

Gov 62 Section 10

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Gov 62 Update

- ▶ Student Research Workshops coming up
 - ▶ April 24, 3-6pm
 - ▶ Research memos due April 21, 3pm
 - ▶ Comments due no later than April 23, 3pm
 - ▶ May 1, 3-6pm
 - ▶ Research memos due April 28, 3pm
 - ▶ Comments due no later than April 30, 3pm
- ▶ You must arrive 5 minutes early to ensure a prompt start to the workshop.
- ▶ See Prof. Soroka's memo on Canvas

Today's plan

- ▶ Review culture/ethnography
- ▶ Discuss exemplary readings
(Cramer-Walsh/Putnam/Parkinson)

What is culture?

Swidler - Culture influences action by shaping a repertoire or “tool kit” of habits, skills, and styles from which people construct “strategies of action.”

Wedeen - Culture as “semiotic practices”

- ▶ What languages and symbols *do* - how they are inscribed in concrete actions and how they operate to produce observable political effects
- ▶ Or as a lens - focusing on how and why actors invest political phenomena with meaning

Ethnography (according to Kubik)

- ▶ Ethnography is used to study culture or other aspects of the broadly conceived social, such as economy, power (politics), or social structure.
- ▶ Its essence is participant observation, a disciplined immersion in the social life of a given group of people.

Ethnography (according to Kubik)

Ethnography is not simply. . .

- ▶ In-depth interviewing (as opposed to surveys)
- ▶ Case studies (as opposed to large-n statistical analysis)
- ▶ Process tracing (as opposed to finding correlations)
- ▶ Interpretation of meaning (as opposed to studying “objective” social facts)

What makes a study ethnographic?

- ▶ Relying on participant observation of considerable length

Ethnography (according to Kubik)

Three types of ethnography:

- ▶ Positivistic ethnography
 - ▶ Studying informal dimensions of power, hidden faces of power, inaccessible mechanisms of power, etc.
- ▶ Interpretive ethnography
 - ▶ Exposing relations between power and meaning in concrete situations
- ▶ Postmodern ethnography
 - ▶ Capturing dynamics of power and identity in an increasingly interconnected and globalized world

Benefits of Ethnography

- ▶ Can reconstruct informal workings of formal power structures
- ▶ Study networks of collective action
- ▶ Analyze mechanisms, moments of change
- ▶ Decenter the researcher's biases
- ▶ Build trust with informants, gaining information about insider perspectives and experiences
- ▶ Ability to identify and analyze “meta-data” – spoken and unspoken thoughts and feelings
- ▶ Attention to culture or social relations as a unit of analysis, not individual

Exemplary Reading(s)

- ▶ What is the main research question and/or puzzle?
- ▶ What is the methodology? How and why is this methodology used?
- ▶ What are the main findings/conclusions?
- ▶ Critically assess the article:
 - ▶ Name at least one aspect of the article that is done well or succeeds.
 - ▶ Name at least one aspect of the article that falls short or could be improved.