Rapid Ethnographic Assessment: A Data Collection Case Study

PRESENTERS:

- Nikita Buckhoy
- Michael Henson
- Kathryn Nowinski
- Kimberly Oliver
- Eduardo Piqueras
Presentation Overview

- Introductions
- Overview of Rapid Ethnographic Assessment (REA)
- The Case: Wayne State University Student Center
- Using REA to Enhance Ethnographic Evaluation and Research Methods
Ethnography

• Characteristics
  • Scientific Immersive investigation of:
    • a People and their Culture
    • Their experience and sense-making of their world
  • 12 to 18 months
• Methods include:
  • Interviews
  • Participant Observation
Rapid Ethnographic Assessment

- **Overview**
  - Origin
  - What it is (unique characteristics)
  - What it isn’t
  - Why use it?
  - When is it appropriate?
    - Formative Phase of Research and Evaluation Projects
Rapid Ethnographic Assessment

● **Original Context**
  ● Anthropology, other disciplines, community members with knowledge of local population & area
  ● Used to provide U.S. and international organizations with info on emerging crises
    ● Refugees, disease outbreaks, natural and human-made disasters; need for rapid economic development
  ● Technical assistance provided to strengthen local infrastructure
  ● Added evaluation component to determine intervention impact
RATIONALE

- Can be used in:
  - Rural and urban areas
  - Homo-and heterogeneous communities

- Key features:
  - Triangulation
    - Data collected from many sources, using numerous collection methods
    - Continuous check for data reliability, validity, scope & interpretation
    - Aids in determining optimal intervention methods, and intervention evaluation
  - Interdependent parts
    - Methods used (1) interactively, not sequentially; and (2) in combination with each other
The Case: Assessment of the WSU Student Center
Research Question & Why REA?

● Q: To What Extent Does the Wayne State University Student Center Meet Student Needs?

Why Use Rapid Ethnographic Assessment?
Aim 1

● **Specific Aim A: What is a (student) need?**

● **Methods**
  ● Archived Materials / Texts
  ● Key Informant Interviews
  ● Student Intercept Interviews
  ● Focus Groups
What your students say...

De Andre
• In a renovated student center, I’d like to see more things to do at the underground ...with more games and activities

Alayna
• I’m looking for technology... ...with Mac Computers and flat screens everywhere
• Please add more security cameras for safety
Aim 2

● **Specific Aim B: How were student needs determined?**

● **Methods**
  - Archived Materials / Texts
  - Key Informant Interviews
  - Student Intercept Interviews
What your students say...

Jessica
• I don’t go to the student center because it’s outdated and not inviting
• The Food Court is too crowded
• I need more cozy ‘little spots’ to sit

Amir
• For me, add a healthier variety of food
• We need more sustainable features like water bottle filling stations
Aim 3

- **Specific Aim C**: To what extent does the building itself; (1) internal spaces; and (3) services contribute to meeting student needs?

- **Methods**
  - Observations / Photos
  - Focus Groups
  - Archived Materials / Texts
  - Key Informant Interviews
  - Student Intercept Interviews
Socialization
Design & Aesthetics
Methods: Summarized

- **Intercept Interviews**
  - 48 Students (15 pilot interviews)
  - Randomization – every 4th student

- **Key Informant Interviews**
  - 4 Graduate & 1 Undergrad
  - 5 Administrators
  - 4 Professionals
  - 4 Staff
  - 1 Alumnae Representative

- **Participant Observation**
  (14 on prospective student tour)

- **Focus Groups**
  - #1. 4 students
  - #2. 5 students

- **Texts**
  (newspaper articles; materials from architect, planners, administrators)

- **Photographs**
  (specific dates and times to analyze busiest times)
Analysis

● Assumptions
  ● Everything about a space or building has a social meaning

● Theory
  ● Anthropological theories - space, place, embodiment, culture

● Coding
  ● Initially established codes – access, food, safety/security, gender, social, design/space use, amenities

● Collaborative, Interpretive Triangulated Data Analysis
  ● Data reviewed and aggregated during detailed debriefing(s)
  ● Common Questions
  ● Emergent codes and themes - modernity, sociability, transformation, pride, “real campus”
Methods: Photographic Analysis (Examples)

October 5th: 12 noon
(Facing Starbucks)

October 13th: 3:59pm
(1st floor study area)

October 19th: 4:15pm
(Food Court)
Mixed Use Space?
Reporting, Conclusions & Recommendations

**Reporting**
- Written & Visual
- **MORE THAN METAL & GLASS:**

  AN ANALYSIS OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT and STUDENT NEEDS in the RENOVATED WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY STUDENT CENTER

**Last Word & Considerations:**
- **YES!**
- Opportunities
  - Space & Amenities
  - Student Use & Behavior
  - Non-student Users
- **Challenges**
  - Food
  - Safety
Using REA to Enhance Evaluation & Research Methods

- Encourages use of variety of data sources beyond the usual...
  - Data can be captured in a range of settings
- Allows for deployment of all, and diverse team members
- Supports rapid assessment, intervention, evaluation cycle
- Enhances rigor
  - Cross-checking through triangulation
Our Reflections: Method Strengths, Challenges

Strengths
- Easy to use for a variety of projects
- Qualitative and quantitative methods can be used simultaneously
- Can be used with a number of theoretical models, frameworks

Challenges
- Rapid Process
  - Challenges teachings of slow methodical research
  - Thorough knowledge of all data nearly impossible
  - Difficult to gather info from all key informants, all data sources
  - Only stakeholders and users interviewed
Q & A