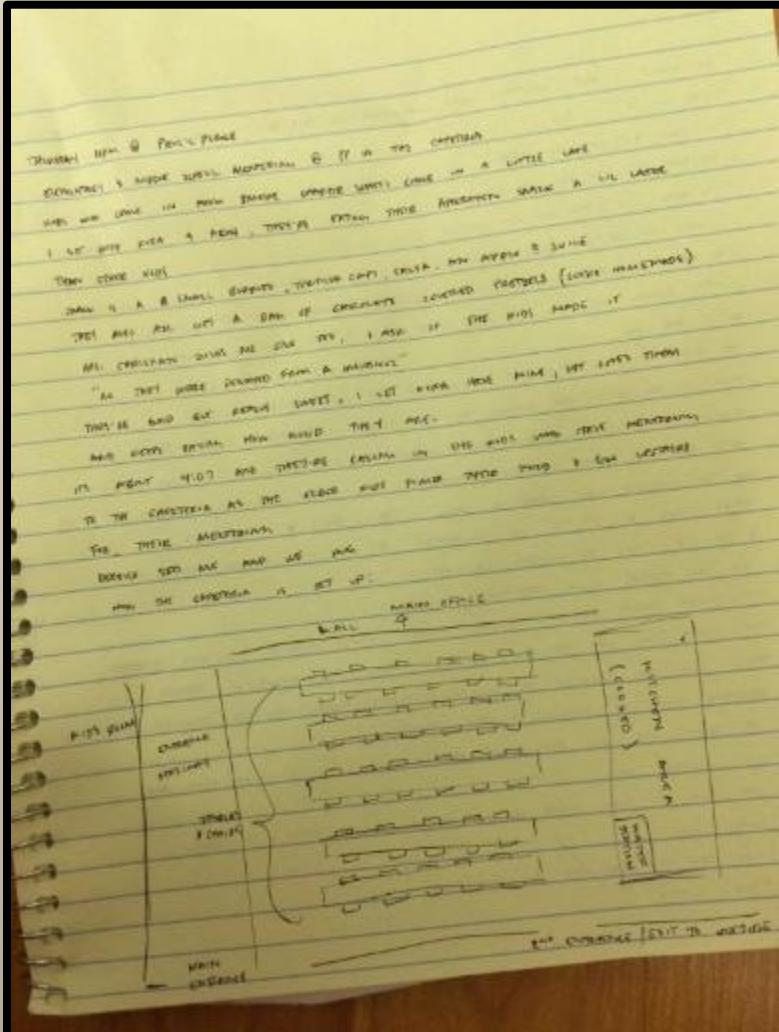


# Qualitative Human Characteristics and the Search for Interpretation, Trends, and Reality

- Qualitative interviews
  - Structured or Unstructured—advantages and disadvantages
  - Verbal questions/discussion vs. direct/indirect observation
- Observation
  - Intervention
  - Non-intervention
- Application of ethnographical methods (culture, as well as context and environment)
- Documents, and other non-verbal assets as data
- Pictures and videos as data streams
- Subject-based assets as data streams
- Integrating and explaining data from a human subject ‘holistic’ viewpoint
- The role of quantitative methods as supplemental input for qualitative assessment



# Fieldwork Notes and Assessment: Importance for Qualitative Human Characteristics

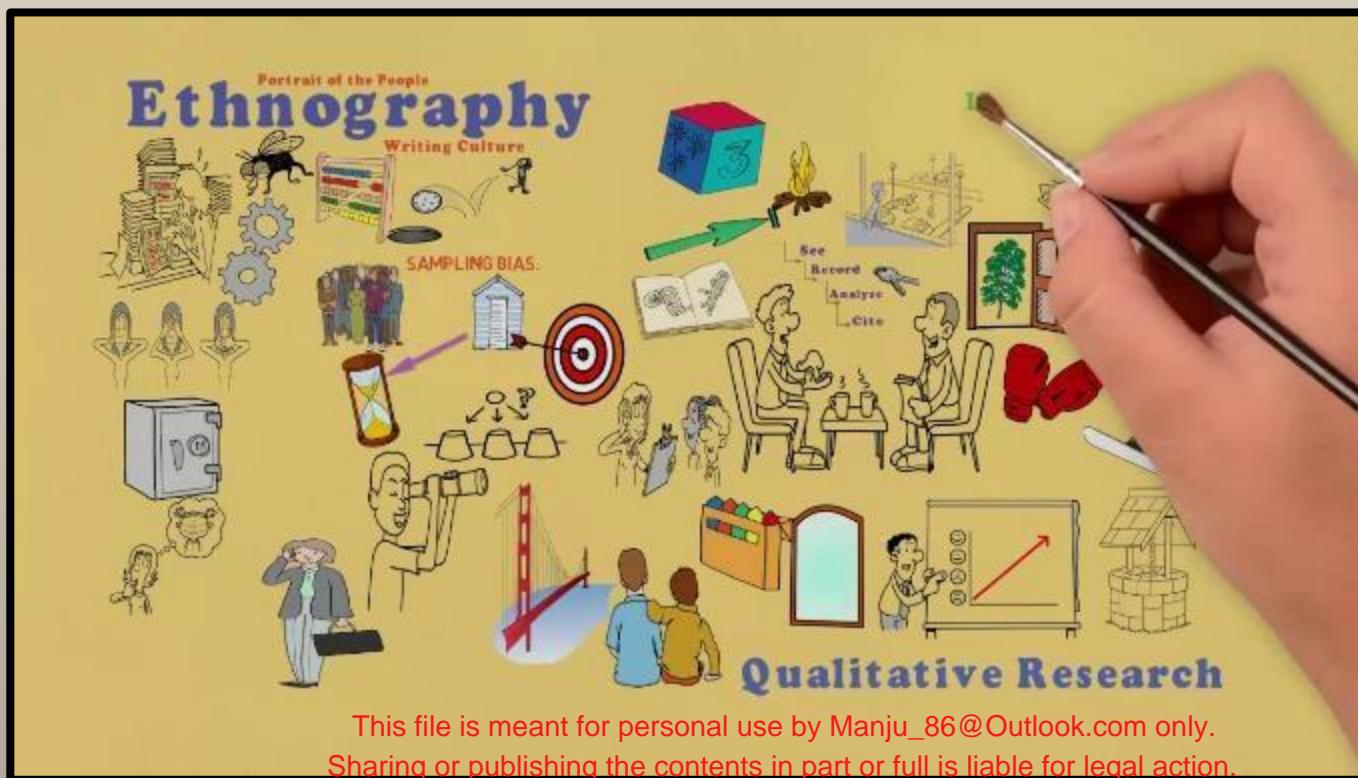


- The role of note taking to capture human characteristics
- Notes as content collection across a dynamic and complex process (spoken word and non-verbal assets)
- Notes as content interpreters (across and between dynamic levels, interactions, etc.)
- Produce meaning and an understanding of the context, culture, social situation, and specific phenomenon being studied
- Establish a record for review and input for analysis
- Fieldwork notes as a research technique

# Qualitative Tradition: Ethnography and Its Variants

## (Assessing Cultural Reality from a Common Phenomenon)

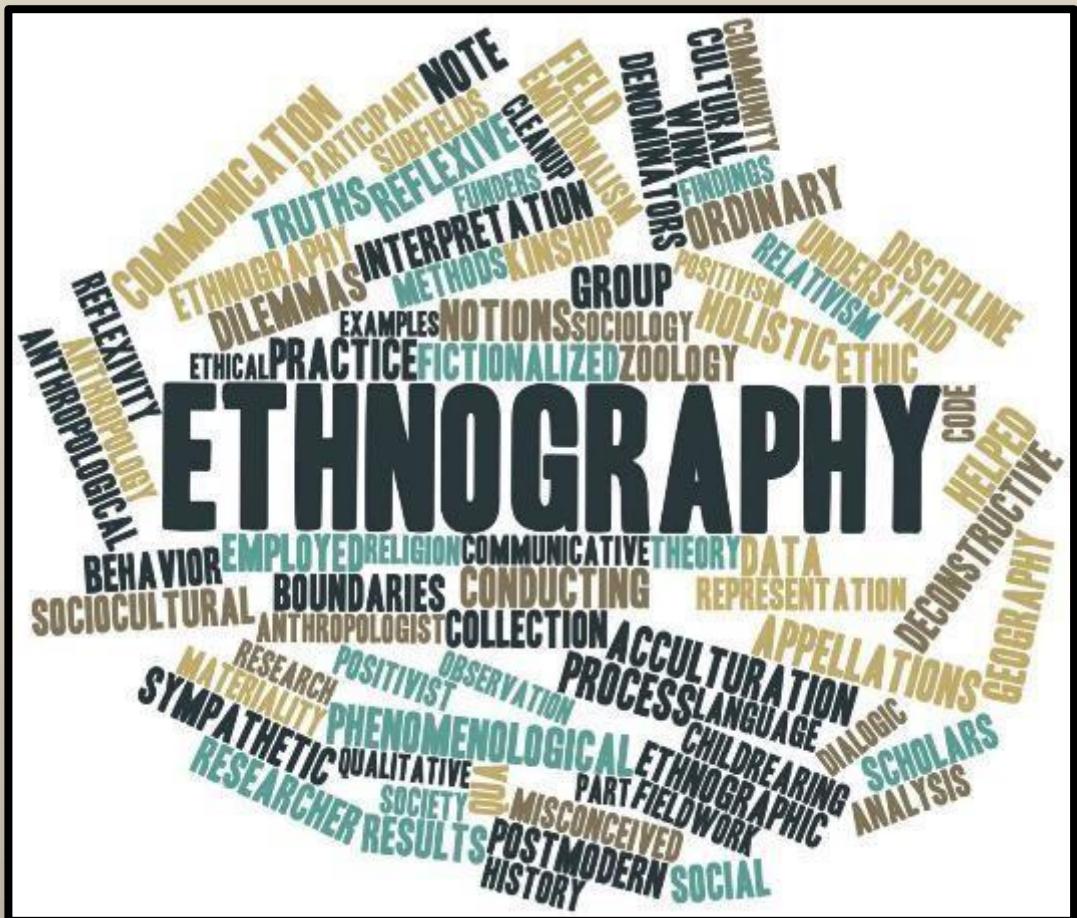
- View human subjects in their cultural setting
- From cultural anthropology and sociology
- A narrative account against a cultural backdrop
- Human subjects as cultural beings (context, specific culture, and environment)
- The human subject within his/her cultural landscape (family and society)



# The Ethnographic Qualitative Tradition: Background and Attributes

## Ethnographical Approach

- Thesis...establishes the central theme and message of the research study
  - Literature Review...analysis of previous research
  - Data Collection...humans and their assets, artifacts, and context within a known culture and environment (multi-dimensional)
  - Data Analysis...integration of qualitative assessment, along with context, culture, and environment
  - Reflexivity, peer review, and triangulation as rigorous checks on validity and reliability



# The Ethnographic Qualitative Tradition: Advantages and Disadvantages

## Advantages of the Ethnographic Tradition

- Ethnography immerses the project team in the participants' lives and enables a relationship to develop with the participants over the period of study
- Ethnography provides a rich source of visual data and helps to reveal unarticulated needs
- Ethnography captures behavior in the different contexts of everyday life
- Ethnography places a human face on data through real-life stories
- Ethnography provides understanding behind quantitative data
- Ethnography allows emotional behavior to be captured
- Identifies discrepancies between what people say and do (what they really do).

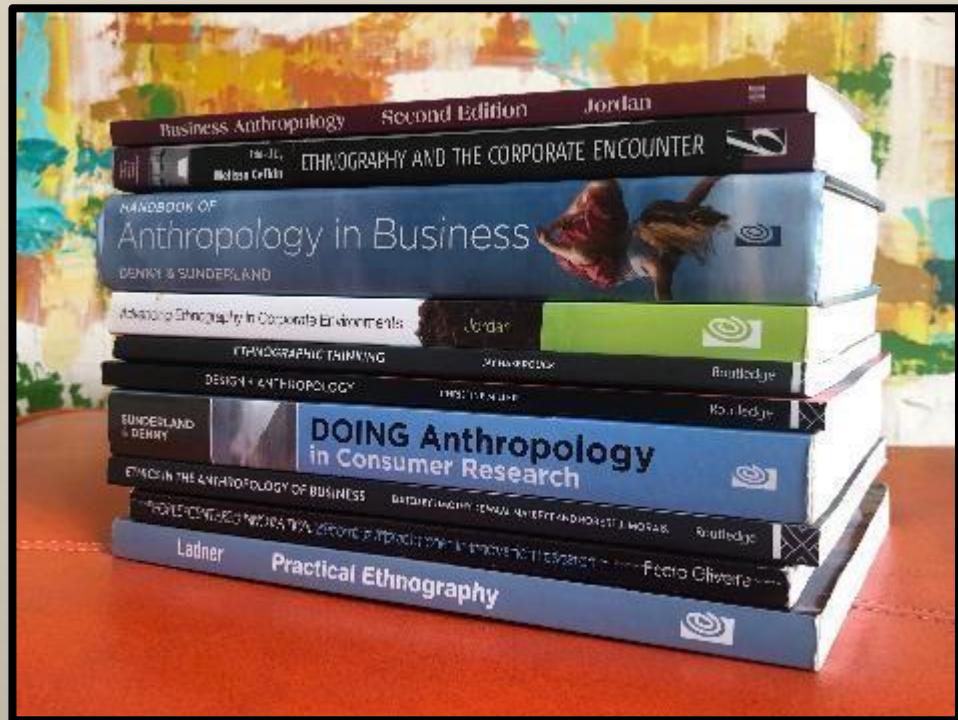
## Disadvantages of the Ethnographic Tradition

- Difficult to choose a representative sample
- Time consuming
- Assumes people's openness and honesty
- Can lead to cultural bias
- Difficult to establish the relationship between story elements and reality (context)
- Difficulty to detect of prevent researcher-induced biases



# The Ethnographic Qualitative Tradition: Examples in the Business Discipline

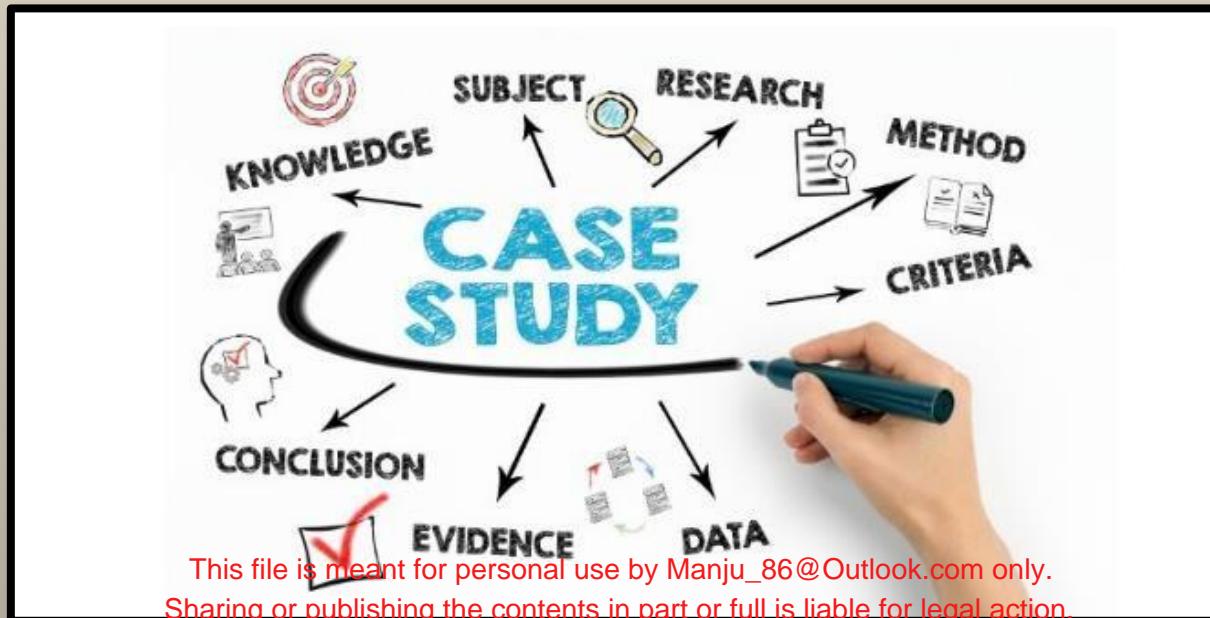
- Observing a group of employees working (acting and functioning within the work environment)
- Observing employees in a corporate office setting
- Observing medical personnel in a high-volume hospital
- Observing an indigenous village
- Observing a high school classroom
- Observing vehicle owners/drivers



# Qualitative Tradition: The Case Study

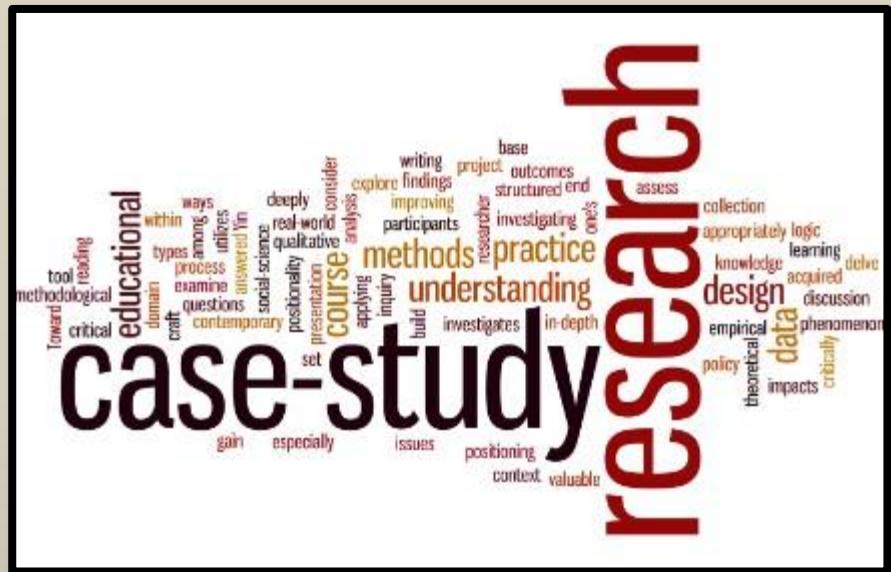
## (The Power of the Single Case)

- Generate an in-depth, multi-faceted understanding of a complex issue/subject in its solo context (single ideal case or subject)
- A qualitative case study explores a phenomenon within a particular context or framework set through various data sources/empirical evidence
- A deep understanding of a subject from various lenses...descriptive, confirmatory, and integrative
- Can combine qualitative and quantitative approaches (multi-method...addresses issues of validity and reliability across approaches)



# Qualitative Tradition: The Case Study—Background and Attributes

- Data identified and collected inductively through interviews, group discussion and observation as well as deductively through desk research, or some combination
- Empirical data studied and compared against theory or other similar cases from another study or discipline (comparative analysis)
- Human subject characteristics integrated across all three major levels (micro, meso, and macro) but most often analyzed at the meso/macro levels
- Closest to a research study “paper format”
- Dependent on detailed assessment of the literature, archival sources, and qualitative, as well as quantitative data
- Highly criticized/critiqued by some for its lack of confirmation...triangulation, comparability, etc.



# Qualitative Tradition: The Case Study: Designs and Techniques

## The Assessment of Specific Human Activities

- Discover and confirm a deep understanding concerning a particular subject (case)
- Address deep knowledge about a particular subject, case or situation
- Assess the trends from a very deep set of questions
- Understand the human condition within a particular situation
- Tends to be time-specific



## Techniques

- Qualitative techniques (various focused on empirical human data collected inductively)
- Focused Individual, Meso, and Macro levels—all inputs into the “case”
- Qualitative techniques—individual and multi-level/comparative analysis
- Focus on a single case

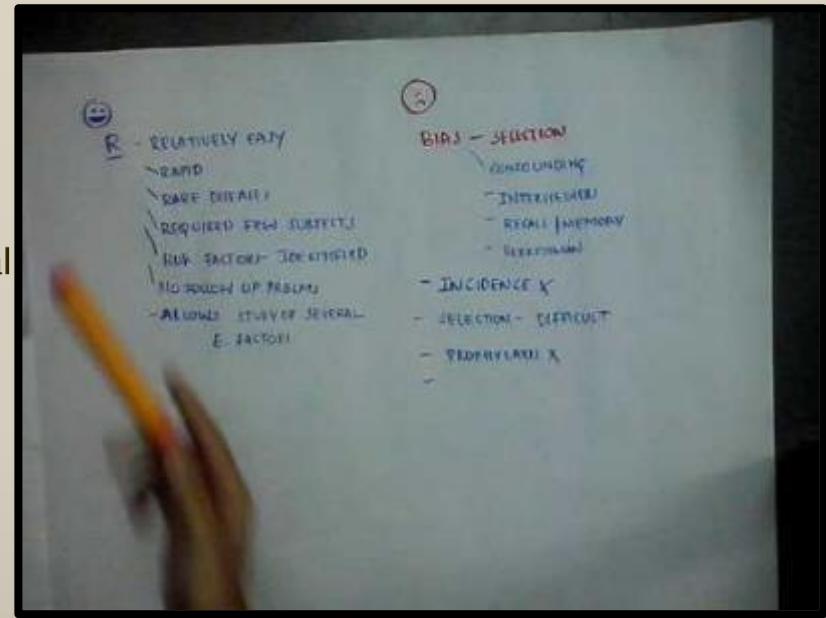
# Qualitative Tradition: The Case Study—Advantages and Disadvantages

## Advantages of the Case Study Tradition

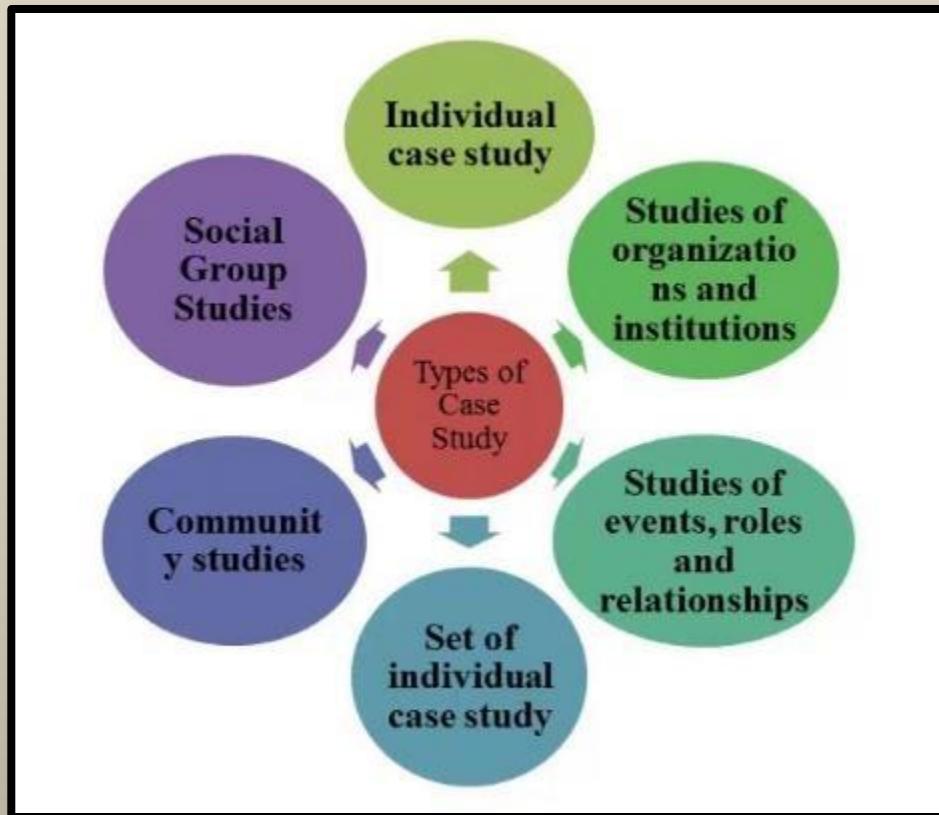
- Holistic—depth and detail of the analysis
- Realistic reflection of the world
- Attention and focus on the human characteristics—context, culture, and the environment across societal characteristics
- Extensive range of variables

## Disadvantages of the Case Study Tradition

- Can be difficult to interpret and understand without extensive knowledge of the topic
- Observation and interpretation biases (solely based on the researcher)
- Not all traits visible to the researcher
- Researcher presence/interaction with data changes the outcome of the case (impact on data itself)
- Temporal relationship difficult to establish
- Low external validity
- Triangulation almost impossible

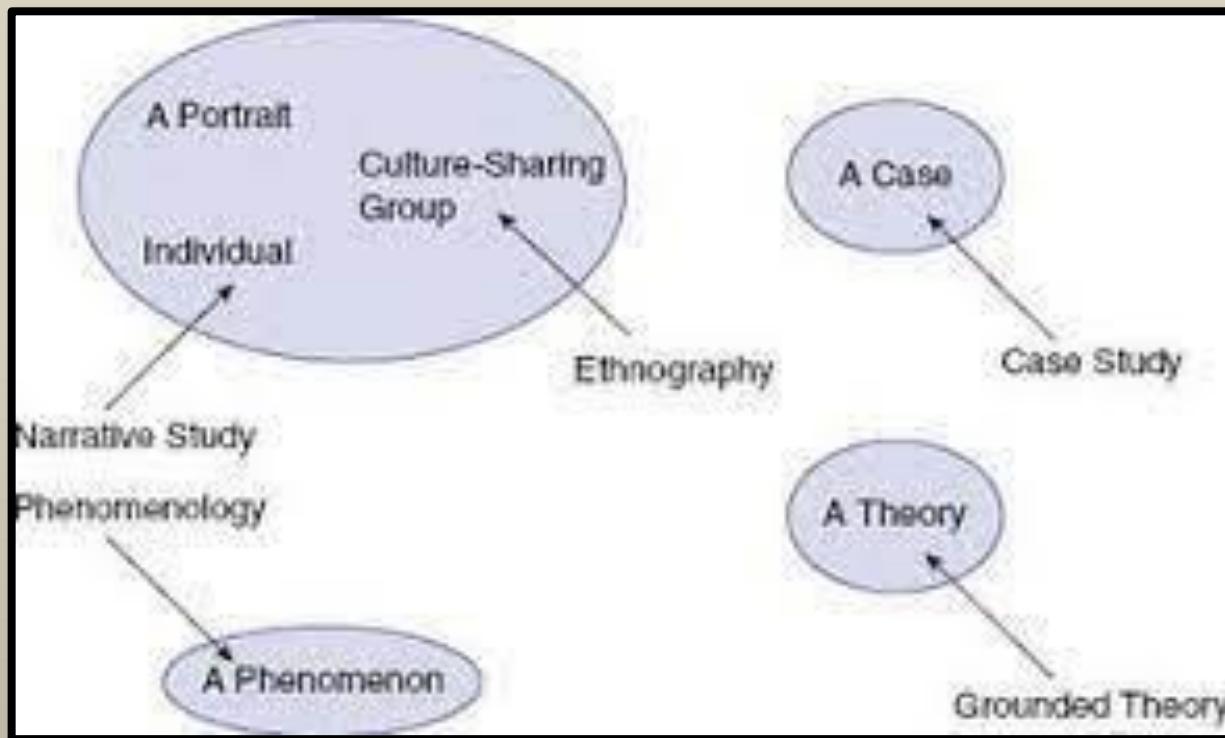


# Qualitative Tradition: The Case Study—Examples in the Business Discipline



- Google as a communication strategy
- Steve Jobs and Apple (leadership and management within a sector)
- PwC, Boston Consulting, and McKinsey and consulting
- Organizational leadership
- Sector leaders (businesses)
- Global success stories
- Industrialization strategies

# Overview of Qualitative Research Traditions: Where do the Ethnographic and Case Study Traditions Fit Within the Qualitative Approach?



# Discussion: Qualitative Traditions and Human Subject Characteristics in Research

- Thinking about your subjects of interest and research topics, how could you envision applying either the ethnographic or case study qualitative traditions to your research?
- How would you specify and apply it for your research or problem?

