

ANH101: Anthropology

Lizzie Hull

Department of Anthropology & Sociology, SOAS
Leverhulme Centre for Integrative Research on Agriculture and Health
e.hull@soas.ac.uk

20th June 2016



Makhathini, South Africa



What is Anthropology?

***Anthropos:** human*

***Logos:** word*

= The study of humans

What is Anthropology?

Anthropos: human

Logos: word

= The study of humans

What does it mean to be **human**?

Deductive and inductive reasoning

Deduction:

Theory → Hypothesis → Observation → Confirmation

Induction:

Observation → Pattern → Tentative hypothesis → Theory

Qualitative research methods

Research methods in anthropology

- Participant observation
- Interviews
- Surveys/questionnaires
- Focus groups
- Oral histories
- Archival and other documentary sources
- Photography and video

Participant observation is the primary method used by anthropologists

Participant observation is the primary method used by anthropologists

- Immersion in social setting

Participant observation is the primary method used by anthropologists

- Immersion in social setting
- Participation in the daily activities of research informants

- ‘...subjecting yourself, your own body and your personality, and your own social situation, to the set of contingencies that play upon a set of individuals, so that you can physically and ecologically penetrate their circle of response to their social situation, or their work situation.’

- *Erving Goffman*

Participant observation is the primary method used by anthropologists

- Immersion in social setting
- Participation in the daily activities of research informants

Participant observation is the primary method used by anthropologists

- Immersion in social setting
- Participation in the daily activities of research informants
- Inscription of observed or experienced realities

Participant observation is the primary method used by anthropologists

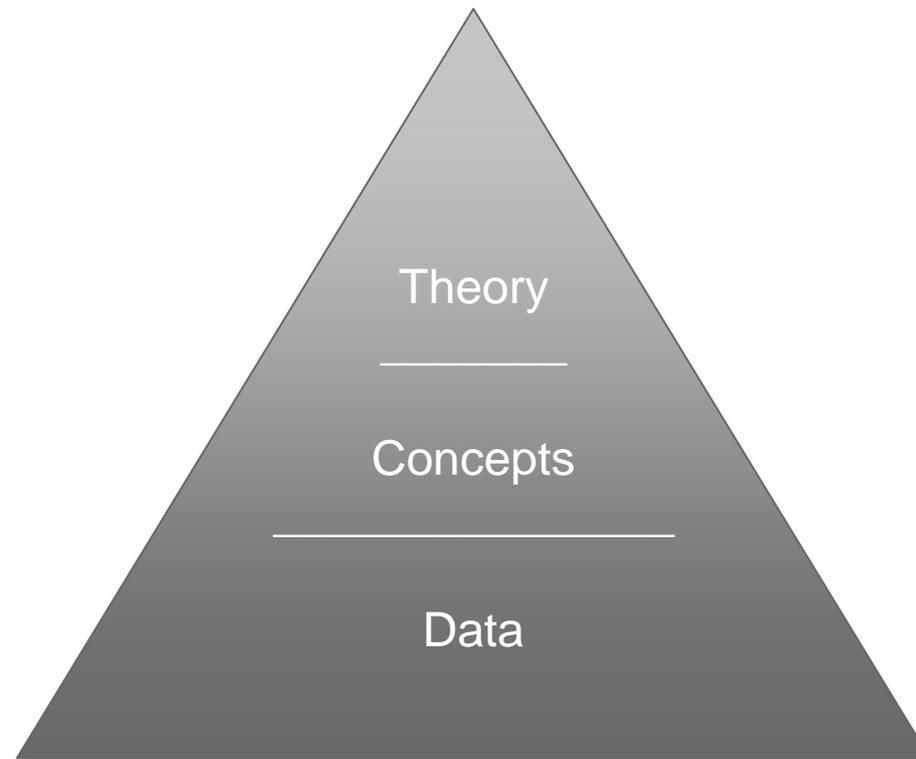
- Immersion in social setting
- Participation in the daily activities of research informants
- Inscription of observed or experienced realities

- Emic and etic theories

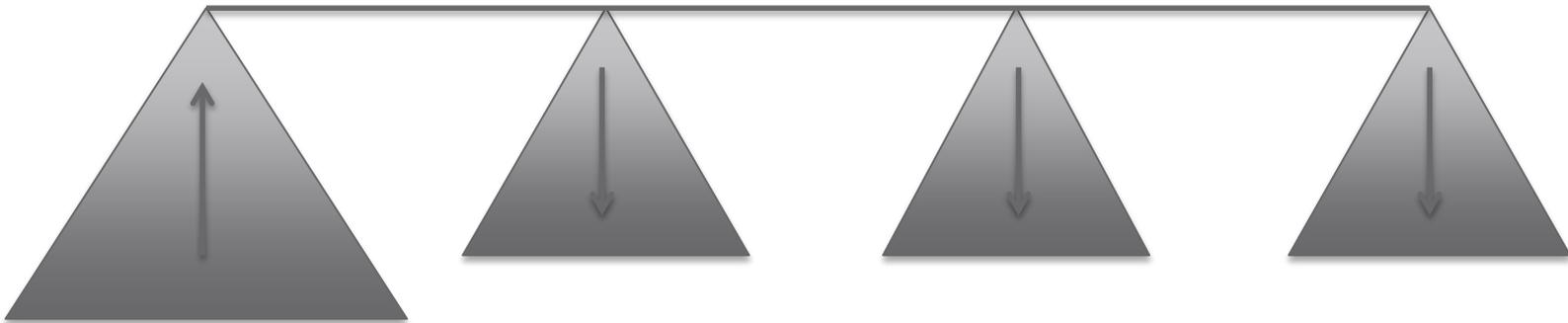
Data analysis

- Close reading of 'fieldnotes' and other data
- Qualitative analytic coding to identify analytic categories/concepts
 - Open coding
 - Focused coding
- Theoretical memos
- Theoretical proposition

Levels of analysis



From the specific to the general...



Why use participant observation?

- Accessibility
- Reduces “reactivity”
- Increases relevance of survey questions
- Creates intuitive understanding
- Many research problems require it



Land access/
tenure

Access to labour/
credit/inputs

Ecology
e.g. soil quality

Rising
incomes

Risk/
low returns

Cultural acceptability/
aspirations



~~Land access/
tenure~~

Access to labour/
credit/inputs

~~Ecology
e.g. soil quality~~

~~Rising
incomes~~

~~Risk/
low returns~~

~~Cultural acceptability/
aspirations~~

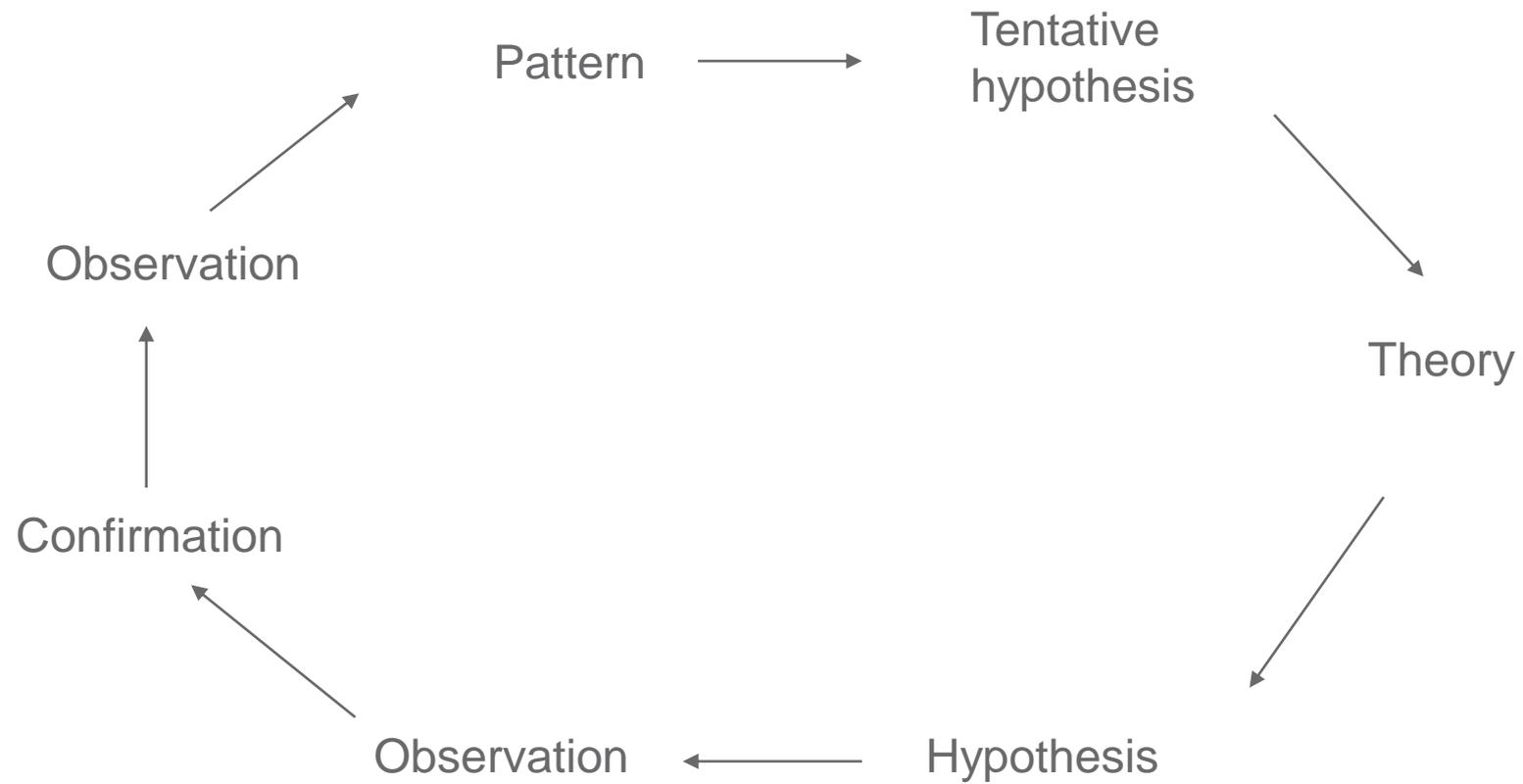
Deductive and inductive reasoning

Deduction:

Theory → Hypothesis → Observation → Confirmation

Induction:

Observation → Pattern → Tentative hypothesis → Theory



Questions?

How can anthropology help in agri-health research?

- Qualitative methods create access to certain kinds of environments
- Connecting policy and practice
- Anthropology can identify the negative or unintended consequences of interventions
- Anthropology identifies the social determinants of disease

1. Bridget O’Laughlin, *Konzo* paralysis in Mozambique

- 1981 - Outbreak of an irreversible spastic paralysis of the legs
- *Konzo* is a form of cyanide poisoning resulting from the high concentration of linamarin found in the edible leaves, peel and roots of cassava
- It is caused by excessive consumption of unprocessed or poorly processed cassava
- *Konzo* is associated with drought
- However, why did *Konzo* occur during this drought and not others?
- ‘Politics, not drought, was arguably the most important cause of *Konzo*’

O’Laughlin, B. 2013. ‘Land, Labour and the Production of Affliction in Rural Southern Africa’, *Journal of Agrarian Change* 13 (1), 175-196.

2. Mark Hunter, HIV/AIDS in South Africa

- Uses anthropology to challenge stereotypes of “African promiscuity”
- 2 years of ethnographic fieldwork in Mandeni, KwaZulu-Natal
- Patterns of intimacy have changed rapidly over a period of 60 years, due to the break down of the migrant labour system and the emergence of chronic unemployment from 1970s onwards
- Economic precariousness and unemployment, not cultural exceptionalism, explains the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS in KwaZulu-Natal

Hunter, M. 2010. *Love in the Time of AIDS: Inequality, Gender and Rights in South Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Problems and challenges

- Different methodologies make it a challenge to work across disciplines
- Time scales can be incommensurable
- Anthropology unearths inconvenient truths
- No quick-fix solutions

Why do rapid ethnographic assessment?

- Rapid assessments provide results and recommendations that are practical and based on local realities
- They provide a richer understanding of the underlying causes of poor health outcomes
- They are relatively low cost
- They can compliment other forms of public health data
- They are useful in contexts where interventions require direct engagement with local communities

What does rapid ethnographic assessment involve?

- Focused scope
- Based on anthropological and qualitative research methods
- Team based
- Small purposive samples

What does rapid ethnographic assessment look for?

- Local categories and terms
- What do people do?
- How and why do they do it?
- How do they feel about what is occurring?
- Patterns and relationships

Problems and challenges

- Different methodologies make it a challenge to work across disciplines
- Time scales can be incommensurable
- Anthropology unearths inconvenient truths
- No quick-fix solutions

Thank
you! e.hull@soas.ac.uk

