

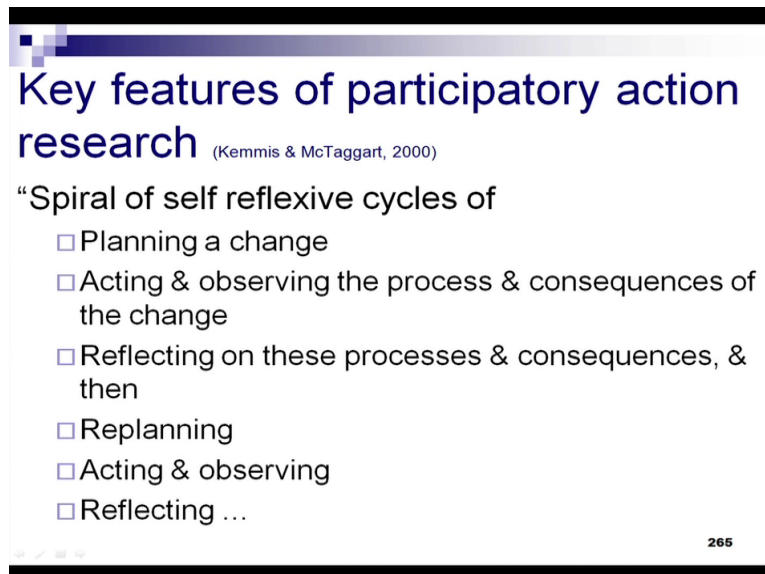
Qualitative Research Methods
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Lecture 28
Participatory Action Research (Contd.)

Welcome back to the NOC course titled qualitative research methods, my name is Aradhna Malik and I'm helping you with this course and we have been discussing strategies of inquiry and we started a discussion on participatory action research in the previous class, we will continue with that in this lecture also.

So we discussed the epistemological, so we discussed the different perspectives, we discussed traditions in and aspects of the study of practice and we discussed epistemological perspectives in PAR and then now we will move on to the key features of participatory action research.

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Key features of participatory action research (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000)

“Spiral of self reflexive cycles of

- Planning a change
- Acting & observing the process & consequences of the change
- Reflecting on these processes & consequences, & then
- Replanning
- Acting & observing
- Reflecting ...

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Now when we talk about participatory action research, again this is from this paper by Kemmis and McTaggart from the book called handbook of qualitative research methods and they discuss the participatory action research as a “spiral of self reflection cycles” like I told you plan change, the situation presents a need for change to the people, who can make the change.

So the stimulus comes from two things, the stimulus comes from the situation that requires the change, the stimulus also comes from within the researcher, who wants to make a change. Because it has to be a willingness, that has to be expertise, there has to be a need for change and these two needs to come together and they need to be mapped together. So planning a change becomes the first step, I need to make a change, what needs a change?

This community need to change, do I have the skills necessary to, does this community can this community use my skill set and that's when these to come together and the change is planned. Then acting and observing the process and consequences of the change, so we make the change and then we observe the consequences of that changed, then we reflect on the implementation, when we talk about reflexivity, we are talking about reflection, we are talking about how the change that has been made has really impacted the situation.

So we reflect on the processes and consequences of acting on our plan for change. And then we re-plan, we react, we observe, we reflect and the cycle goes on, so this cycle is very, very important in participatory action research. The community informs us what we need to do and we take the inputs from the community, we do what is required, we observe the implementation, then we think about whatever about the impact.

The implementation has had on the community, we go back, we assess this in terms of the resources we have, in terms of for the change that might be required in the community. We make another plan based on the inputs from the first plan or the previous plans, then we make another change, then we observe again, then we reflect again, this cycle continues and that is the essence of participatory action research, the cycle of planning, reflecting, analyzing putting back into the community is what really constitutes participatory action research.

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Benefits of action research (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000)

- ‘Through action research, people can come to understand their social & educational practices as located in particular material, social, & historical circumstances that produced (& reproduce) them - & in which it may be possible to transform them.’

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The benefits of action research, “through action research, people can come to understand their social and educational practices as located in particular material, social historical circumstances that produced them and in which may be possible to transform them.” Now when we reflect on things, when we look at how things have happened, when you look at why things have taken place to with the way they have.

We are able to observe our social practices, we are able to observe, the we are able to understand the social environment much better, we are able to understand how interactions have contributed to the social environment and we are able to make changes wherever possible, that is only possible after going into the situation and seeing things from the perspective of the insider and outsider.

And bringing his perspectives together and an understanding, so I am talking about fifth epistemological stands that we talked about in the last lecture which is this,

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Epistemological perspectives (Contd.)

(Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000)

■ Practice as reflexive, to be studied dialectically:

- "... sees the individual & the social, & the objective & the subjective, as related aspects of human life & practice, to be understood dialectically – i.e., as mutually opposed (& often contradictory) but mutually necessary aspects of human, social, & historical reality, in which each aspect helps to constitute the other."
- "... necessary to understand practice as enacted by individuals who act in the context of history & in ways constituted by a vast historical web of social interactions among people."
- "... [tries to] recognize not only that people's actions are caused by their intentions & circumstances, but also that people cause intentions & circumstances – i.e., that people are made by action in the world, & that they also make action & history."

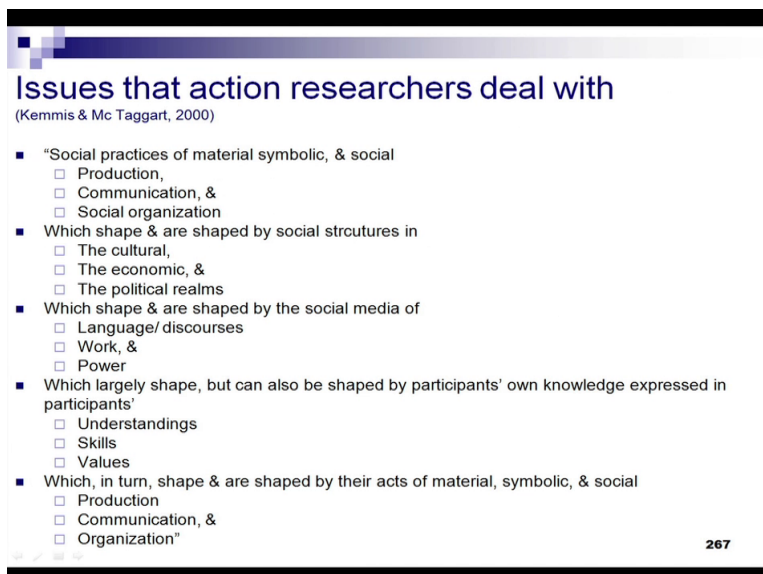
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We talked about the last one, practice and reflexive to be studied dialectically, we understand that there will be different perspectives and we go in and we try and understand how these different, very conflicting perspectives interacting with each other, which process is emerging and why and then we look into the reasons of where one can make a change, which change will be acceptable, which change will not be acceptable.

And why, because once we know what is assuming more importance, what is becoming dominant, what is you know, what we are able to do, only then can we plan to do things they could be a million things that may be required, but we are only able to do certain percentage of the things that are required, because of various situations surrounding the whole or various aspects of the situation.

So analysis helps us understand what can and will be possible and acceptable to the community at large okay and then the transformation can occur.

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Issues that action researchers deal with

(Kemmis & Mc Taggart, 2000)

- "Social practices of material symbolic, & social
 - ☐ Production,
 - ☐ Communication, &
 - ☐ Social organization
- Which shape & are shaped by social structures in
 - ☐ The cultural,
 - ☐ The economic, &
 - ☐ The political realms
- Which shape & are shaped by the social media of
 - ☐ Language/ discourses
 - ☐ Work, &
 - ☐ Power
- Which largely shape, but can also be shaped by participants' own knowledge expressed in participants'
 - ☐ Understandings
 - ☐ Skills
 - ☐ Values
- Which, in turn, shape & are shaped by their acts of material, symbolic, & social
 - ☐ Production
 - ☐ Communication, &
 - ☐ Organization"

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Issues that action researchers deal with, I'm sorry for small font, but then it's very important to put all this on the same page, so I've done that here. Social practices of material symbolic and social production, communication and social organization, which shape and are shaped by social structures in the cultural, the economic and political realms, which shape and are shaped by the social media of language, work and power.

Which largely shape, but can also be shaped by participants own knowledge expressed in the participants' understandings, skills and values. Which in turn, shape and are shaped by their acts of material, symbolic and social production, communication and organization. This really sums of the old cycle, we are a product of the situation, but we are also contributed to the situation.

When the sides are given to you, please read this slide, you know of course here it the same thing that is continuing, but this will be given to you and pieces, so please read the slides and you will see that this is really the entire cycle of the effects on, particular practices within situations. So social practices are influencing the researchers and whatever the researchers do as a result of the influence is also in turn influencing the social practices, this is the entire cycle summed up in this one slide, okay.

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Key features of participatory action research (Contd.)

(Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000)

- “[PAR] is a social process: [PAR] deliberately explores the *relationship between the realms of the individual & the social*. [...] [PAR] is a process followed in research in settings, such as those of education & community development, where people, individually & collectively, try to understand how they are formed & re-formed as individuals & in relation to one another in a variety of settings.”
- “[PAR] is participatory: [...] It is a process in which each individual in a group tries to get a handle on the way his/ her knowledge shapes his/ her sense of identity & agency & reflects critically on how that present knowledge frames & constrains his/ her action.”



Key features of participatory action research, some more features here. “PAR is a social process: PAR deliberately explores the relationship between the realms of the individual and the social. PAR is a process followed in research in settings, such as those of education and community development, where people individually and collectively, try to understand how they are formed and re-formed as individuals and in relation to one another in a variety of settings.”

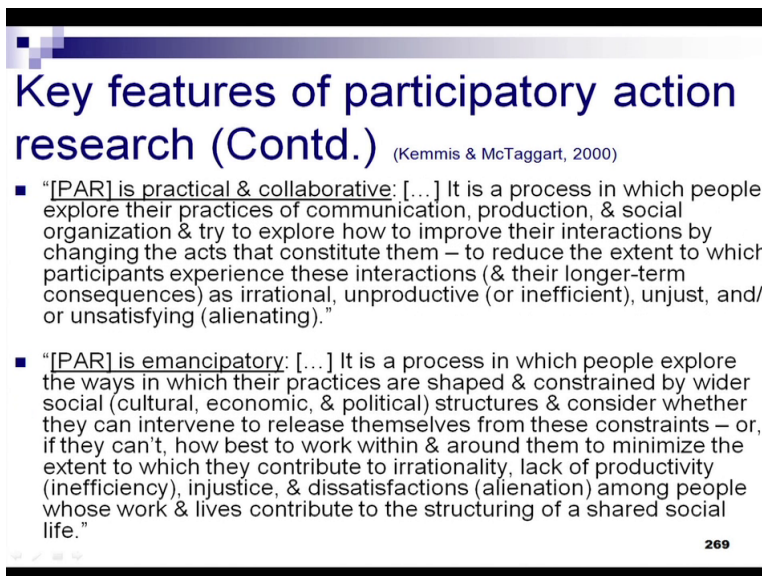
PAR informs us that not only are we being influenced by the community, we are also influencing the community, and we are also influencing the social environment that is how it becomes a social process.

“ PAR is participatory: it is a process in which each individual in a group tries to get a handle on the way his or her knowledge shapes his or her sense of identity and agency, agency is what you can and cannot do, what you think you are capable of doing, what you are able to accomplish and reflects critically on how that present knowledge frames and constrains his or her actions.”

So it is a process in which each individual tries to understand or become comfortable with the way his or her knowledge shapes, his or her sense of reality, what do we know? Why or what we know? How does what we know? Informs us about the situation that we are in and how does what we know help us, do what we want to do in the community, how does what we want to do in the community influence the community itself, okay.

So how does what we know limit us or give us an opportunity, to do what we think the community needs done okay.

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Key features of participatory action research (Contd.) (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000)

- “[PAR] is practical & collaborative: [...] It is a process in which people explore their practices of communication, production, & social organization & try to explore how to improve their interactions by changing the acts that constitute them – to reduce the extent to which participants experience these interactions (& their longer-term consequences) as irrational, unproductive (or inefficient), unjust, and/or unsatisfying (alienating).”
- “[PAR] is emancipatory: [...] It is a process in which people explore the ways in which their practices are shaped & constrained by wider social (cultural, economic, & political) structures & consider whether they can intervene to release themselves from these constraints – or, if they can't, how best to work within & around them to minimize the extent to which they contribute to irrationality, lack of productivity (inefficiency), injustice, & dissatisfactions (alienation) among people whose work & lives contribute to the structuring of a shared social life.”

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Then “PAR is practical and collaborative: it is a process in which people explore their practices of communication, production, and social organization and try to explore how to improve their interactions by changing the acts that constitutes them - to reduce the extent to which participants experience these interactions and longer-term consequences as irrational, unproductive or inefficient, unjust, and or unsatisfying of alienating.

So we use interactions, it is practical, is collaborative, people try and understand how their interactions shape, what is acceptable to the community and large. They also try and understand how these interactions inform them about what is not acceptable to the community. So it is collaborative and it is practical, participatory action research helps us understand what will be acceptable to the community and why and how do we know that is acceptable.

We know that in an through interaction and that's where we communications student in, me comes out and bias towards communication I feel that communication is what makes the world go round, I am declaring it in the open, in an open forum that is known to everybody worldwide, so I guess this is the reason. So participatory action research is collaborative, so interaction is what informs you what is going to be acceptable in the social milieu and what is not going to be acceptable.

Then “PAR is emancipatory: it is a process in which people explore the ways in which their practices are shaped and considered by wider social structures and consider whether they can intervene to release themselves from the is constraints - or if they cannot, how best to work within and around them to minimize the extent to which they contribute to irrationality, lack of productivity, injustice and dissatisfactions among people whose work and lives contribute to the structuring of a shared social life.”

So it is a process that helps people understand how they, whatever is happening is shaped by the environment they live in and it also helps people understand what we can do to improve the situation, that they see as unjust, unfair, uncomfortable, for want of a better umbrella word, uncomfortable at best you know that would encompass, unjust, unsatisfactory not productive, irrational, all of this can be clubbed under one umbrella term called uncomfortable, undesirable.

And then people see what is undesirable and then they realize that okay these are the social structures that I am working with, this is how the social structures constrain me, these are the opportunities at afforded to me, because of the social structure. So what can I do to make this undesirable and uncomfortable situation, a little more desirable, a little more comfortable that is what participatory action research does.

It is emancipator, it helps us improve the lives of people who are being affected by the situations that are there knowingly or unknowingly okay.

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Key features of participatory action research (Contd.)

(Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000)

- “[PAR] is critical: [...] It is a process in which people deliberately set out to contest & to reconstitute irrational, unproductive (or inefficient), unjust, &/or unsatisfying (alienating) ways of interpreting & describing their world (language/ discourses), ways of working (work), & ways of relating to others (power).”
- “[PAR] is recursive (reflexive, dialectical): “[PAR] aims to help people to investigate reality in order to change it (Fals Borda, 1979, in Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000) & to change reality in order to investigate it – in particular by changing their practices through a spiral of cycles of critical & self-critical action & reflection, as a deliberate social process designed to help them learn more about (& theorize) their practices, their knowledge of their practices, the social structures that shape & constrain their practices, & the social media in which their practices are expressed.”

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“PAR is critical process: it is a process in which people deliberately set out to contest and to reconstitute irrational, unproductive, unjust and or unsatisfying ways of interpreting and describing their world ways of working and ways of relating to others.” so people go out and say okay they identify what is uncomfortable and undesirable, again I'm using the umbrella term.

I am not going into the details here and then they start, it is critical they are the researchers and given or the researchers find an opportunity through participatory action research to identify whatever is uncomfortable and undesirable for the larger masses. And then they get a chance to contest it, they get a chance to say okay, this is not acceptable, this shouldn't be done, this is undesirable, can we change it so that is what participatory action research helps them do.

“It is recursive it is reflexive and dialectical: PAR aims to help people to investigate reality in order to change it and to change reality in order to investigate it. So we change reality, we investigate reality, we can we find out what the situations are like, we Institute change through reaction part of the participatory action research, then we take feedback from the environment and we see how the change has affected the environment, so that inform this about what the environment can be affected by.

So the changed need to further investigation of the reality and further investigation of the reality gives us another chance to change the reality, so reflexive cycle, what can I do? What

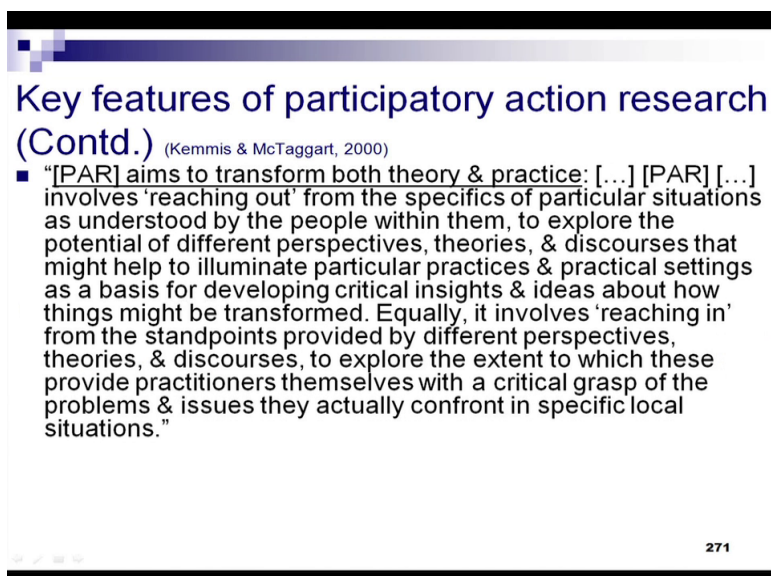
can I do? What can I do? To make this to make people a little more comfortable, what can I do? to make the community a little more comfortable and then in this what can I do, what must I do, we keep thinking, we do things, we asses them, we do things, we assess them.

We go back and forth between doing, assessing, thinking, observing and then we, so this is the opportunity that participatory action research gives us, it gives us a chance to go and see what can be done, in order to change reality, in order to investigate it, in particular by changing the practices through a spiral of cycles of critical and self-critical action and reflection.

As a deliberate social process designed to help them learn more about and theories their practices, their knowledge of their practices, the social structures that shape and constrain their practices and social media in which their practices are expressed.” Here is where communication come in, so the expression of social practices also helps with reflexivity and it also helps generate opposing points of view.

And it also helps us see more into or understand more about why and how certain practices, certain aspects of the community, become more prevalent, become assume a higher importance than other aspects and its this constant reflection, constant going back and forth, that helps us understand more and how do we do it, in and through expression, okay.

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Key features of participatory action research (Contd.) (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000)

- “[IPAR] aims to transform both theory & practice: [...] [IPAR] [...] involves ‘reaching out’ from the specifics of particular situations as understood by the people within them, to explore the potential of different perspectives, theories, & discourses that might help to illuminate particular practices & practical settings as a basis for developing critical insights & ideas about how things might be transformed. Equally, it involves ‘reaching in’ from the standpoints provided by different perspectives, theories, & discourses, to explore the extent to which these provide practitioners themselves with a critical grasp of the problems & issues they actually confront in specific local situations.”

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“PAR aims to transform both theory and practice: PAR involves ‘reaching out’ from the specific of particular situations as understood by the people within them, to explore the

potential of different perspectives, theories and discourses that might help to illuminate particular practices and practical settings as a basis for developing critical insights and ideas about how things might be transformed.

You see things from the inside and you reach out and you say okay, what can I do. Equally it involves 'reaching in' from the standpoints provided by different perspectives, theories and discourses, things on the outside, that do not explain particular situation, particular social situations, so equally involves reaching in from the standpoints provided by different perspectives.

Theories and discourses, to explore the extent to which these provide practitioners themselves with a critical grasp of the problems and issues they actually confront and specific local situations." So as people who are informed about the theory we reach in, we see okay, this is what you learnt about the social situation in general, how does this apply to this particular situation.

So we take theory, we go in to the field and then we see whether there is a match between what we know about the social situation and what is really happening in the field or not, we also go in to the field see what is happening, then we reach out and we try and understand it from the perspective of an outsider. So it gives us a chance to do both, participatory action research, when we are at the reflection point, then we are looking at things objectively, when we are participating we are inside the situation.

So it gives us a chance to bring both the perspective of the outsider and insider together, which is why I love this theory, because it seems like something that you know anybody who has a lot of energy would like to do. You want to see results, you want to see, you want to implement your solutions, you want to see whether those solutions have really done, what they was planned to do or why they were generated. So that's why this is one big, very big favorite of mine among these strategies okay.

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Bottomline (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000)

- “Participatory action research is a form of ‘insider research’ in which participants move between two thought positions: on one side, seeing themselves, their understandings, their practices, & the settings in which they practice from the perspective of insiders who see these things in an intimate, even ‘natural’ way that may be subject to the partiality of view characteristic of the insider perspective; & on the other side, seeing themselves, their understandings, their practices, & the setting from the perspective of an outsider (sometimes by adopting the perspective of an abstract imagined outsider, & sometimes by trying to see things from the perspective of real individuals or role incumbents in & around the setting) who do not share the partiality of the inside view but who also do not have the benefit of ‘inside knowledge’.”

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The bottomline here is that “participatory action research is a form of ‘insider research’ in which participants move between two thought positions: on one side seeing themselves, their understanding their practices and the settings in which they practice from the perspective of insider who see these things in an intimate, even ‘natural’ way that may be subject to the partiality of view characteristic of the inside a perspective;

So we understand things yes this is how this would be, these are the things that are affecting it, there is partiality view, these are things only insiders can understand, because it's not possible to explain all the connections between different things that are affecting a situation, so partiality of view comes in.

And on the other side seeing themselves, their understandings, their practices and the setting from the perspective of an outsider, sometimes by adopting the perspective of an abstract imagined outsider and sometimes by trying see things from the perspective of real individuals or role in incumbents in and around the setting, who do not share the partiality of the inside view but who also do not have the benefit of ‘inside knowledge’.”

So it also gives us the chance to completely go on the outside and say okay what if I did not have the phase, this is what we were talking about yesterday also, in the previous lectures what if I did not have this view of the situation from the inside, what would I see, so participatory action research helps us this. You go in, you do things with the insider, you make the changes, you go into the field see things, feel things from the perspective of the

insider, come back outside and analyze what has been done and then see things from the perspective of a person who will not have those biases.

So it is very complicated, it's very complex, I won't say it's complicated, is very complex, but is also very and reaching in that way and that is all we have time for in this lecture and that is all I would like to tell you about participatory action research at this point. My goal here is to leave you with this seeds, craving for more knowledge about each of these strategies; if I give you everything in one shot, then your interest could win.

So I want you to start thinking about what else participatory action research could be, this is a bird's eye view, please think about it, please post your questions on the forum, when you go through this lecture and we will have a very nice engaging discussion on the forum itself. So thank you very much for listening and we will continue with some more insights into qualitative research methods in the next class, thank you.