Chapter 11
Ethnographic Study

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ABSTRACT

This chapter is about ethnographic study. Ethnography is the subset of social research. The term ethnography originated in the nineteenth century in Western anthropology, where ethnography was an evocative description of the culture of group of people, generally one placed in the outskirts of the west. The endeavor of ethnography is to assess another way of life from the native point of view. This chapter highlights the characteristics of ethnography, when to use ethnography, types of ethnography, procedure, and benefits and issues involved in carrying out ethnographic research.

INTRODUCTION

Fieldwork is the hallmark of cultural anthropology. Whether in the suburbs of Kasol in Himachal Pradesh or on the New Delhi streets, India, an anthropologist goes where people actually live and carries out his/her fieldwork. This means that (s)he watches the ceremonies which are being followed in that particular suburbs, observes how the people wash their clothes, how kids play and how they learn their language by asking questions about their culture, taking field notes, and lot of other things. Conducting ethnography refers to a vast range of activities that often recondite the most fundamental task of all fieldworks. The detail about anthropologic fieldwork is in this chapter.

Ethnography originated from social research. The term 'ethnography' was more popular during the nineteenth century in Western anthropology. Ethnography was an evocative description of the culture which was usually followed in the outskirts of the west. In the middle of nineteenth century ethnography was divergent with,

and was typically seen as similar to, ethnology, which constituted to the past and relative study of non-western societies and cultures. Ethnology was regarded as the center of anthropological work and drew individual ethnographic accounts which were being followed by travelers and missionaries. Ethnology did not get much support from anthropologists since they started doing their own fieldwork, this let to ethnography coming in the fore front. Ethnography was referred to as an integration of both empirical investigation and the theoretical and relative elucidation of community learning and ethnicity.

Since twentieth century, ethnographic fieldwork has been vital to anthropology. In fact, carrying out fieldwork, which is not similar to one's own culture, became a rite of passage required for entry to the anthropologist's tribe. One of the prerequisite of fieldwork was to live with a group of people for longer durations, sometimes more than six months, in order to record, observe and infer their unique way of life, and the attitude and ethics related to it.

Ethnographic work describes culture. The endeavor of ethnography is to weigh another way of life from the native point of view. According to Malinowski (1994), to embrace the native's point of view is the main objective of ethnography, the ethnographer tries to find out the native's relation to life, and what his vision of the world. Fieldwork is carried out for understanding what the world is like to people who have learned to see, speak, think, hear, and act in ways that are different. Ethnographer does not study people, rather he learns from from people.

ABOUT

Distinctiveness From Other Qualitative Research

1. **Ethnography:** According to Hammersly and Atkinson (1983) in ethnographic study the role of the researcher is to participate overtly or covertly in people's daily lives for longer duration inspecting what is happening, listens to what is being communicated by asking relevant questions. In other words the researcher collects all the relevant data which would throw light on issues which concerns the researcher.

2. **Grounded Theory:** Glaser, Strauss, and Corbin (1967) developed grounded theory. In this research methodology the researcher uses game plan which are inductive in nature for analyzing the data. The researcher begins the research with no pre-existing (1) theory; (2) propositions; and (3) hypothesis, or research findings but relatively permits a theory to emerge directly from the data. The aim of the research is to illustrate the topic of study in a proper manner and also to develop adequate theoretical conceptualizations of research findings.

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