Foundations of Social Research - 11/30/22

Assignment 6 Lab: Evaluating and Designing Social Research

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Lab #6 Agenda

Objectives:
1) Review key ideas on research evaluation and design.
2) Practice applying key ideas to research situations.

The Big Picture: Labs 1 – 5 Overview

Assignment 6 Overview & Tips

Practice: Information Extraction

Practice: Matching Research Questions & Methods

Assignment #6 Outline

General Tips:
- Answer each question in 1 – 3 paragraphs.
- Carefully read each question, paying attention to each part and the hints provided in the question.
- Review feedback from all labs.

Part I: Course Themes
- Describe/define key concepts/ideas from the class.
- Provide examples to demonstrate understanding of how to apply the concept/idea.

Part II: Evaluating Research
- Read the 5 questions in this section to familiarize yourself with what information you need to extract.
- Read news article
- Read academic journal article
- Extract key information from journal article.

Part III: Designing a Research Project
- Be sure to pick one of the two methodological options listed: interviews or ethnography.
- For **questions 3 & 5**, only answer the parts that correspond with the methodology that you selected.
- Treat question 6 like a mini research proposal (1 – 3 paragraphs). Assume you addressed the research question given to you using interviews or ethnography. Sticking with the same topic – college life and religion - **propose a new question that you can address with either historical-comparative methods or content analysis**.
  - Choose the method that best addresses your research question and explain why.

How do Labs 1 – 5 Fit Together?

Quick Recap

Lab 1: Course Themes, Evaluating Research, & Designing Studies

Lab 1: Social Science & the News

Information Extraction	Evaluating Research Design Elements	Evaluating the Use of Research in Media/Other Venues
• Research Question • Key concepts & their operationalization • Data & Method(s) • Main Findings	• Was the data and method appropriate for the RQ? • What are the limitations of using this approach? • Was the operationalization strategy reasonably justified? • Did the findings address the research question?	• Accurate presentation of research findings • Appropriate/generalization of the findings for the context of the news article

Labs 2 – 5: Course Themes, Evaluating Research, & Designing Studies

Quantitative Methods

Lab 2: Surveys

Research Design Elements
- Sampling Strategy
- Questionnaire Design
- Mode of Administration

Design Elements Evaluated
- Evaluated the generalizability of findings from GSS vs your sample

Lab 5: Survey Experiments

Research Design Elements
- Created treatment & control conditions
- Designed vignette to manipulate IV
- Designed Survey question to measure DV
- Random Assignment
- Drafted Consent Form

Design Elements Evaluated
- Matched a causal question & causal method
- Tradeoffs between Internal & External Validity

Qualitative Methods

Lab 3: Interviews

Research Design Elements
- Designed recruitment & (Non-Probability) sampling strategy
- Designed interview guide
- Conducted interviews
- Drafted & analyzed notes from transcription

Design Elements Evaluated
- Identified limitations of interview guide, interview process, analysis.
- Proposed a sampling strategy that would be best for your research question/design.

Lab 4: Ethnography

Research Design Elements
- Selected a field site
- Identified your position as an observer or participant in the field
- Drafted field notes
- Analyzed patterns that emerged from observations

Design Elements Evaluated
- Justified strengths of ethnography and articulated limitations.
- Explained your positionality in the field and how it may impact data collected.

Practice: Information Extraction

Think – Pair – Share

Information Extraction

- What is/(are) the research question(s)?
  - Why is the researchers' motivation for studying this question?
- What data sources/methods are used?
  - If you were to continue reading the paper, what details about the data/methods will you be on the look out for and why?
- What are some key concepts in this study?
  - Can you brainstorm a way to operationalize any of these concepts?
- What are the main findings of the study?
  - Are these findings generalizable, or is generalizability not the goal of this study?


Beyond the Schoolyard: The Role of Parenting Logics, Financial Resources, and Social Institutions in the Social Class Gap in Structured Activity Participation

Pamela R. Bennett[1], Amy C. Lutz[2], and Lakshmi Jayaram[3]

Abstract

We investigate class differences in youth activity participation with interview, survey, and archival data from a diverse sample of parents (n = 51) in two schools. Findings point toward structural rather than cultural explanations. Working- and middle-class parents overlap in parenting logics about participation, though differ in one respect: middle-class parents are concerned with *customizing* children's involvement in activities, while working-class parents are concerned with *ensuring* safety and social mobility for children through participation. Like financial constraints among the working class, social institutions are implicated in class differences. Schools act as an equalizing institution by offering low-cost activities; yet, contribute to class differences by offering different activities to working- and middle-class youth. Opportunities for working-class youth to participate in non-school activities are few due to the scarcity of community organizations in their neighborhood, while middle-class families are heavily involved in out-of-school activities. We explore the implications of our findings for educational stratification.

Keywords

extracurricular activities, organized activities, leisure activities, youth, families, neighborhoods, schools, adolescents, college

Prior research links participation in structured activities to social stratification through its effects on college attendance and destination (Kaufman and Gabler 2004; Karabel 2005; Gabler and Kaufman 2006; Soares 2007; Stevens 2007). To the extent that disadvantaged groups evidence lower participation than advantaged ones, organized activities become a mechanism through which social inequality is maintained and reproduced. A class gap in participation is well established, yet disagreement exists over explanations for its cause, with some authors focusing on cultural explanations and others on more structural

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ones (Furstenberg et al. 1999; Lareau 2002, 2003; Hofferth 2008; Hughes 2008; Lareau and Weininger 2008a). We adopt an approach that allows us to explicitly recognize that social behavior often sits at the intersection of beliefs about what *should* occur (as informed by culture) and the *ability* to actualize those beliefs (as shaped by structure).[1] Based on qualitative interviews with parents at two urban schools, we report findings on working- and middle-class children's level and type of activity participation, parents' expressed cultural logic regarding participation, and parents' reasons for enrolling their own children in structured activities.

We find that working-class parents use participation in organized activities as part of their parenting strategies and articulate many of the same reasons for doing so as their middle-class counterparts. Further, we find that the in-school activity profiles of working- and middle-class youth are strikingly similar, while the two groups differ in their out-of-school activities. That the class gap in activity participation is small within schools but substantial outside of schools suggests that schools play a critical role in equalizing access to activity participation opportunities across social class groups. What requires explanation, then, is not the lack of involvement in activities by working-class youth, but their low levels of participation in activities that are not organizationally tied to schools.

We argue that because of financial constraints, working-class families rely on social institutions for affordable participation opportunities, but have access to few such institutions beyond schools and churches, which are the ones prevalent in their neighborhoods. This is consistent with beliefs expressed by working-class parents regarding the value of activity participation for their children, the concentration of their children's participation in school and religious activities, as well as the virtual lack of participation outside of school in the kinds of elite activities that colleges and universities value. Thus, almost a decade after publication of Lareau's (2002) influential study, we find that working-class parents in our sample are quite supportive of organized activities, but their children participate in fewer and different activities than their middle-class counterparts due to limited financial and institutional resources. We conclude that greater emphasis on organized activities by working-class parents is insufficient to close the class gap in activity participation because of structural constraints that they face.

SOCIAL CLASS AS CULTURE AND SOCIAL CLASS AS STRUCTURAL LOCATION

We argue that to fully understand class differences in youth participation in organized activities, we must extend our analytical lens beyond parenting logics to include the structural location of families. Doing so will help us distinguish between conceptualizing social behavior as the product of values, beliefs, and attitudes that people hold on the one hand and conceiving of behavior as structured by differential access to resources—the result of what Barry Wellman (1983:163) terms the 'social distribution of possibilities.' Only then can we identify the way in which social class acts as culture and as structure in producing group differences in activity participation.

In *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*, Lareau ([2003] 2011) argues that divergent cultural logics exist among America's social classes, leading to differential management of children's time, including the time they spend in organized activities. In the middle-class homes in her study, she observed what she terms 'concerted cultivation'—a cultural logic to parenting practices that emphasizes structure, language use, and interaction with dominant social institutions. In contrast, working-class and poor families displayed what she calls the 'accomplishment of natural growth,' which involves relatively unstructured days, use of directives with children, and general avoidance—even distrust—of dominant social institutions. Although middle-class parents use enrollment in extracurricular activities as a means to cultivate children's talents and skill, working-class parents, according to Lareau, are comfortable giving their children comparatively greater autonomy in how they spend free time and emphasize enrollment in activities less (Lareau [2003] 2011; Lareau and Weininger 2008a). As a result, middle-class and working-class children evidence different levels of involvement in structured activities. When combined with other class differences in parenting strategies, class gaps in activity participation help to reproduce social class advantage and disadvantage across generations.

Chin and Phillips (2004) come to a different conclusion. They investigate the ways in which

Practice: Designing a Research Study

Small Group Discussion (3 to 4 people) – Share

Residential Neighborhood Selection & Race/Ethnicity/Immigration Status

Select 1 of: Survey OR Experiment AND Select 1 of: Interview OR Ethnography OR Content Analysis OR Historical-Comparative

Research Design Attribute	Study #1	Study #2
Research Question	How does lacking legal status shape the residential selection process for undocumented immigrants?	
Method	Semi-Structured Interviews	
Sample/Site Case Selection Approach	Select a city that is an immigrant destination and snowball sample current or formerly undocumented immigrants who are heads of household	
Key Concepts (For quantitative methods: focus on Ivs&DVs)	Residential Selection – Decision-making process on selecting a neighborhood to live in.	
Operationalization of Key Concept (operationalize 1 concept)	Strategies or search methods that householders report using to find and select a place to live.	
Important Methodology-Specific Considerations	Building Rapport; Ethics – Ensuring respect for persons, protecting the identity/privacy of interviewees.	
Strength of Method	Ideal for questions about decision-making; sense-making.	
Limitation of Method	Interviews are retrospective and might lead to recall errors.	
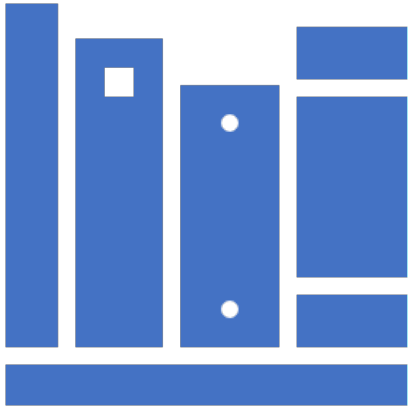
Questions, concerns, or comments?

Feel free to email with questions or visit one of our office hours periods.