



A STRATEGY  
FOR  
INNOVATION  
AND CHANGE

## TRADITIONAL HEALTHCARE INTEGRATION NETWORK

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OUR REF

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### Gathering Data.

## Researcher as Witness and Instrument

Qualitative field study differs from other research methods in that it features researchers themselves as observers and participants in the lives of the people being studied. The researcher strives to be a participant in and a witness to the lives of others. This is quite different from other kinds of research on which the investigator is not her – or himself a sustained presence in a naturally occurring situation or setting. Other researchers rely instead on documents, structured interviews, experimental simulations, and other sources that are one or more levels removed from direct observation of and participation in on going natural settings.

The central reason for observing and / or participating in the lives of others is that a great many aspects of social life can be seen, felt, and analytically articulated only in this manner. In subjecting him – or herself to the life's of others and living and feeling those lives along with them, the researcher becomes the primary instrument or medium through which the research is conducted. The researcher seeks to witness how those studied perceive, feel and act in order to understand their perceptions, feelings, and behaviour more fully and intimately. The epistemological foundation of field studies is indeed the proposition that only through direct observation and / or participation can one get close to apprehending those studied and the character of their social worlds and lives.

Social science is the study of a society, or the social life of the human being. It has two branches: Social Anthropology and sociology. Social Anthropology studies small-scale social relationships, with an emphasis on ideas. Sociology studies large-scale social relationships, with an emphasis on behaviour. The two disciplines have a common origin, but have developed in different, but complementary ways.

The object of sociology is the large-scale, industrialized or complex society, while the object of Social Anthropology is the small-scale society, community or network. The interest of sociology is chiefly in behavioural while the interest in Social Anthropology is chiefly in ideas. In human society ideas and behaviour interact. Sociology uses field work or participant observation. This involves vernacular language learning, living and participating in everyday life, interrogation of informant, systematic recording and qualification. A descriptive account of a small-scale human society is called "ethnography".

Social-Cultural Anthropology has two branches: the science of culture and Social science (or the science of society). The science of Culture studies "the learned" aspects of human behaviour- that is to say, form of behaviour that are not due to hereditary. It has also two branches:

Cultural Anthropology and Ethnology. Cultural Anthropology started in the U.S.A; with such scholars as Franz Boas. It studies whole cultures, with an emphasis on material culture and language (of museum studies of Native American cultures by Boas and others). It also studies learning theory, the processes by which human beings are socialized and acquire their culture. Ethnology started in Europe, as the study of material Culture; human artifacts, technology, economy, habitat. There is sometimes confusion when the word "Ethnology" is used for social Anthropology.

Obviously, the human sciences interact and overlap, but social anthropology does not restrict itself to material culture, nor is it primarily interested in material culture. "Ethnology" is not to be confused with "Ethology" (or sociobiology), the study of the "social life" of animals. It is based on external observation and conjecture, and is often used to comment adversely on human society and behaviour.

Physical Anthropology studies human biology, the organisms and workings of the human body. As such it is really part of the study of medicine. It includes a variety of disciplines. Human morphology (or somatology), for example studies and classifies the human forms, according to such criteria as height and build, pigmentation, brain size, shape of head and facial features. It notes the advantages of certain forms in relation to climate and environment. Dark pigmentation is an advantage as a protection against solar radiation. A heavy build conserves heat in a cold climate ( cf the inuit of the Arctic circle). A higher ratio of body surface to body weight helps to conduct heat in a hot climate (cf the Nilotic peoples of equatorial Sudan)

Genetics is the discipline which studies variations in human organisms due to heredity and the processes by which they occur.

It can identify gene pools, or human groupings with common genetic traits. The discipline also studies twinning rates (Monozygotic and dizygotic) in diverse populations. Haematology is the study of blood groups and their geographic distribution. In conjunction with paleontology (the study of fossil remains) physical anthropology studies human evolutions.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries anthropologists believed that human physical characteristics had extensive cultural implications. We now know that such implications are limited. The concept of "face" for example, is notoriously subjective, being based on the visual impact of physical difference. The blood group is a more Scientific category, but it does not correspond to the notion of race. Perceived physical differences may have an impact on human behaviour, e.g. social discrimination and racism.

Genetic phenomena such as twinning may also have social repercussions. Dizygotic twinning (the occurrence of non identical twins) is more common in African and African- American populations than among caucasoids. Twin – rituals are a social reaction to this phenomena and are more common in Africa than in other countries. Modern social-cultural anthropologists are seldom interested in the physical characteristics of the peoples they study.

Physiology studies the conscious and unconsciousness of the mind of a human being. It developed as an experimental science, being based on observed clinical cases. Generalizations were drawn from individual instances without explicit references to socio-cultural factors. Problems arise with socio-cultural application of psychological theory. For this reason, social psychology was developed as a corrective. It studies human psychological responses to varied socio-cultural stimuli ( cf the work of Margaret Maede in New Guinea and Samoa.

Techniques for collecting indigenous knowledge should document what people do and why, within the larger framework of what they know and think (Brookfield 1996), PRA methods can reveal the hidden complexity of ik systems but it is important to have a good sequencing of activities and an overall relaxed approach.

The quality and quantity of information resulting from a particular research activity depend on the trust established between the researchers and the participants. Villagers may need time to assess the researcher as a person, the researcher may need time to change his or her attitudes and behaviour to match that of villagers (Emiry 1997)

The techniques can yield an excessive amount of information, not all of it useful. Although the task of documentation is perceived as technically the easiest, it can be laborious, time consuming, costly, and sometimes disappointing (Adugne 1996). It is important to have clear research objectives (that is good questions) and some knowledge of the subject area. Johannes (1993) explained that the researcher should be able to determine whether the information is new, already well known, or implausible and, most impartially, be able to highlight the potentially significant points.

The THINS vision for the next decades is to assist in promoting greater reliance in tropical developing countries of East Africa on a mission oriented Scientific and technological research, leading directly to the generation of low-cost and viable health management technologies relevant to the locale-specific socio-economic situations, which will help increase food production and improve the health of the rural communities. Social scientists working in cooperation with biological scientists will ensure the development of culturally acceptable and cost-effective health management techniques, strategies, tactics, pathways. This assures that the adoption of improved technological innovations are facilitated by taking into account the needs and constraints of the end-users.

This vision further assures that a growing community of indigenous scientists, technicians, extension, practitioners with expertise and knowledge in health and health research is produced, who can join this pan –tropical efforts to generate, disseminate and apply new knowledge and to develop new technologies. This strongly calls for intensified research and training, effective partnerships and networking, as well as institutional development more conducive for research and development. THIN, because of its Non-Governmental countrywide status and base in a developing country has a significant role to play in these processes.

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