Folknography: The Foundation and Rationale

By:

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Abstract

In this treatise, the author presents a theoretical, philosophical, and pragmatic basis for the qualitative research method called folknography. Between the more narrowly focused method known as rapid rural appraisal and the broader, more difficult to define method called ethnography, this article presents folknography as the method that fills a necessary niche in the area of qualitative research.
Introduction

The purpose of this article is to introduce and provide the basic foundation and rationale for the qualitative research approach known as folknography. This field research approach has similarities to others found in the list of qualitative methods. In order to properly explain the importance and performance of this unique research method called folknography, the foundations and rationale will be detailed.

Introducing Folknography

Folknography, as a research method, evolved through a series of recent field experiences by blending elements of rapid rural appraisal, ethnography, and concepts of phenomenology. Folknography also employs the use of the narrative paradigm theory (Fisher 1995) along with the use of technology. The method can be implemented in metro, urban, or rural qualitative research projects, allowing collaborative and multidisciplinary participation.

Folknography operates as a modified version of rapid rural appraisal and ethnography. Folknography is designed to assist researchers who are interested in gaining a better understanding of the subjective perspective of a particular folk selected for investigation. A literal interpretation of the term folknography suggests folk refers to people of a specified kind (www.folknography.org), while graphy is a direct reference to the use of graphic recording methods during research. Folknographers gather raw data
for the purpose of gaining an empathetic understanding of the social reality experienced by a particular folk.

The Roots of Folknography

The old adage that “necessity breeds invention” best explains the development of this method. Even though other qualitative methods offered many attractive elements, no one method seemed to fit the need of searching out the perceptions of the common folk. In early research projects, the author engaged in ethnographic studies, but found the method lacked sufficient specific delineations. The author then migrated to rapid rural appraisal, but found this method too restrictive to agricultural applications. No method seemed to fit the need when studying a particular social group, hence the development of folknography.

Each method and theory contributed elements essential to the necessary roots of the method called folknography. The main focus of this method is to give voice to the common folk resulting from mixing elements of various methods along with addition of other, important components.

Reviewing the Roots

Rapid Rural Appraisal

First, folknography shares several elements found in rapid appraisal, but also sometimes called rapid rural appraisal, rapid reconnaissance, or participatory rapid appraisal (Sweetser, 1995). In this method, often designated by initials such as RRA, the researcher moves into an area and
asks several questions of a rural population or ethnic group. Rapid appraisal research method assumes that local, rural people have valuable knowledge regarding situations that affect their lives. The method also allows the locals to identify solutions to certain problems. This method provides for efficient and rapid identification of problems, issues, and situations affecting the lives of the rural peoples and communities (Sweetser, 1995, Beebe, 1995 Gibbs, 1985 Patton, 2002). Proponents suggest that rapid rural appraisal provides a much more thorough, comprehensive, insightful framework in which analysis can be achieved (Dunn, 1994; Chambers, 1992; Chambers, 1991).

Rapid appraisal is a process during which the researchers begin with information collected in advance, say through literature review or other research projects, and then progressively expand their knowledge and deepen their understanding by gathering new information through semi-structured interviews and direct observations, and sharing their interpretations of this new information as it is collected (Chambers, Sweetser, Beebe, 1995).

James Beebe (1995), an experienced USAID field research agent, maintains that the rapid appraisal research method rests on three basic principles:

1. *Engages a systems perspective.* The elements of the system cannot necessarily be identified in advance, nor can decisions be made in advance as to which of the elements of the system are most important for understanding a given situation. Understanding is
gained only when the researcher listens carefully to what interviewees mention.

2. **Employs triangulation.** This refers to the systematic combination of observations made by various research team members coming from different backgrounds or disciplines. Rapid appraisal practitioners must triangulate methods of data collection, sources of information, and researcher’s observations.

3. **Iterative data collection and analysis.** Researchers spend time in interaction, discussions, meetings, and contemplation sometimes including not only the appraisal team, but also the client/partners.

For rapid rural to be scientifically effective, Christopher Gibbs (1985), an evaluation officer for the World Bank, maintains that the researcher must take four actions in order to preserve the integrity and validity of rapid-rural studies. These include:

1. Investigators should have a sound conceptual framework for the investigation before the start of the project.

2. A variety of data collections should be employed.

3. Information gained through one rapid appraisal exercise should be crosschecked with another (triangulation).

In rapid rural, the time for research is compressed, but, generally the questions are simple and straightforward. Time is allocated in order to ensure team members interact in an iterative learning process (Sweetser, 1995). For example, a few years ago, Ohio University Southern received a request from colleagues in Mexico, suggesting a study be made in a small village outside of a major metropolitan area. This village (General Cepeda) seemed to be suffering from high unemployment, exaggerated alcohol abuse in the adult population, higher mental depression rate in the adult population, and a lack of community action or involvement in social issues. The non-profit client had some research monies to invest, but lacked the expertise in the qualitative side of research techniques in order to mount a proper social sciences study. In a collaborative effort, Ohio University linked with the Institute of Technology of Monterrey (ITESM), Saltillo Campus, to organize and perform a successful study in the small village. (Jarrett & Lucas, 2003). These problems surfaced, however, in an urban setting. Rapid appraisal was designed especially for land law and rural development (Dunn, 2004; Beebe, 1995; Chambers, 1994; Sweetser, 1995).

In order to further demonstrate that RRA functions as a more narrow research methodology and better suits rural, land development work, Ann Sweetser (1995), a longtime advocate of participatory research projects, maintains that:

“Rapid Appraisal is a form of qualitative research derived from participant observation methodology of socio-cultural anthropology.
It is used for preliminary design and evaluation of applied activities. RA is fast and flexible but rigorous. It is grounded in recognition that all dimensions of a local system (be it an irrigation system or a political system) cannot be identified in advance, and that attempts to do so reflect primarily the outsider's culture. Instead, a team of individuals with contrasting expertise can develop an understanding of a system by synthesizing information from several sources: prior research and reports, direct observation, and semi-structured interviews. The goals are to grasp an insider's perspective on the system and to understand it as a whole, rather than to come up with a statistical description of its constituent units. This methodology has also been labeled as Participatory Rural Appraisal and/or Rapid Rural Appraisal (Sweetser, Thomas-Slayter, 1995).

The question remains, however, what if the questions are broader and uniquely fitted for the general population instead of community leaders, land development customers, or key leader informants? What if the research target area includes community neighborhoods or urban areas? The needs of many research situations demanded a more versatile, flexible research method.

**Ethnography**

On the other side of the method called *folknography* stands ethnography. Defined in the early 1900's, ethnography crossed the discipline lines of academia and is now recognized as a legitimate method of research in many disciplines. Writers such as Agar, Atkinson, Bernard, Denzin, Geertz, and a host of others have defined, refined, and described ethnography. Sometimes characterized as *hut sitters*, ethnographers move among their subjects and write thick descriptions about the people they study. Wolcott (1999) describes the practice of ethnography as “experiencing, enquiring, and
examining.” According to Alexander Massey (1998), ethnography includes seven essential elements. The elements include:

1. *An elongated study of a culture.* The very term, *ethnography*, denotes a study of an ethnic group. Often this research methodology requires a longer-term commitment to the research process involving months or even years.

2. *Multiple collection methods and diverse forms of data.* According to most ethnographers, in order to reach even a rudimentary understanding of the culture, the process requires openness to looking into the culture in many different ways. Different situations must be sampled many times, including the parameters of people, place, and time in order to establish what and who counts as being a part of a culture.

3. *Long-term Engagement.* According to Denscombe (1995), the ethnographer believes that “observation of culture in situ” is the best way to get to know the culture intimately. Woods (1994), another ethnographic scientist, contends that “long term engagement in the situation as things actually happened and observing things first hand” is the way in which ethnographic work should be done. Spindler and Spindler (1992) write, “The requirement for direct, prolonged, on-the-spot observation cannot be avoided or reduced. It is the guts of the ethnographic approach.”

4. *Researcher as instrument.* The ethnographer attempts to articulate the assumptions and values implicit in the research, and what the results mean while always acknowledging that researcher is a part of, rather than outside, the research act (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995).

5. *Multiple perspectives.* The researcher’s power needs to be tempered to be credible so that the culture can be illuminated rather than obscured by the observer/commentator. This can be achieved in three ways:
   a. The ethnographers must be culturally open-minded.
   b. Second, all claims about the culture must be based on some kind of empirical experience in that culture.
   c. Third, the participants hold knowledge about themselves, which nobody else possesses. Direct and intimate acquaintance and contact with the empirical world of the culture assures that the data collected are grounded in the informants’ actual experiences and lives (Gold, 1997).
6. **Cycle of hypothesis and theory building.** Ethnographers are committed to modify hypotheses and theories in the light of emerging data. Gold (1997) states, “there is a running interaction between formulating and testing both; then, a reformulating and retesting throughout the research process”.

7. **Intention and outcome.** The ethnographer seeks to discover how people in the study area classify or label each other; how they find meaning in activities in life; how they engage in the process of defining who they are; and how they select and collectively define their cultural situation.

(For a more detailed review of ethnography and numerous other qualitative methods, see Patton’s Qualitative Research & Evaluation, Sage Publishing, 2002).

Massey (1998) makes an observation that “the term ethnography will continue to be used to describe many different kinds of research activity. If ethnography comes to mean too many different things to too many different people, then it ceases to be a useful term at all, and we might as well describe or, at the very least, develop more precise terms to describe different activities which are supposedly encompassed by the word.”

The question could be asked, has ethnography become so broad, so big, or so large and encompassing that beginning researchers face a near impossible task to practice the method? Can the veteran researcher adequately define the method? Another criticism that strikes at the authenticity of the method was put forth in a remark made by an American state department of education: “Anything anyone wants to do research on that has no clear problem, no methodology, and no theory is likely to be called ethnography” (Spindler, 1982). In any case, this author needed a method
better suited to study a specific people group, but not necessarily an ethnic group.

**Phenomenology**

Max Weber, one of the founding fathers of sociology, believed that there could be absolutely no objective scientific analysis of culture, or social phenomena. Weber notes, "We can only understand human action by using methods of investigation requiring verstehen, or empathetic understanding" (Coser, 1997). Max Weber's definition of social investigation aimed for an interpretative understanding of social behavior by penetration into the subjective meanings that actors attach to their own behavior, and to the behavior of others (Coser, 1997; Patton, 2002).

**Folknographers** borrow Weber's concept and apply verstehen (or empathy) by using qualitative methods appropriate for interpreting the social world from the subjective perspective of folk in their natural setting, stressing their attitudes, their beliefs, their values, their social expressions, their interactive rituals, and their mode of communication. Folknographers actively listen for the voice of the people, searching carefully for emergent themes and collective interpretations appropriate for gaining an empathetic understanding of social reality as defined by a particular folk selected for investigation.

**Folknography**
Indeed, *folknography* strives to give voice to the people. If Wolcott (1999) is right and ethnography is a “way of seeing,” then *folknography* is a way of listening. *Folknographers* want to hear the voice, concerns, needs, and hopes of the people. *Folknographers* listen to the expression of needs, hopes, dreams, desires, and stories and record them (graph them) for others. This kind of research results from one short story after another (narratives). These stories, woven together, present a picture of a people, no matter their geographical space or their ethnic background. The research participants can inhabit huts, houses, or castles. *Folknographers* search out the people and discover their stories. Researchers are not as much concerned with discovering key informants, but rather common people (the *folk*) who have insights into the common life affecting community and country.

*Folknographers* seek to compile the feeling or perspectives of the folk. During this process, descriptive narratives are developed by researchers, posted to a dedicated web site, and combined with other emanating charts, graphs, photos, and other digital images. Folk tales, knowledge, art, religion, and food ways must also be considered (www.folknography.org, 2004).

*Folknography* works when the researcher does not have years to make a research study. As previously stated, ethnography works best in an elongated time commitment. Like rapid rural, the *folknographic* method works in shorter time periods, and students can be well trained in time spaces fitted for semesters or quarters. Additionally, *folknography* can be
applied to people found in Appalachia, Alaska, the West Coast, Midwest farmlands, the Badlands, or Mexico. Because *folknographers* desire to study *folk*, the study is not restricted to an ethnic group or certain people group. *Folknographers* study people in a defined location, within a specified time allotment, with defined parameters, for a specific purpose or purposes. This method works well for teams, for a few, for two, or even a solo researcher. The method has been applied successfully numerous times in places such as the United Kingdom, the United States, Mexico, Dominican Republic, and in Hong Kong, by faculty and undergraduate students. (www.folknography.org).

Technology has also helped to fashion this research tool. After each day of fieldwork, the *folknographer* returns to a team debriefing session and then the writing lab, in order to review the day’s findings, (data) and then record and post them to the web page dedicated to that particular study. This is some of the most vulnerable moments for the *folknographer*. The debriefing sessions help to crystallize the day’s experiences and provide moments of synthesis and framing. The writing sessions provide the *folknographer* an opportunity to organize and express what data has been collected on that particular day. The digital photos, narratives, and other expressions can then be posted to a dedicated web site so that students, participants, researchers and all other interested parties can see the results of the research. Colleagues, families, and friends follow the narratives of the daily work posted on the web site for each folknographic project, but also the
folk being studied (the target of the research, have oversight rights and accessibility to the data).

In this instance, *folknography* includes a process known as *feed forward*. As the research project progresses, while researchers remain in the field, informants and folk participants can correct, criticize, critique, question, or comment on the description or narratives presented by the researchers. This is research in *real time*.

In practical application, *folknography* borrows from the research method called rapid rural appraisal. For a theoretical base, *folknography* draws from ethnography. Philosophically, the technique relies on phenomenology. Along with unique fieldwork and academic synthesis features, *folknography* blends the strongest elements of all three of these frameworks.

*So What’s The Difference?*

The question has been asked, “What is the difference between ethnography, rapid appraisal, and folknography?” *Folknography* stands unique because the method:

1. Works best in a team or group effort with a consistent, daily debriefing session with all participants involved. This trait allows adaptation and adoption by undergraduate students from the classroom to the fieldwork application.
2. Seeks out the unique knowledge, values, culture, and the voice of a certain cultural group. *Folknography* seeks the *heart* and the *voice* of the people.

3. Functions exceptionally well as a teaching tool for training undergraduate college students the research process, writing and fieldwork. They learn about qualitative and quantitative research; theory; design; data collection; analysis; and other practical applications of research.

4. Employs new and various technologies, allowing *hands on experience* by all participants in the research project.

5. Provides local communities (leaders and the *folk*) with the results of a research project with little investment by that community. The method provides instant results.

6. Allows colleges and universities to provide students with an experience in new, different, international, or unique cultures.

7. Permits a broader research application, in the strictest sense, *ethnography* deals with a certain ethnic group and rapid appraisal which generally applies to development or agricultural projects. *Folknography* allows for a diverse number of cultural research targets.

8. Demands that the participants engage their previously accrued skills in the project. In other words, employing *folknography*
allows the researcher to draw on a synthesis of artistic and intellectual abilities on a daily basis throughout the project timeline. The researcher draws on writing, analytical, and critical talents.

9. Offers web site field reports for *instant access* to the knowledge and observations being made. Scientists, family members, other field workers, and participants can access the site for information and research access.

10. Gives informants an opportunity to participate in the overall research project including descriptions, results, analysis and summaries.

11. Engages a multiplicity of data collection activities, including single participant interviews, structured and unstructured interviews, focus groups, plenary sessions, structured observations, and artistic observations.

12. Employs a multiplicity of reporting avenues including traditional reports and publications, websites, narrative sketches, journal articles, photo journals, and creative, static displays.

13. Decreases the intimidation and/or fear undergraduate students feel concerning entering the academic research arena.

14. Fits the semester or quarter time frame.
Serves as a task specific research process with less ambiguity, fewer complications, and less technical implications than other methods heretofore defined.

**Researcher as Listener**

Many qualitative methods depend substantially on the research agent (Patton, 2002; Berg, 2001; Mason, 2002). In this research activity, the researcher actively concentrates on listening to the voice of the people. Naturally, people have a reality to convey. Everyone in the population has a story to tell. *Folknography* provides and offers opportunity to many who would not otherwise be heard. Not only do *folknographers* seek out the key informants as other methodologies, but also the common person must also be heard. Each person has perspectives and insights to offer to broaden the overall picture. By carefully listening to each person from the designated group of people to be studied (the target group), the researcher or research team finds more data to develop the description. The entire science of communication becomes vitally important to the operation of *Folknography*.

**Individual interviews**

As with many other methods, *folknography* depends on the person-to-person interview. The interviews can be structured, semi-structured, or casual. Prior experience in several previous studies, demonstrates that a blend of all three works best. In other words, if time allows, the
folknographer should include all three approaches in the data collection process.

The *structured interview* follows a strict, written, predetermined list of questions that the researcher wishes to ask. Discovery comes much easier if the questions are arranged in a rational sequence. The experienced interviewer knows that questions can be asked in a certain planned order such as the *hour-glass* plan, the pyramid plan, the funnel plan or the *pipe* approach. A random arrangement of questions develops more like a casual interview. In a two-week research project in a small village in Mexico, researchers designed a structured interview to collect living condition data from the village. “Basically, we wanted to know what life was like in a village located near a booming metro area. The interview questions were designed using the *pipe* method. This method allows an even flow of questions and generally does not appear threatening to the informant. The student team researchers could use the question guide with confidence and not get lost in the work” (Lucas, 1998). In the final analysis, the folknographer, drawing on all previously learned skills, can choose the best interview method suited for the situation, case, or project.

The semi-structured interview allows the experienced folknographer to follow leads and comments made by the informant. The researcher has a series of questions in which to engage, but if an interesting *lead* develops, the researcher can follow that lead through the rest of the interview. This
becomes a valuable technique for seeking previously undiscovered or never-before described information. Once again, listening reigns as more important than the researcher’s questions. The questions help to prime the pump. The informant, at some point during the interview, begins to take charge of the course and direction of the exchange. This then becomes the desired result. The informant’s voice can literally develop the theme and direction of the study.

The *casual interview* emerges as a useful tool in restaurants, markets, the streets, and before or after focus groups, town meetings or plenary interviews. Actually, a more experienced researcher should engage in the casual interview. Once a person has developed good interviewing skills, using folknography, the information gained can be powerful. While in the midst of the study in General Cepeda, Mexico, a researcher recalled, “I waited in the reception area for a meeting with the mayor (el presidente municipal) when I met the old farmer. The conversation turned into one of the most remarkable moments of the entire study. Without the casual interview, the moments would have been lost without ever gaining the valuable insights” (Lucas, 2005).

**Group Work**

The *focus group* should also be employed when possible. This allows multiple contacts with researchers and folk. The participants in focus groups have a tendency to tag on comments made by others and offer up new and
additional insights to the topic being discussed. These *folknographic* focus groups should follow a series of questions previously constructed by the focus group facilitator, but can digress if the discussion direction changes due to the need or wishes of the folk being studied. In a lull, the facilitator can then bring the discussion back to prescribed questions if needed. Much discovery can occur in these sessions. As many as four or five focus group sessions can be planned or organized even in a time limited research project.

*Folknography* offers the data collection technique called the *plenary session*. In this event, a crowd of folk gathers to express concerns, beliefs, hopes, or dreams. A good example occurred during the General Cepeda Project in Mexico (www.folknography.org). Researchers heard from many male informants throughout the study, but felt concerned that the female expressions and comments seemed limited. In an effort to glean more female perspectives, the research team planned a women’s meeting at a meeting room in the hotel. Nay sayers predicted doom and failure. Yet, at the prescribed time, hundreds of women, both youth and adults, arrived at the meeting room and a lively plenary session ensued. While the female researchers listened to the heart of the women through their expression and declarations, male researchers cared for the children out in the hotel plaza area and then served refreshments. The entire event made history in that small, Mexican village. The plenary session also worked well in South Carolina with the Gullah community (Jarrett and Lucas, 2003).
Other data collection techniques include:

1. Structured observations (researchers have a previously compiled list as to what actions, behaviors, or situations to observe).

2. Film, digital video, digital still photos, along with the more traditional photographic recordings.

3. Digital and/or analogue sound recordings (for music, meetings, demonstrations, speeches, and other cultural sounds).

4. Artistic renderings such as poetic descriptions, artistic drawings, paintings and/or sketches.

5. Notations taken throughout the research project, carefully dated, time referenced, and located. These field notes become especially valuable as the researcher synthesizes and records the narratives in the daily writing process at the end of the research day.

**Assumptions**

As with any practicing theory, the employment of *folknography* makes three basic assumptions. Although these assumptions seem elementary. These three basic assumptions support the scope of the method.

*Assumption #1: Community*, one of the very basic components of society does exist. In other words, the notion of *community* must be
understood and recognized by the investigator(s) before this method makes sense as a research template. If the investigator or discipline questions the existence of community, this methodology offers little scientific reward.

_Assumption #2:_ These associated people groups (i.e., communities or _folk_) offer innate knowledge and information that can be extracted and recorded. The investigator operates on the notion that, at least by experiential learning, these identified and/or selected people groups have knowledge that can and should be heard, recorded and disseminated.

_Assumption #3:_ These community groups should have _voice_. In other words, the _folk_ have a message that, given an opportunity, they will _voice_ to others. Thus the primary obligation of the _folknographer_ is to listen to the voice of the people. In other words, the researcher must record their perceptions, narratives, values, beliefs, and traditions.

**The Researchers**

Although this methodology fits the needs of various researchers, undergraduate students are prime candidates for operating as research agents in this method of research. Several reasons make _folknography_ well suited for use with undergraduates in special field research projects. These include:

- Undergraduate students need to learn the scientific process in order to prepare for future employment opportunities or possible graduate school study
• Undergraduate students provide valuable resources to help faculty members in research while the students learn about science and discovery of new knowledge (Atkinson & Ruzin, 1992; Joseph, 1998).

• Undergraduate students experience deeper learning by direct experience with methods and process of inquiry. Students that experience a supportive environment gain an excellent education when their education involves scientific inquiry (NSF, 1996).

• Science and learning are active, not passive, endeavors. Students engaged in active scientific inquiry as a way of learning become holistically involved in the creative process of scientific methodology and practice (Abraham & Hoagland, 1999).

• Undergraduates involved and engaged in research data collection and analysis develop insights into how research is done, thus leading to scientific literacy (Abraham & Hoagland, 1999).

• Undergraduates, according to empirical evidence, learn best when they actively construct their own knowledge. According to studies, the students who are exposed to research examples and
activities tend to remain more interested in science and the scientific process (Lanza, 1988; McNeal & Avanzo, 1997).

- Such projects provide undergraduate students with capstone experiences, opportunities for synthesis, reflection, and preparation for the future (Council on Undergraduate Research White Paper, 1999).

- Such projects develop and engage the students’ skills in communication, teamwork, critical thinking, and a foundation for lifelong learning.

- Such projects help develop and build collaborations, partnerships, and relationships with other departments, disciplines, cultures, and businesses (CUR White Paper).

- Undergraduate research projects enliven and enrich the students’ experience and learning. These projects have a positive effect on the instructor’s teaching and provide opportunities for students to do research with faculty mentors (CUR White Paper).

- Faculty members who lead these research experiences are research active and have first-hand experience with what ‘practitioners do’ and have a storehouse of personal experiences to relate to their students in their classes (CUR White Paper).
• Active research classes, lead by faculty offering their students first-hand experience with cutting edge, inquiry driven research projects, has emerged as one of the most effective and engaging forms of education (CUR White Paper).

Conclusion

Between the stricter method of research known as rapid appraisal and the broader research method called ethnography, emerges a new, practical qualitative research method called folknography. Folknography functions as a viable way for instructors to train and teach students the research process. Engaging students in this research process provides them with challenges in writing, group communication, cultural awareness, organizational communication, intellectual synthesis, and planning. Numerous undergraduate students in several different field research projects have successfully used the methodology of folknography over the past few years (www.folknography.org). The methodology of folknography provides educators a flexible framework for leading undergraduates in deep learning and meaningful research opportunities.

This method also offers the community college, regional campus, and small liberal arts college faculty an affordable, collaborative manner in which to conduct research. With limited budgets and time constraints, this method works well for two or three colleagues entering a field to perform a research
project effectively. The method offers numerous possibilities and potential applications.

In reality, this method fills a void. The method fits a need. Qualitative research depends on rigorous implementation in the field. If a researcher seeks to discover more about a particular culture not ethnic in nature or rooted in agriculture, now the researcher has an additional choice in field method design. Folknography offers the cultural research practitioner a suited method that produces notable results. Now the social scientist, the graduate student, or even the undergraduate student team can implement this method in the field and produce dependable, qualitative data. Folknography offers a blend of popular research method with teaching components and effective design. Folknography gives the researcher a viable research method and gives the folk voice.
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Biography
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David Lucas, born in Freetown, Indiana, completed an undergraduate degree in speech communication at Kentucky Christian College in Grayson, Ky. He also completed a degree in Theology there as well. Lucas completed his first masters degree in communication at Marshall University in Huntington, WV. He did a second masters in international studies and completed his Ph.D. at Ohio University.

Lucas taught communication at Kentucky Christian College and at Marshall University before finally accepting a position at Ohio University where he currently serves as an associate tenured professor and directs the communication studies program at Ohio University Southern located in Ironton, OH.

David Lucas travels extensively throughout the United States and the world as a consultant and noted public speaker. He has published several articles, co-authored books, published a book of his poems, and has directed numerous research projects. His research interests include Native American culture (especially Shawnee), Gullah/Geechee culture, Appalachian culture and architecture, Australian culture, qualitative research methods, and research applications and activities for undergraduate students.

Dr. Lucas currently resides in a secluded, privately owned section of forest surrounded by the vast Wayne National Forest timberland. He is an avid naturalist, outdoorsman, and environmental advocate.