

## **GPD-IGERT Training Module on Comparative and Multi-Sited Ethnographic Research**

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This methods module focuses on the advantages of combining two distinct social-scientific approaches that seldom go together: “small-n” comparisons and (multi sited) ethnography. Both have origins in different disciplines, and both command growing attention. In addition to their explicit focus on multiple contexts, what unites them is that they leverage the relative boundedness of their objects of study to maximum effect, making a virtue out of paying attention to process, context, and detail. Contemporary work in this vein can be just as theoretically ambitious, if not more, than work that is less bounded. This module consists of two tracks, one for students who have not yet defined a research project and seek an introduction to comparative ethnography, and the other for students with well-defined individual research projects who wish to explore how a small-N comparative or multi-sited perspective could enrich their work. Participants with projects in hand are asked to send a written summary of their project to the instructors ahead of time. This could be a grant proposal, paper for DEVL 2010, or a dissertation prospectus. We also ask these participants to submit at least one article or book chapter that is an excellent example of work that combines comparative analysis and ethnographic research and that could serve as a feasible model for your own work.

### **What is Multi-Sited Ethnography?**

Ethnography is, at its most basic definition, the observation of people over time in their natural settings (a methodology). More broadly, ethnography can also mean a logic of inquiry that emphasizes culture and/or meanings in a particular context (a method). Ethnography is also a genre, a way of presenting work that is defined by particular conventions. We can make three general observations about ethnography – first, is that while it has been the dominant method in anthropology, it has often sat uneasily with dominant epistemological assumptions in sociology and political science; second, that there has been growing attention and excitement around ethnography especially as an interdisciplinary endeavor; and third, that multi-sited ethnography (or its cognates like global ethnography, ethnography of global connection, ethnography of assemblages) constitutes an exciting area of research, theory development, and engagement with the problematics of development and inequality.

If we borrow from Alford and take the idea seriously that studies can have more than one logic at the same time, one way to think of multi-sited ethnographies or comparative ethnographies as making arguments based on different logics. In fact, many ethnographies do explicitly and implicitly compare, whether by alluding to theoretical expectations, the global, or to different sites. This methods module works with the assumption that many of the most exciting studies today operate with different logics (ethnographic and comparative), and we will work with students on their projects provoking them to exploit these different possibilities.

This module will accomplish several goals, and is aimed at different audiences, in addition to introducing and discussing some excellent exemplars of the genre of multi-sited ethnography. At the most basic level, this module will help you make sense of the thicket of terms related to these studies – methods, case, concept, design, epistemology, while helping you think about the value of ethnography and multi-sited ethnography. For those wholly unfamiliar with the approach this module will, at the very least, make you an informed reader of the genre and point you to ways to learn to do it. We have some excellent suggested readings that can give some guidance, though it is our position that ethnography is learned by doing, ideally under the guidance of someone more experienced.

A second, more ambitious goal for those familiar with ethnography (but perhaps not settled on a project) will be to help you critically evaluate the value-added – as well as the limits, of ethnography for your interest areas and for development debates more generally. You should leave this module having a clearer sense of how ethnography can contribute to your research and what this might look like; in other words you should leave here with a clear sense of research design, field sites, and the type of ethnography to pursue. For example, you should also have a sense of the challenges and issues related to your type of ethnography

A third goal is for those already settled on a project: we will challenge you to augment the *other* logic of inquiry. For ethnographers, we will challenge you to think about comparative or multi-sited logic; for comparativists, we will challenge you to increase the ethnographic component. For those participants with defined research projects we will work with the exemplary article you have brought to the course. For students new to ethnography, this workshop element will partially open up the black box of ethnography.

### **Class Meetings and Readings.**

We list below the readings for each session under “required” and “recommended.” We will discuss before each class meeting what the ideal readings for you might be. For those with a disciplinary background in ethnography, many of the basic readings might be familiar. All o the readings are available electronically to you.

### **Meeting 1: Introduction to the module and people’s projects.**

- Devereux, Georges. 1966. *From Anxiety to Method in the Behavioral Sciences*. The Hague: Mouton.
- Snyder, Richard, “Creative Hypothesis Generating in Comparative Research,” *Qualitative Methods: Newsletter of the American Political Science Association Organized Section on Qualitative Methods* Vol. 3, N° 2 (Fall 2005): 2-5.

## Meeting 2: What is Ethnography anyway, and What does it bring to the social sciences? (And what is Multi-Sited Ethnography?)

- Goffman, Erving "On Fieldwork", *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, vol 18, No 2, July 1989, 123-132
- Baiocchi, Gianpaolo and Brian Connor. 2008. "The Ethnos in the Polis: Political Ethnographies in Sociology." *Sociology Compass* 2:139-155.
- Schatz, Edward, ed. *Political Ethnography: What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Power*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. [Introduction and Chapters 1 & 2]
- Marcus, George. 1995. "Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24:95-117
- Lisa Weeden 'political ethnography' in Schatz ed.

## Meeting 3: How do we justify Ethnography? What are its epistemological bases? (ie. The Philosophy of Science meeting)

- Alford, Robert. *The Craft of Inquiry*, Ch.1-3
- Gupta, Akhil and James Ferguson. 1997. "Discipline and Practice: The 'Field' as Site, Method and Location in Anthropology" Pp. 1-46 in *Anthropological Locations: Boundaries and Grounds of a Field Science*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- William J. Sewell, Jr., "Three Temporalities: Toward an Eventful Sociology," Pp. 245-80 in Terrence J. McDonald, ed. *The Historic Turn in the Human Sciences* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996).
- Burawoy, Michael. 1998. "The Extended Case Method." *Sociological Theory* 16-1 (March): 4- 33.
- Katz, Jack. 1997. "On Ethnographic Warrants." *Sociological Methods and Research* 25-4: 391- 423.
- Small, Mario L. 2005. "Lost in Translation: How Not to Make Qualitative Research More Scientific."
- *Recommended*: Pp. 165-71 in *Workshop on Interdisciplinary Standards for Systematic Qualitative Research*, edited by M. Lamont and P. White. Washington, DC: National Science Foundation.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1973. "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture." In *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books).

### Recommended:

Some ethnographers reflect on their own choices:

- Eliasoph, Nina. 1998. "Appendix 2: Method." Pp. 269-279 in *Avoiding politics: How Americans Produce Apathy in Everyday Life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hughes, Everett C. [1960] 1970. "The Place of Fieldwork in Social Science." Pp. 496-506 in *The Sociological Eye: Selected Papers*. New Brunswick: Transaction.

- Desmond, Matthew. 2007. "Appendix." Pp. 283-308 in *On the Fireline: Living and Dying with Wildland Firefighters*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Baiocchi, Gianpaolo. 2005. "Ethnography by Numbers" in *Militants and Citizens*.

The basics of philosophy of science:

- Popper, Karl. "Science: Conjectures and Refutations" in Klemke, Hollinger and Kline (eds.) *Introductory Readings in the Philosophy of Science*. Buffalo: Prometheus Books.
- Hempel, Carl G. 1994 [1942]. "The Function of General Laws in History." Pp. 43-54 in *Readings in the Philosophy of Social Science*, edited by M. Martin and L.C. McIntyre. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Machlup, Fritz. 1994 [1961]. "Are the Social Sciences Really Inferior?" Pp. 5-20 in *Readings in the Philosophy of Social Science*, edited by M. Martin and L.C. McIntyre. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Taylor, Charles. 1994. "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man." Pp. 181-212 in *Readings in the Philosophy of Social Science*, edited by M. Martin and L.C. McIntyre. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Bohman, James. 1999. "Theories, Practices, and Pluralism: A Pragmatic Interpretation of Critical Social Science." *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 29: 459-480.
- Lakatos, Imre. 1970. "Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programs." In Imre Lakatos and A. Musgrave (eds), *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Editors. "Glossary." In Richard Boyd, Philip Gasper, and J.D. Trout (eds), *The Philosophy of Science*
- Ted Benton and Ian Craib, *Philosophy of Social Science* (Palgrave, 2001). Chapter 8. "Critical Realism and the Social Sciences". pp. 119-139

#### **Meeting 4: Cases, Concepts, Comparisons**

This session is about Getting Some Things Down: What is a Concept, What is a Theory, What is a unit of analysis? So, if you have a concept and a theory, what is a Case? And should you Compare?

- George, Alexander L. and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), Ch. 1. "Case Studies and Theory Development," and Ch. 10, on "Process-Tracing and Historical Explanation."
- Charles Ragin, "Turning the Tables: How Case-Oriented Research Challenges Variable-Oriented Research," *Comparative Social Research* 16, 1997.
- Becker, Chapter 5.

- Robert H. Bates, “From Case Studies to Social Science: A Strategy for Political Research.” Department of Government, Harvard University.
- James Mahoney, “Strategies of Causal Inference in Small-N Research,” *Sociological Methods and Research* Vol. 28, N° 4 (2000): 387-424.
- Richard Snyder, “Scaling Down: The Subnational Comparative Method,” *Studies in Comparative International Development* 36, No. 1, Spring 2001.\
- Eduardo Moncada and Richard Snyder, “Subnational Comparative Research on Democracy: Taking Stock and Looking Forward,” Forthcoming in *CD-APSA: The Newsletter of the Comparative Democratization Section of the American Political Science Association (APSA)*

#### Recommended:

- Robert H. Bates, Avner Greif, Margaret Levi, Jean-Laurent Rosenthal, and Barry Weingast, *Analytic Narratives*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998.
- Coppedge, Michael. “Thickening Thin Concepts and Theories: Combining Large N and Small in Comparative Politics,” *Comparative Politics* Vol. 31, N° 4 (July 1999): 465-76.
- John Gerring, *Case study research: principles and practices* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
- Evan S. Lieberman, “Nested Analysis as a Mixed Method Strategy for Comparative Research,” *American Political Science Review* 99 (August 2005): 1-18.
- Adcock, Robert N. and David Collier, “Measurement Validity: A Shared Standard for Qualitative and Quantitative Research,” *American Political Science Review* Vol. 95, N° 3 (2001): 529-46.
- Lijphart, Arend, “Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method,” *American Political Science Review* Vol. 65, N° 3 (1971): 682-93.
- Shively, *The Craft of Political Research*, Chs. 4 & 5, on “Problems of Measurement.”
- Shively, *The Craft of Political Research*, Ch. 3, on “Importance of Dimensional Thinking.”
- Barton, Allen H. “The Concept of Property Space in Social Research,” pp. 40-53, in Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Morris Rosenberg (eds.), *The Language of Social Research* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1955).
- Collier, David, Jody LaPorte, and Jason Seawright, “Typologies: Forming Concepts and Creating Categorical Variables” pp. 152-73, in Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier, Henry E. Brady, and David Collier (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2008).
- Munck, Gerardo L. and Jay Verkuilen, “Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy: An Evaluation of Alternative Indices,” pp. 13-37 and 146-49, in Gerardo L. Munck, *Measuring Democracy: A Bridge Between Scholarship and Politics* (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).
- Goertz, Gary, *Social Science Concepts: A User’s Guide* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

*What is all this science nonsense, anyway?*

- Foucault, Michel. 1978. "Method" Pp. 92-102 in *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Volume 1*. New York: Random House Inc.
- Law, John. 2004. *After Method: Mess in Social Science Research*. New York: Routledge. [skim Chapter 1 & read Chapter 2]
- M. Foucault. (1998) "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" in *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault 1954-1984 vol 2*, James Faubion, editor. P 369-392.
- Callon, Michel and Bruno Latour. 1981. "Unscrewing the big Leviathan: how actors macro-structure reality and how sociologists help them to do so" Pp. 277-303 in *Advances in Social Theory and Methodology: Toward an integration of micro- and macro-sociologies*, edited by K.D. Knorr-Cetina and A.V. Cicourel. New York: Routledge.
- Donna Haraway. "Situated Knowledges: the science question in feminism and the privilege of Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies* (14, 3 1988): 575-99.

Theory and theory construction:

- Gorski, Phil. (2004): The Poverty of Deductivism: A Constructive Realist Model of Sociological Explanation. *Sociological Methodology*, vol. 34 (2004, pp. 1-34 (see also the comments and exchanges with Goldstone, Sewell).
- Coleman, James (1986): "Social Theory, Social Research, and a Theory of Action." *American Journal of Sociology* 91 (6): 1309-1335.
- Lieberman, Stanley and Freda B. Lynn (2002): "Barking Up the Wrong Branch: Scientific Alternatives to the Current Model of Sociological Science." *Annual Review of Sociology* 28 (August): 1-19.

### **Meeting 5: The Ethnographer and the Assemblage**

- Burawoy, Michael. 2000. "Reaching for the Global." Pp. 1-39 in M. Burawoy et al., *Global Ethnography*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. 2003. "Making Sense: The Fields in which We Work." Pp. 117-139 in *Global Transformations: Anthropology and the Modern World*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gupta, Akhil. 1995. "Blurred Boundaries: the discourse of corruption, the culture of politics, and the imagined state." *American Ethnologist* 22: 2: 375-402.
- Clifford, James. 1998. "Spatial Practices: Fieldwork, Travel, and the Disciplining of Anthropology." Pp. 185-222 in Gupta, and Ferguson, eds., *Anthropological Locations*.
- Riles, A. (2004), Real time: Unwinding technocratic and anthropological knowledge. *American Ethnologist*, 31: 392-405.  
doi: 10.1525/ae.2004.31.3.392. Available online at:  
<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1525/ae.2004.31.3.392/abstract>
- Holmes and Marcus. 'Cultures of Expertise and the Re-Functioning of Ethnography.' Chapter 13 in Ong and Collier. *Global Assemblages*.

Recommended:

Hedström, Peter and Richard Swedberg, "Social Mechanisms," *Acta Sociologica* Vol. 39, N° 3 (1996): 281-308.

Elster, Jon, *Explaining Social Behavior: More Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), Part I, "Explanations and Mechanisms," pp. 7-66.

Bunge, Mario, "Mechanisms and Explanation," *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* Vol 27, N° 4 (1997): 410-65.

Some How-To Stuff:

- Emerson, Robert, Rachel Fretz & Linda Shaw, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, Ch. 1-2
- Van Maanen, John - *Tales of the Field*, pg. 45-125

### **Meeting 6: After the Field – Departures, Representations, and Reprisals?**

- Mosse, David. 2006. "Anti-social anthropology? Objectivity, objection, and the ethnography of public policy and professional communities." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 12:935-956.
- Wood, Elisabeth Jean. 1997. "Field Research During War: Ethical Dilemmas" Pp. 205-223 in *New Perspectives in Political Ethnography*, edited by J. Auyero, M. Mahler, L. Joseph. New York: Springer-Verlag.
- Katherine S. Newman, 2002. "Qualitative Research on the Frontlines of Controversy." *Sociological Methods and Research* 31 (2): 123-130.
- Scheper-Hughes, "Ire in Ireland," *Ethnography* 1-1, July 2000, pp. 117-140.
- Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. 2004. "Parts unknown: Undercover Ethnography of the Organs- Trafficking Underworld." *Ethnography* 5-1 (March): 29-73.

Recommended:

On the IRB:

- Christopher Shea, 2000. "Don't Talk to the Humans." *Lingua Franca* 10 (6): 27-34.
- "Bureaucracies of Mass Deception"

### **Additional Topics and Resources:**

### **On the Ethnographic Interview (ie. “can I talk to people?” or “How Many People do I need to interview?”)**

- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1999. “Understanding.” Pp 607-626 in *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Auyero, Javier. 2002. “The judge, the cop, the queen of carnival: Ethnography, storytelling, and the (contested) meanings of protest.” *Theory and Society* 31:151-187.
- Wolford, Wendy. 2006. “The Difference Ethnography Can Make: Understanding Social Mobilization and Development in the Brazilian Northeast.” *Qualitative Sociology* 29:335-352.
- Young, Jr., Alford A. 2004. “Experiences in Ethnographic Interviewing About Race: The Inside and Outside of It.” Pp. 187-202 in *Researching Race and Racism*, edited by M. Bulmer and J. Solomos. New York: Routledge.
- Weiss, Robert Stuart. 1995. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interviews*. New York: Free Press. [Chapters 4 & 5]
- Baiocchi, Gianpaolo and Lisa Corrado. 2010. “The Politics of Habitus: Publics, Blackness, and Community Activism in Salvador, Brazil.” *Qualitative Sociology* 33:369-388.

### **On Comparative-Historical Sociology**

- Victoria Bonnell, 1980. “The Use of Theory, Concepts, and Comparison in Historical Sociology.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22 (2): 155-173.
- Theda Skocpol and Margaret Somers, “The Uses of Comparative History in Macrosocial Inquiry,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 2, 1980.
- Theda Skocpol, 1984. “Emerging Agendas and Recurrent Strategies in Historical Sociology.” Pp. 356-391 in *Vision and Method in Historical Sociology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Stanley Lieberson, 2000. “Small N’s and Big Conclusions: An Examination of the Reasoning in Comparative Studies Based on a Small Number of Cases.” Pp. 105-118 in Charles C. Ragin and Howard S. Becker, eds., *What is a Case? Exploring the Foundations of Social Inquiry*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Theda Skocpol, 2003. “Doubly Engaged Social Science: The Promise of Comparative Historical Analysis. Pp. 407-429 in *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*, ed. James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- James Mahoney, 2004. “Comparative-Historical Methodology.” *Annual Review of Sociology* 30: 81-101.
- Pierson, Paul. “Big, Slow-Moving, and ... Invisible,” pp. 177-207, in James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer (eds.), *Comparative Historical Analysis in*

*the Social Sciences* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2003)