FIELD STUDIES

OBSERVATION

CPSC 544 FUNDAMENTALS IN DESIGNING INTERACTIVE COMPUTATIONAL TECHNOLOGY FOR PEOPLE (HUMAN COMPUTER INTERACTION)

WEEK 02 – CLASS 3

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TODAY

• Admin [5min]
• Field studies [25min]
  • Ethnography
  • Data collection techniques
  • Unstructured data collection

• In class activity [20min]
• Discussion of readings [20min]
• Project overview + group formation [10min]
Any quick questions?
  • e.g., Researcher Journal? Other?

Anyone who is not yet registered (not on Canvas) please see me after class.
LEARNING GOALS

• Understand field studies and explain why field work is an appropriate choice of enquiry method
• Explain when and how to use field methods
• Generate focal points for doing a field study
• Understand ethnography
• Explain observation as a fundamental method in ethnography
• Describe how to conduct an observation session, what to observe, and how to collect and document data
• Characterize pros/cons of observation
WHAT IS A FIELD STUDY?

• field study is a general term that denotes a study that takes place in context

• value of context? what people say and what they do can vary significantly
WHEN TO USE FIELD METHODS

• most often for pre-design / empathize but can be used at any stage

• interviews & observations are often used throughout the design/evaluation cycle
  • there is a difference between using these methods in and out of context
OVERVIEW: DOING FIELD WORK

General steps and considerations:

• Determine research objectives
• Develop focal points (research questions)
• Identify participants and sampling strategy, recruit participants
• Determine data collection methods and design materials
  • E.g., creating interview questions
• Other pragmatics
  • How will data be recorded?
  • What do you need to bring?
  • Ethics, etc.
• Piloting
• Post-session debriefing
• Data analysis
RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

formulate research objectives:

• states what one wants to achieve
• use objectives to set initial scope

e.g., to understand how doctors manage patient records and the implications this activity has for the design of electronic medical records
IDENTIFY FOCAL POINTS
- CRITICAL

2-5 questions that focus & scope the research:
  • driven by research objectives or development goals
  • answers not anticipated or assumed

e.g., what are the triggers that result in a doctor updating (or referencing) a patient record?
IDENTIFY PARTICIPANTS

By subcultures

• Social groups defined by cultural similarities (e.g. Punk Rocker, Harley drivers, …)

• Share norms: clothes, behaviors, activities, language, place (e.g. Italians, …)

By practices

Social practices: cooking, skateboarders, DIY makers

And others…
RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS

• can be more involved than for lab studies:
  • higher threshold, participants allowing you into their “space”
  • often involves more time than a lab study
  • consider appropriate incentive (lab study norms not necessarily appropriate: e.g., $15/hr)

• usually far fewer participants than in a lab study, 3-12 is common (assuming the collection of rich observational data)
SAMPLING METHODS

• finding participants:
  • Quota
  • Purposive
  • Convenience
  • Snowball

• if you have specific groups of interest
  • need some kind of screener that identifies important parameters in your target population
NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY (FOR THIS CLASS)

METHODOLOGY

METHODS
ETHNOGRAPHY ACROSS TIME

• roots in anthropology – exploration of the everyday realities of people living in small scale, non-western societies
  • ethnographers “figuring out” what is going on through participation in social life e.g., by observing, participating, and talking with people.

• today, ethnographic approach is much broader:
  • being applied to large industrialized societies (e.g., workplaces, senior centers, schools; and activities like teaching, financial investing)

• Studies the culture (values, beliefs, behaviors/activities, language) of distinct group within society. The distinct group of people have usually been together over an extended period of time, having similar beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, language.
CHARACTERISTICS OF ETHNOGRAPHY

1. Descriptive
detailed “thick” description of event; get some insight into their meanings of what going on.

2. Method of discovery
when you are not sure what happening

3. Comparative
often comparing one setting to another

4. Naturalistic setting

5. Empathetic
try to feel/experience what they are

6. No assumption
ANOTHER NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

• variation in language:
  • some refer to all field work as ethnography, which isn’t correct
  • There are multiple terms uses:
    • design ethnography
    • applied ethnography (Norman)
    • ethnographically-informed
    • ethnographic approach

• e.g. an interview in context is not an ethnography
  • it has to involve some observation
GAINING ACCESS

Much more difficult than in laboratory studies.

• **Entry**: the process of developing presence and relationship in the designated research setting that makes it possible for the researchers to collect data.

• **Field**: the natural, non laboratory setting or location where the activities which a researcher is interested take place.

• **Building rapport**: Develop good personal relationship with people to get access and information.
DATA COLLECTION METHODS

select methods that will address focal points and that will be appropriate for chosen site, e.g.,

- observation
- interviews
- self-report techniques
  - Diaries and visual stories
- remote data collection techniques
- artifact analysis
OBSERVATION

• goal to capture tacit knowledge and ward against participants trying to please observer

• duration can vary dramatically (small # of days to a year or more!)

• can be person/event/place/or object focused (identified in your focal points)
  • can you think of an example for each?
SPECIFICS ON OBSERVATION

look for what people do, not what they say

• direct observations
  • researcher on site, in context
  • participate as little as possible
  • take notes, audio tape conversational components, collect artifacts, take pictures of artifacts that cannot be taken, sometimes videotape as a backup

• video observations
  • researcher not present, video camera capturing instead
  • can be less intrusive for participant
WHAT TO OBSERVE

- routines & patterns
- language
  - what they and how they say things (do, think, believe)
- actions and activities
  - what they do
  - how they behave
- things and environments
  - what artifacts? spaces?
  - how are these artifacts and spaces: shaped and used
FIELD NOTES

• No point in observation if you don’t record!
• Develop powers of observation, practice mental notes.
• Describe behaviorally: try to avoid interpreting meaning of action.
• Description of individual(s) (in detail).
• Describe physical state of environment (in detail).
• Keep your interpretation separate from notes.
DATA ANALYSIS – MORE IN UPCOMING LECTURE

• circulate notes and transcriptions among team
• hold video analysis sessions
• identify patterns: in behaviour, events, artifacts, within and across individuals
• common techniques:
  • coding data
  • affinity diagrams
• triangulate data where possible

On your own
SUMMARY OF PROS & CONS OF FIELDWORK VS. LAB STUDY

pros:

• comprehensive understanding of current practice
• greater ability to predict the impact of a new or re-designed technology
• provides designers a richer understanding of who + context they are developing for
• greater ability to prioritize design ideas & features

cons:

• time intensive
• could perpetuate negative aspects of current design
• vast amounts of data that can be difficult to analyze
• output is description of practices, not prediction for design
• scale – small number of users
Observation Activity [20 min]

• Imagine you are creating a multiuser interactive table top puzzle and you are trying to understand how people work on puzzles together in the real world...

• Focal points:
  • e.g., How do people arrange the activity in the physical space?
  • [3 min] Come up with 1 or 2 focal points on your own.

• [7 min] In groups of 6-8, and:
  • 3-4 members play and solve a puzzle.
  • 3-4 members observe the first team while playing with puzzles and take notes on interaction, actions, behaviour, and conversation among them.

• [2 min] Consolidate your observation notes
• [8 min] Class level report back
Get into group of 3-4 answering the following questions:

- What surprised you? or
- What you disagreed with?
- other questions that arose from the readings
PROJECT OVERVIEW

• Project description and the first interim milestone:
  • https://blogs.ubc.ca/cpsc544/project/

• First interim milestone: due next Friday
TEAMS FORMATION [10 MIN]

Teams for project formed by students

• Form teams: due by/before Tuesday’s class
  • 3-4 member per team
• combination of different skills and knowledge.
• use google spread sheet (link in Canvas)
• choose a project topic (design opportunity) listed in the project description.
• complete the team contract: due before next Thursday’s class
ON DECK...

Next week’s class (Tuesday) ...

1. Readings (as posted) and researcher journals
2. Review HCI course ethics materials
3. Team formation (3-4 members per team)
4. Note: Team contract is due on Thursday