

# Qualitative Case Studies

Presentation 14.10.2009 - Group 3

# Case Study

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- ▶ A common way to do qualitative inquiry.
- ▶ A choice of what is to be studied.



# Case study

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Five requirements:

- ▶ Issue choice
- ▶ Triangulation
- ▶ Experiential knowledge
- ▶ Contexts
- ▶ Activities



# The Singular Case

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- ▶ Each case study is a concentrated inquiry into a single case.
- ▶ Ethno methodologists study methods, examining how things get done, but the prime referent in case study is the case
- ▶ The case is a “bounded system”.



# The Singular Case

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Interest in cases:

- ▶ **Intrinsic Case Study:** If the study is undertaken because one wants better understanding of this particular case.
- ▶ **Instrumental Case Study:** If a particular case is examined mainly to provide insight into an issue or to redraw a generalization.
- ▶ **Multiple or Collective Case Study:** It is Instrumental study extended to several cases.



# The Singular Case

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Case Researchers - Seek out:

- ▶ The nature of the case, particularly its activity and functioning.
- ▶ Its historical background.
- ▶ Its physical setting.
- ▶ Other contexts, such as economic, political, legal and aesthetic.
- ▶ Other cases through which this case is recognized.
- ▶ Those informants through whom the case can be known.



# What is a case?

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- ▶ The case is a specific one
- ▶ Concentration on one amongst many



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Stalkers definition:

"A case study is both the process of inquiry and the product of that inquiry"





# "Organizing around issues"

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Issues - stated for generalization or for particularization?

Case studies start out

- ▶ Concern for a topic
- ▶ Pose fore-shadowed problems
- ▶ Concentrate on issue-related observations
- ▶ Interpret patterns of data
- ▶ Reform the issues as assertions



# Case Selection, what to choose?

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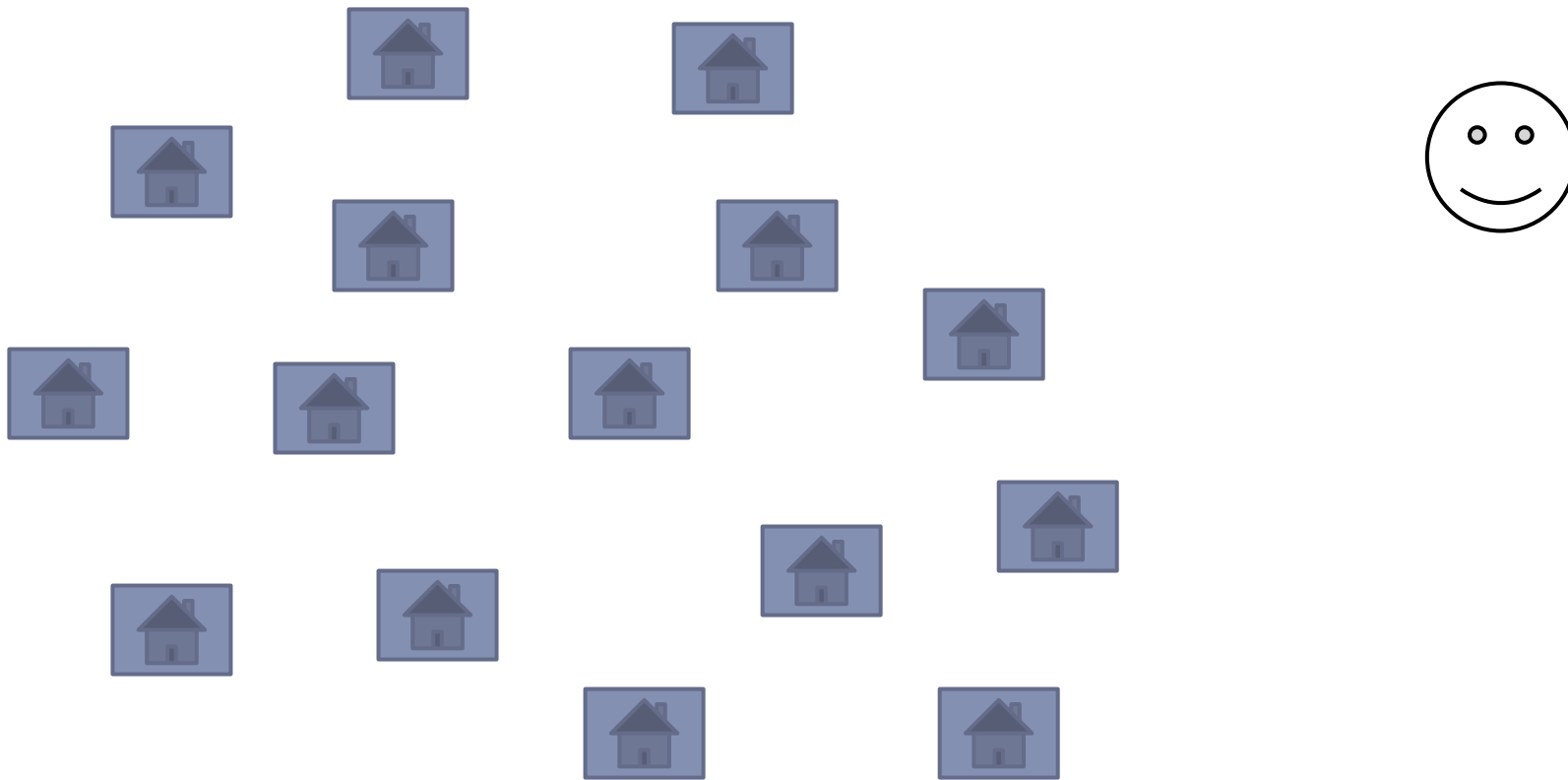
- ▶ Representative selection
- ▶ Variety
- ▶ Opportunity to learn



# Case: Fourth graders & computers

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- ▶ You are studying a program for placing computers in the homes of fourth graders.



# Case: Fourth graders & computers

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- ▶ Attributes of interest
- ▶ Gender
- ▶ Siblings
- ▶ Family structure
- ▶ Home discipline
- ▶ Previous use of computer
- ▶ Other tech in the home



# Case: Fourth graders & computers

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- ▶ Discuss these characteristics with informants
- ▶ Get recommendations
- ▶ Visit several homes
- ▶ Obtain attribute data

The goal: An opportunity to learn



# How to study?

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- ▶ Be reflective
- ▶ Get to know your case
- ▶ Thick descriptions
- ▶ Be interactive
- ▶ Team up



# Shoot for validity

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- ▶ Triangulation
  - ▶ Redundancy of data
  - ▶ Challenge your explanations



# Key to readers' understanding

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- ▶ People learn, understand and remind information from others' "personal" descriptions
- ▶ Someone's knowledge is made of personal opinions and feelings, and use it to build connections with what they learn.
- ▶ This can lead to the conclusion that everyone has a pre-shemed world and influence it all the time



## As a consequence...

- ▶ Transmitting information is rather trying to communicate with readers' personal feelings and experiences than simply exposing cases, scales and statistics. This is part of a researcher's job to get the reader to make connections what he already know
- ▶ Thin border between subjectivity and objectivity.
- ▶ A new case without common things with reader's cannot be understood, yet a new case without distinction won't be noticed.

# Storytelling

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- ▶ Which side of the story are you telling?
  - ▶ Researchers
  - ▶ Actors
- ▶ What's most important?
  - ▶ Understanding of the case



# Storytelling

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- ▶ The report: a researchers dressign of the case's own story
- ▶ How Much?
- ▶ Many ways



# Storytelling

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- ▶ The report seldom in the form of storytelling
- ▶ Often it looks like traditional social science
  - ▶ Statement
  - ▶ Review of literature
  - ▶ Data collection
  - ▶ Analysis
  - ▶ Conclusion



# Comparisons

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- ▶ The case will be compared -
- ▶ Sufficient details
- ▶ Can point out comparisons
  - ▶ Presenting one or more reference cases
  - ▶ Presenting a hypothetical reference



# Comparisons

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- ▶ Intrinsic study –
  - ▶ Often only one case of intrinsic interest
  - ▶ Reader learn most directly from the description of the case
  - ▶ Don't ignore comparison, but don't focus on them
- ▶ Instrumental-
  - ▶ Phenomenon exists within the particular case



# Ethics

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- ▶ Public interest
- ▶ No right to know (no license to invade privacy)
- ▶ Value of research is not likely to outweigh injury to a person exposed

# Ethics

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- ▶ Privacy issues:
  - ▶ Guest
  - ▶ Manners & ethics
  - ▶ Risk exposure
  - ▶ Loss of standing (lose pride, lose his/ her position in a group/society etc.)
  - ▶ Employment
  - ▶ Self-esteem





# Ethics

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Important elements to good ethics:

- ▶ Contract
- ▶ Issues of observation and reportage should be discussed in advance
- ▶ Discuss limits to access
- ▶ Researched should receive drafts
- ▶ Listen to concerns
- ▶ Show caution
- ▶ Advisors and reviewers



# Summary

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## **Major conceptual responsibilities of the qualitative case researcher include:**

- ▶ Bounding the case, conceptualizing the object of study
- ▶ Selecting phenomena, themes, or issues (i.e. the research questions to emphasis)
- ▶ Seeking patterns of data to develop the issues
- ▶ Triangulating key observations and bases for interpretation
- ▶ Selecting alternative interpretations to pursue
- ▶ Developing assertions or generalizations about the case

# Summary

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**Some major stylistic options for case researchers are following:**

- ▶ Make the report a story
- ▶ Compare with other cases
- ▶ Formalize generalizations
- ▶ Description of the researcher
- ▶ Anonymity



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▶ Thank you!

## Ex.on book titles

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- ▶ Intristic: *The Education of Henry Adams & The Swedish School system*
- ▶ Instrumental: *Campus response to a student gunman, On the border of Opportunity: Education, Community and language at the U.S - Mexico Line*
- ▶ Collorative: *Teachers work*

