



23E80101 Qualitative Business Research Methods

Observation and ethnography

Ilona Mikkonen, DSc.

1

Anything you want to
share about the
first assignment
(question and context)?



2

General feedback

- Try to go “past” the context → what are you studying in this context
 - For example a recent Thesis that was around alcohol use → risk consumption
 - A proposed research question: snus consumption
 - Illicit consumption (?)
 - Addictive consumption
 - Gender issues

3

**Most frequent
feedback:
let's take a
break**



4

Why is it so important to
transcribe interviews?
Is it not more credible to
show a video of the
interviewee talking?

5

THESIS TIP:

Don't take too much time
between transcribing and analysis;
use analysis as a way to check that
your research protocol is working



6

Is the “tell me about yourself” - question really the best way to start? **Is it too general?**
Does a question this broad spark an answer that leads to the needed background information?

7

How can you tell the data is saturated? -- how many times should the interview still be repeated after the first observation of the repeated answers?

8

Based on what I have learned, I have recognized that **qualitative research could possibly be somewhat abused to support one's own agenda**. By that I mean that if one were to wish, they could select informants that they know feel a certain way, and perhaps even go as far as to manipulate the data collection (for example depth interviews) and data analysis even. Therefore, I am asking, do you think this could happen, and why / why not? Are there checks and balances in place to prevent this instance?

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is it completely wrong to dot he Master's thesis with qualitative method(interview) and supplement the findings with other numeric statistics or can the thesis contain any observations in numerical format? For example,if my qualitative interview is focusing on the effects of e-commerce growth in the retail sector, can I also examine other numeric statistics on how much e-commerce has grown in the whole retail sector?

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Must be used: peer-reviewed academic articles

Your references should be 80% from this category)

ASB and FT50 ranked journals are a must

4*	3	2
Journal of Consumer Psychology	European Journal of Marketing	Academy of Marketing Science Review
Journal of Consumer Research	Industrial Marketing Management	Advances in Consumer Research
Journal of Marketing	International Marketing Review	Consumption, Markets and Culture
Journal of Marketing Research	Journal of Advertising	Electronic Markets
Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science	Journal of Advertising Research	International Journal of Advertising
Marketing Science	Journal of Interactive Marketing (formerly JDM)	International Journal of Consumer Studies
	Journal of International Marketing	International Journal of Market Research
4	Journal of Public Policy and Marketing	International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management
International Journal of Research in Marketing	Marketing Letters	Journal of Brand Management
Journal of Retailing	Marketing Theory	Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing
	Psychology and Marketing	Journal of Business-to-Business Marketing
		Journal of Consumer Affairs
		Journal of Consumer Behavior

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• May be used (proceed with caution)

- **Conference proceedings** from academic conferences
- **Academic books** – typically written by academic researchers for a more general audience, published by academic publishing houses, such as Routledge, Sage, Harvard University Press. Often peer-reviewed, but not double-blind
- **Statistics from reliable sources** (such as Tilastokeskus) → these can be to argue why the topic is important. But always check who has published the statistic!
- **White papers, resolutions etc.**, published by, for example, governments, The UN, advocacy groups, research institutions, think tanks etc. **But be careful → mind the politics!**

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- **High-quality dictionaries and encyclopedias, text books to some extent**

(for example Oxford English Dictionary → sometimes can be ok) → especially when you need to define something, dictionary can be a good starting point)

- **Practitioner literature**

(e.g. Advertising Age)

- **High-quality journalism, offline and online**

(e.g. NY Times, Economist) → especially when introducing a marketplace phenomenon and giving it background)

- **Reports by large consultancy firms**

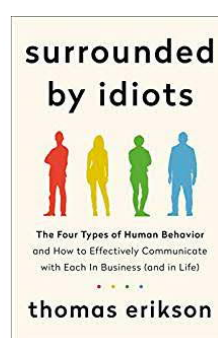
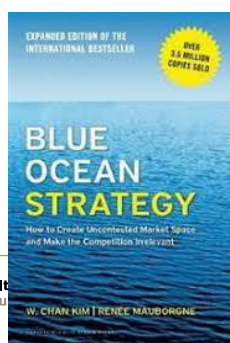
(PWC, Deloitte, Accenture) → especially for numbers and statistics, also good insights on consumer trends etc.

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- **SHOULD BE AVOIDED**

- **Consultancy books and popular psychology**

- They are **most often based on anecdotal evidence**, not research, and they have not gone through a peer-review process
- They can be sometimes be useful to provide background information on the phenomenon → such as show, that popular managerial books have noted it ☺



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- **Bachelor and Master's thesis, dissertations**
→ when you're writing your thesis, you can browse through them for structure etc. You may also cite if really interesting original findings, but note that **they have not been peer-reviews**. Good for finding better sources!
- **Random web pages**
- **Company-produced or sponsored material** (can be used as data!)

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Academic dishonesty

The New York Times Magazine

The Mind of a Con Man

Diederik Stapel



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Should the researcher
ever doubt the
truthfulness of the
interviewee?

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Is there is any guidance on the
appropriate amount/range of
interview questions?

What are the most typical mistakes
in interviewing that novice
students make in creating their
qualitative master's thesis, and
how to avoid them?

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What would be an example of transferability?

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Consumption Markets & Culture, 2014
Vol. 17, No. 3, 254–273, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10253866.2013.778174>



What not to wear? Oppositional ideology, fashion, and governmentality in wardrobe self-help

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In this paper, we draw attention to the emancipatory premises of oppositional ideologies and the ideological nature of consumption in the context of fashion. Drawing on the Foucauldian concept of power, we illustrate how a specific genre of self-help literature, which we have termed wardrobe self-help (WSH), produces an alternative mode of discourse about fashion and clothing as a cultural mediator. Our findings challenge the prevailing fashion ideology that capitalizes on emancipation, and unravel the means through which WSH oppositional ideology governs consumers. Consequently, we argue that while oppositional ideologies can blur the boundaries between coercion and consent, and act as vehicles of repression and liberation, they ultimately come to govern, if not limit, consumer choice and expression.

Keywords: ideology; consumption; government; fashion; clothing

Introduction

Looking stylish is as much about knowing what not to wear as it is about knowing what suits you. It's about being honest and coming to terms with the fact that some parts of your body aren't great... we incorrectly believe the notion of becoming stylish is a feat beyond our grasp... At the end of the day this is bollocks... looking stylish is not about following fashion. It's about dressing to show off what you love and hiding what you loathe about your body. (What Not to Wear, 6–7, emphasis original)

In the contemporary marketplace and consumer culture, fashion and clothing occupy a major part of the mainstream store areas in both visual and material terms (Hall 2009; Schroeder 2002), and make-up a significant part of the world economy (Allwood et al. 2006).

In this paper, we explore fashion markets as an ideological domain (Thompson and

Overall, we demonstrate that while the WSH rhetoric seemingly challenges the pre-vailing fashion ideology that favours constant change and emulation of others, it also requires consumers to turn a very critical eye on themselves, and adhere to a strict set of rules concerning the proper dress for a particular bodily figure. **Thus, the oppositional ideology constructed in WSH is hardly not only liberatory but also very restricting.** It forms a domain of government in which power is exercised through constitution of free subjects, while simultaneously constraining the freedom through normalization of certain forms of being and acting.

Oppositional ideologies have mainly been discussed in consumer research in relation to countercultural consumer groups (Kozinets and Handelman 2004). Our study recognizes more explicitly that commercial cultural texts create and circulate multiple ideologies that can be complementary or even oppositional to one another. Furthermore, **this study challenges the idea of emancipation as the result of oppositional ideologies.** By so doing, we also contribute to consumer research literature on fashion by demonstrating how WSH takes part in shaping of the broader fashion discourses, which frame and constrain the discursive and material practices available for consumers (Marion and Nairn 2011).

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**Do I have to
choose and use
a tradition in my master's
thesis research
if I decide to do
qualitative research?**

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What is observation?

Merriam-Webster SINCE 1828 observe
 DICTIONARY THESAURUS

observe *ve*
 ob·serve | \ ˈəb-ˈzərv |
observed; observing

Definition of observe
transitive verb

1 : to conform one's action (condition) : comply with
 // failed to observe the

2 : to inspect or take note of as an augury, omen, or presage
 // observed the flight of the sacred gees

3 : to celebrate or solemnize (something, customary or accepted way)
 // observed Independence Day with a pi

4 a : to watch carefully especially with a purpose of arriving at a judgment
 // observed the behavior of the child

b : to make a scientific observation or
 // observed the mating habits of the

5 : to come to realize or know especially :
 // ... observed that the indefinite reduction brings with it an increase in other risks.
 — E. L. Zebroski

4 a : to watch carefully especially with attention to details or behavior for the purpose of arriving at a judgment
 // observed the behavior of the children

b : to make a scientific observation on or of
 // observed the mating habits of the grouse

2 a : an act of recognizing and noting a fact or occurrence often involving measurement with instruments
 // weather observations

b : a record or description so obtained
 // Scientific observations were sent to the committee.

3 : a judgment on or inference (see [INFERENCE](#) sense 1) from what one has observed
 broadly : REMARK, STATEMENT
 // an insightful observation
 // based his observations on his own research

A! School of Business

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Non-participant and participant observation

- In **non-participant observation** (“pure” observation) the **researcher looks “from the outside in”**
 - for example: Trévinal, Aurélia Michaud. "Shopping in a mall: A typology of four shopping trips." *Recherche et Applications en Marketing* (English Edition) 28.3 (2013): 14-43.)
- In **participant observation** the **researcher joins** the activities to get an insider's view and experience
 - for example: Kozinets, Robert V. (2002), "Can Consumers Escape the Market? Emancipatory Illuminations from Burning Man," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 29 (June), 20-38.)

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Relationship between observation and ethnography?

Observation \neq ethnography!

Please explain 😊

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Observation \neq ethnography

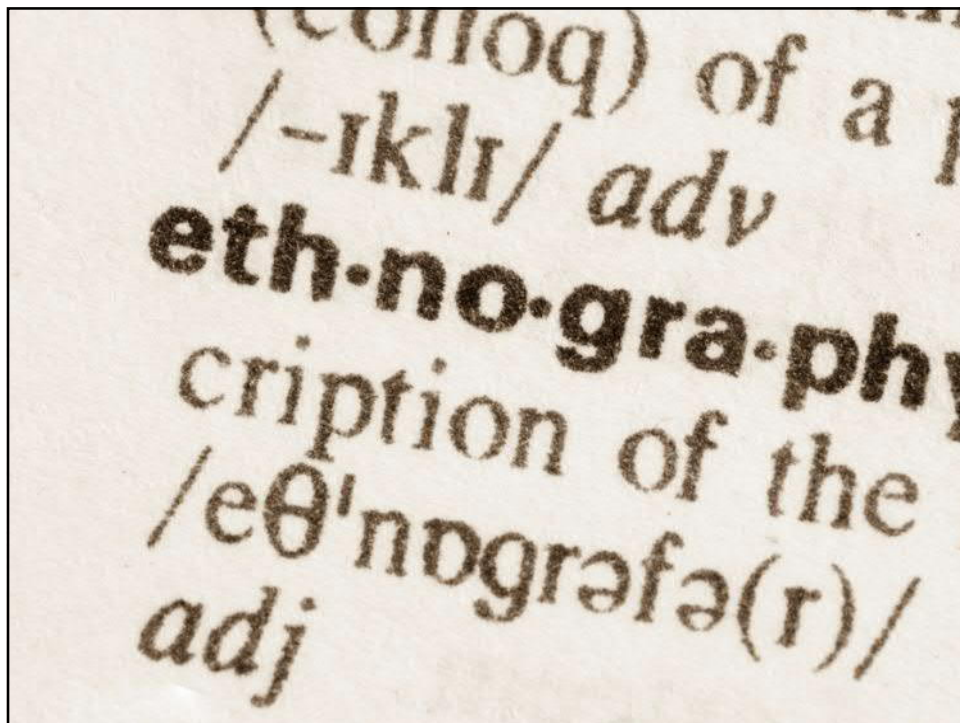
- The relationship is the same as with interviewing and qualitative research

→ Observation is a **method** of collecting data


→ Ethnography is a **whole research strategy** and the way research is written and approached

- Ethnographers *utilize* observation, but rarely *only* observation
- Observation can be used *also in non-constructivist research* (psychology, for example, often uses observation)

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Consumer Ethnography
The Exotic and the Mundane in Everyday Life

John W. Schouten, PhD
 12 December 2012



21.1.2022
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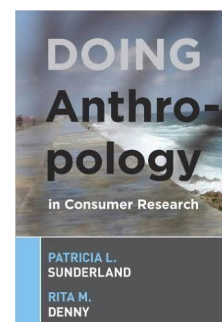
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“Ethnography
 (from Greek ἔθνος ethnos "folk, people, nation" and γράφω grapho
 "I write")
is the systematic study of people and cultures.
It is designed to
explore cultural phenomena
where the researcher observes society
from the point of view of the subject of the study.
An ethnography is a means to
represent graphically and in writing
the culture of a group.”

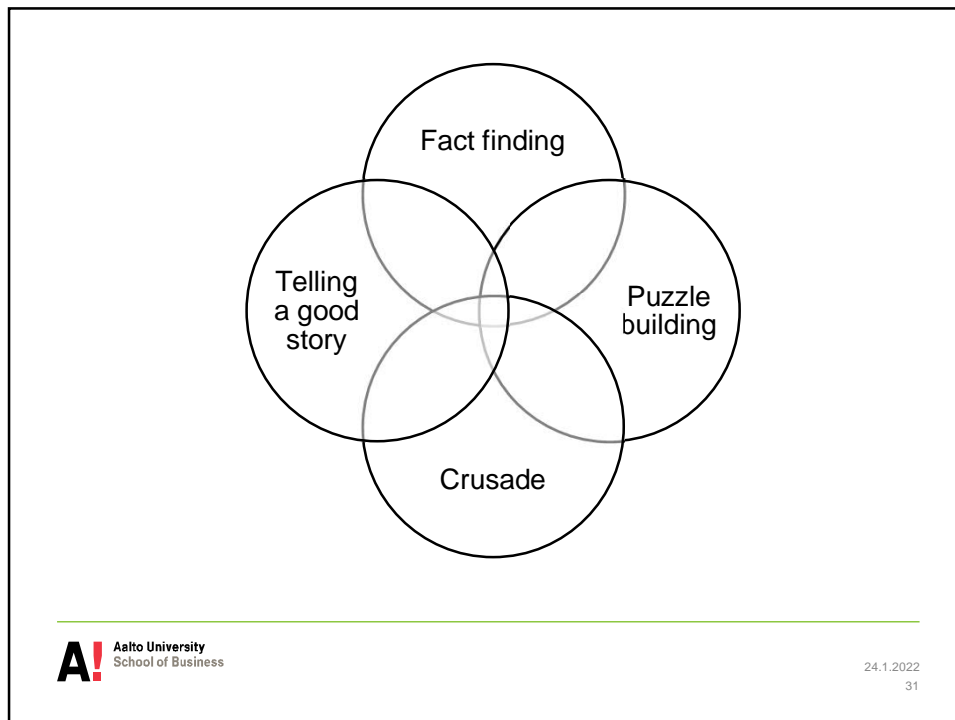
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ETHNOGRAPHY

- Ethnography is a flexible research **methodology** that aims to produce a **credible and compelling account** of culture and social life in a specific social context
- Builds on multiple detailed observations of what people “actually do”, but is never “just” those observations (**emic vs. etic**)
- Leverages participatory observation and **multiple data sources** (interviews, photos, Netnography, but also **statistics, surveys**, archives etc.)
- Long history in marketing and consumer research (e.g., Arnould and Wallendorf 1994)



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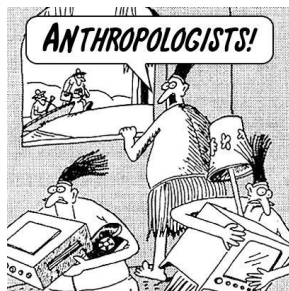
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What is ethnography?

- a) **Research strategy** that studies people in their natural environments
- b) **The process** of research— doing field work, “hanging out”
- c) **The product** of ethnographic research, the final report

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Two types of ethnography



- “Classic” ethnography
 - Studies “unfamiliar” cultures in far-away places
- In anthropology

Unfamiliar = non-Western

Laitoksen nimi
21.1.2022
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Two types of ethnography



- “Ethnography at home” (Chicago school)
 - Focuses on different nearby groups, like subcultures
 - Unfamiliar = marginal
- Contemporary ethnography in consumer research

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WHEN TO USE ETHNOGRAPHIC METHODS

- Communities, subcultures, or tribes (for example mores and customs, internal hierarchies, communal aspects of consumption)
- Consumption practices or extended experiences
- Spatially bounded marketplace cultures (tied to a specific location, for example Nike Town, Hard Rock Café)
- When understanding is more important than theorizing (for example what is Crossfit)
- Increasingly: systemic issues (societal systems, material infrastructures where people (try to) do things)

'Do I risk it?' Your photos of the world's best and worst cycling infrastructure

From Hong Kong to Cape Town, Seoul to Selly Oak, here are some of the standout examples



▲ A cyclist's nightmare bike lane... and a cyclist's dream. Composite: Getty Images/Fee/Guardian Community

Article

Cycling into Headwinds: Analyzing Practices That Inhibit Sustainability

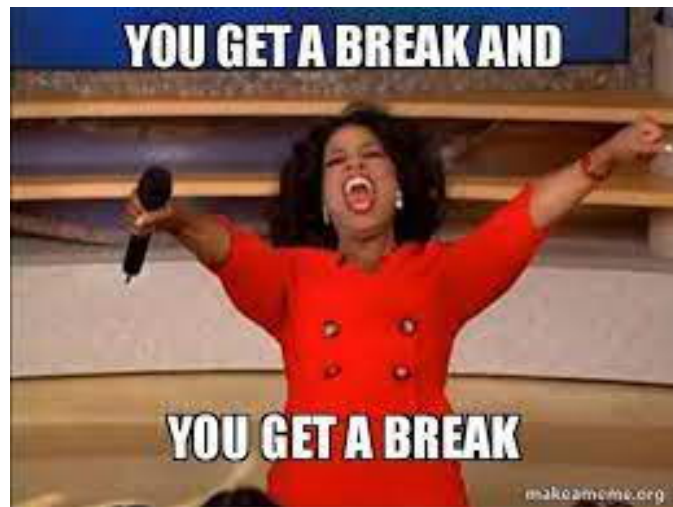
Klara Scheurenbrand, Elizabeth Parsons, Benedetta Cappellini, and Anthony Patterson

Abstract

Using the example of cycling, the authors contribute to public policy debates surrounding sustainability. They employ practice theory to shift the debate away from consumer choice and agency to examine instead why sustainable practices are not always available to consumers. Therefore, rather than asking, "Why don't people cycle?" the authors ask, "Why isn't the practice of cycling thriving?" Practice theory focuses on material, meanings, and competences as the components of a practice, positing that a practice can thrive and grow only when these elements come together. By looking at how practices compete for the same set of elements, the authors demonstrate how some practices (e.g., driving, shopping, juggling) come to dominate or inhibit others (i.e., cycling). In terms of the theme of this special issue, then, instead of excavating anticonsumption as a precursor to practices (i.e., a choice not to engage in those practices), by unpacking practices, the authors examine the mechanisms through which this choice is restricted.

Keywords

cycling, policy, practice theory, practice, sustainable consumption, anticonsumption



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Breakout rooms

- In breakout rooms, try to come up with a couple of interesting field sites for consumer ethnography

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Prolonged engagement

"The differences between focus groups and interviews, on the one hand, and ethnographies, on the other, lie in the ethnographic fieldwork emphasis on researcher immersion, prolonged exposure and participation-observation in a naturalistic setting (Arnould and Wallendorf 1994)."

→ "Ethnographic year" or 13 months??



This ethnography explores the emancipatory dynamics of the Burning Man project, a one-week-long antimarket event. Practices used at Burning Man to distance consumers from the market include discourses supporting communality and disparaging market logics, alternative exchange practices, and positioning consumption as self-expressive art. Findings reveal several communal practices that distance consumption from broader rhetorics of efficiency and rationality. Although Burning Man's participants materially support the market, they successfully construct a temporary hypercommunity from which to practice divergent social logics. Escape from the market, if possible at all, must be conceived of as similarly temporary and local.

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Research design

- Three years of following an online community around Burning man, beginning in 1996
- "I downloaded and analyzed Burning Man-related photographs, articles, documents, reminiscences, computer-mediated communications, and other cultural data available through mass media channels and on the Internet."
- 1999 conducted six days of participant observation at the festival, also interviewing participants
- After the festival kept active e-mail communication with the people met and interviewed
- Created a website called Burning Man Research and signed up to three Burning Man mailing lists
- Another six days at the festival in 2000
- Interviewed more than 210 people, took more than 300 photographs
- "Between interviews, and particularly during the evenings, I left my camera behind and participated: wearing a variety of outlandish costumes, being initiated into new religions, drumming, meeting new people, riding on strange vehicles like UFOs and Viking ships."

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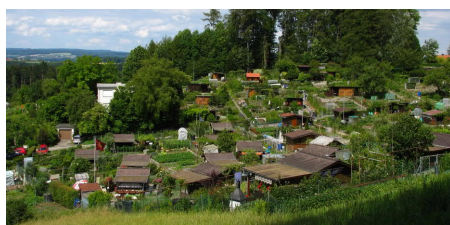
Participant observation

- Some observation opportunities are only available through participation
- Participation creates trust and connections
- Participation also gives insights to the “consumer journeys” (Price and Schau 2019)

Schouten and McAlexander (1995) from novices to respectable Harley community members

Kozinets's (2001) deep involvement in Star Trek culture

Hill (1991) extensive volunteering in homeless shelters



SIIRTOLAPUUTARHAT TUTKIMUKSEN KOhteena

HELMI ERKAMO GRADUN siheema on ihmisten keinot tasapainottaa turhautumista, jota nykyaikainen elämä kaupungissa aiheuttaa. Tärkeä otakko on Siirtolapuutarhatoiminnasta kulttuurin strategiana urbaanin viihteytymisen lieventämiseen.

Olen itse luontoliikkeen, ja läppäytyn iltyy ihmisen ja luonnon suhteeseen. Siirtolapuutarhoista hantaa vastapainoa kaupungin arjen vaipapuille eli tutkimuksen kielillä ”vieraantumisen kokemukseen”. Tutkin sosiaalisuutta ja lähtöä ja vuorovaikutusta eriasteisten tulojen välillä, ja valitsin kontekstiksi siirtolapuutarhat, Helmi Erkamo kertoo. Hän esitti kiertokulmalla siirtolapuutarha-alueella tekemässä havaintoja. Sen jälkeen hän haastatteli viittä siirtolapuutarhalla, jolla kerhothet vapautumisen toivon onista kokemukseksi mitä päätää merkittävälle, mitä tunteita se herättää, mitä he tekevät siitä ja heidän kanssa.

Siirtolapuutarhojen merkitys on nykyisin toinen kuin aikoo, kun niillä väkijoukko perustettiin. Silloin tärkeä funktio oli ruuan viljely ja väkijoukon mahdollisuus päästä kaupungin kivittämistä luonnon lähelle. Loppuyhtälönsä Helmi Erkamo toteaa, että nykyisin

siirtolapuutarhat ovat elvyttävää ympäristöä ja motivoi on nousut hyvä olo. Ero muhin aiemmin tutkittuihin vastaaviin ympäristöihin on se, että siirtolapuutarhat ovat osa kuluttajan normaalista ympäristöstä ja toimista siellä on ihmisten itsensä järjestämää.

Päätälle nimenäinen ei vaadi kattoa arkkitehtuurilla, kuten tapahtuu, jos lähtee valikaa vaikkoonuuseille. Jos taas menet esimerkiksi festarille, tapahtuma on yleisöille valmiiksi suunniteltu, mutta siirtolapuutarhoissa suunnitellut luovat kokemuksensa itse.

Helmi Erkamo löysi tutkimuksessaan siirtolapuutarhoista kolme elementtiä, jotka helpottavat modernin elämän arjesta kumpuavaa turhautumista. Ensimmäinen on yhteyden luontoon kaupungissa. Toinen on mahdollisuus uppoutua hoikeviteeseen, arjesta poikkeavaan tekemiseen. Kolmas on kuulumisen tiiviseen yhteisöön.

Jos olet esimerkiksi pälvät yksin tietokoneella, puutarhatyöt yhdessä muiden kanssa ovat terapeuttinen vastapaino. Siirtolapuutarhassa viihtyvistä ajasta saa energiaa siihen, kun palaa taas arkeen. Koska alueet eivät ole kaukana, niissä on mahdollista käydä viikistäytymässä usein. Hyvä olo löytyy läheltä, Helmi Erkamo toteaa. P.



THESIS TIP:

Only do an ethnographic thesis if you really do have the time (and motivation) to invest in the process



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Principles of ethnography (Nardi 2000)

- Holism
 - focus on relations among activities and not on single tasks or single isolated individuals
 - everything connected to everything else
- Natives' point(s) of view
 - how people see their own worlds
 - opportunity to engage with customers
- Study people in their “native habitats”
 - e.g., home, office, school, library, hospital, community...

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Ethnography – focus of analysis

- Research **focuses on culture** (however it is defined), people as members of culture, and people's practices in culture
 - how the members of some particular group organize their lives to manage everyday routines, communicate what they know and what they expect of others, and cope with forces within and beyond their control
 - We are not interested in recording and recounting events as such but “to render a theory of cultural behavior” (Wolcott 1995)

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Ethnographic fieldwork and data

- People are studied **in situ** - in their natural environments and contexts
 - “In its most characteristic form it involves the
 - ethnographer **participating**, overtly or covertly in people's daily lives **for an extended period of time**,
 - **watching** what happens,
 - **listening** to what is said,
 - **asking** questions—in fact, **collecting whatever data are available** to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research”

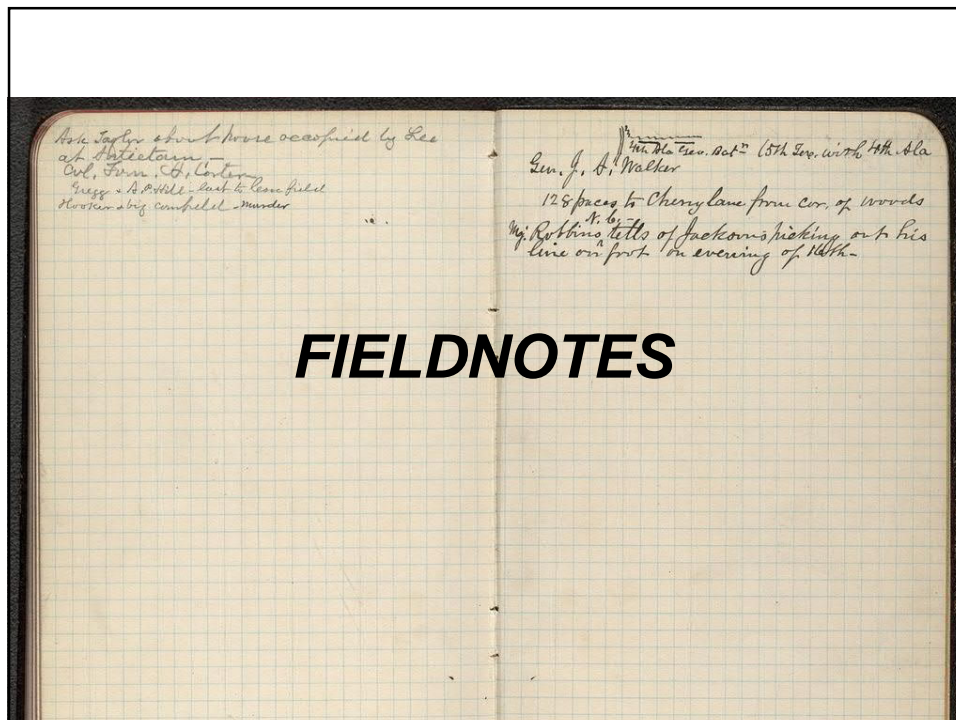
• (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995:1)

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Ethnographic fieldwork and data

- What kind of information can you data offer
 - Information of things that may be hard to approach by asking people!
 - Routines, habits, and customs that
 - People usually consider trivial or self-evident
 - People don't usually think about actively
 - People don't usually remember to mention in interview settings

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Ethnographic fieldwork and data

- Data produced with the fieldwork can include
 - **Field notes**
 - Your own general observations, notes about discussions with different people, insights that you got
 - Field diary
 - Transcribed interviews
 - Photos
 - Artefacts
 - Other documents

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To put it bluntly, fieldnotes are **gnomic, shorthand reconstructions of events, observations, and conversations that took place in the field**. They are composed well after the fact as inexact notes to oneself and represent simply one of many levels of textualization set off by experience. To disentangle the interpretive procedures at work as one moves across levels is problematic to say the least. . . . Little wonder that fieldnotes are the secret papers of social research (van Maanen 1988 pp. 223–4).

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TWO STRATEGIES FOR NOTE-TAKING

SALIENCE HIERARCHY

Describing observations that seemed most noteworthy, interesting, or telling

Only advisable for seasoned ethnographers; risk of missing important stuff

COMPREHENSIVE NOTE-TAKING

Systematically noting down everything you observed and felt in the field

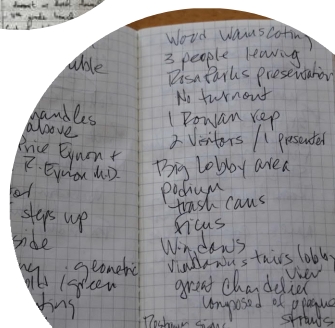
Recommended for novice ethnographers

Exhausting and time-consuming; tradeoffs between observing and writing

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My main fieldnotes would be what I wrote up afterwards. So what I wrote in these little pocket books were just shorthand notes of quick incidents written down, broadly, a couple of sentences really. So for a quarter of an hour stretch there may be about three or four pages -- just of two sentences -- somebody playing with somebody, somebody chasing someone else and so on. I would then use these to write up more detained notes in the evening. Given the amount of things going on during a typical school day it's amazing how much you'd forget if you didn't keep a running record like this to remind you.

Paul Connolly (educational ethnographer)



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THESIS TIP:

If you do an ethnography, aim for concise writing, capture everything, and edit later; like analysis and interpretation, writing fieldnotes is a personal and creative process



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1. *Space*: the physical place or places
 2. *Actor*: the people involved
 3. *Activity*: a set of related acts people do
 4. *Object*: the physical things that are present
 5. *Act*: single actions that people do
 6. *Event*: a set of related activities that people carry out
 7. *Time*: the sequencing that takes place over time
 8. *Goal*: the things people are trying to accomplish
 9. *Feeling*: the emotions felt and expressed
- Spradley (1980)**

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	SPACE	OBJECT	ACT	ACTIVITY	EVENT	TIME	ACTOR	GOAL	FEELING
SPACE	Can you describe in detail all the places?	What are all the ways space is organized by objects?	What are all the ways space is organized by acts?	What are all the ways space is organized by activities?	What are all the ways space is organized by events?	What spatial changes occur over time?	What are all the ways space is used by actors?	What are all the ways space is related to goals?	What places are associated with feelings?
OBJECT	Where are objects located?	Can you describe in detail all the objects?	What are all the ways objects are used in acts?	What are all the ways objects are used in activities?	What are all the ways objects are used in events?	How are objects used at different times?	What are all the ways objects are used by actors?	How are objects used in seeking goals?	What are all the ways objects evoke feelings?
ACT	Where do the acts occur?	How do acts incorporate the use of objects?	Can you describe in detail all the acts?	How are acts a part of activities?	How are acts a part of events?	How do acts vary over time?	What are the ways acts are performed by actors?	What are all the ways acts are related to goals?	What are all the ways acts are linked to feelings?
ACTIVITY	What are all the places activities occur?	What are all the ways activities incorporate objects?	What are all the ways activities incorporate acts?	Can you describe in detail all the activities?	What are all the ways activities are part of events?	How do activities vary at different times?	What are all the ways activities involve actors?	What are all the ways activities involve goals?	How do activities involve feelings?
EVENT	What are all the places events occur?	What are all the ways events incorporate objects?	What are all the ways events incorporate acts?	What are all the ways events incorporate activities?	Can you describe in detail all the events?	How do events occur over time? Is there any sequencing?	How do events involve the various actors?	How are events related to goals?	How do events involve feelings?
TIME	Where do time periods occur?	What are all the ways time affects objects?	How do acts fall into time periods?	How do activities fall into time periods?	How do events fall into time periods?	Can you describe in detail all the time periods?	When are all the times actors are "on stage"?	How are goals related to time periods?	When are feelings evoked?
ACTOR	Where do actors place themselves?	What are all the ways actors use objects?	What are all the ways actors use acts?	How are actors involved in activities?	How are actors involved in events?	How do actors change over time or at different times?	Can you describe in detail all the actors?	Which actors are linked to which goals?	What are the feelings experienced by actors?
GOAL	Where are goals sought and achieved?	What are all the ways goals involved use of objects?	What are all the ways goals involve acts?	What activities are goal seeking or linked to goals?	What are all the ways events are linked to goals?	Which goals are scheduled for which times?	How do the various goals affect the various actors?	Can you describe in detail all the goals?	What are all the ways goals evoke feelings?
FEELING	Where do the various feeling states occur?	What feelings lead to the use of what objects?	What are all the ways feelings affect acts?	What are all the ways feelings affect activities?	What are all the ways feelings affect events?	How are feelings related to various time periods?	What are all the ways feelings involve actors?	What are the ways feelings influence goals?	Can you describe in detail all the feelings?

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Thick description

- Thick description is a term introduced by anthropologist Clifford Geertz
 - Thin description is superficial information that has contains no explanations and little or no context
 - Thick description is in depth information that tells not only what is present, but how and why it is there, what accompanies it, and what emotions and meanings are attached to it
- In ethnography, researchers aim at thick descriptions

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ETHNOGRAPHIC WRITING

I think of myself as a writer
who happens to be doing his
writing as an anthropologist.

Clifford Geertz

quoting.com

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Thick description – golf as an example

A single golfer, with six golf balls in front of him [sic], hitting each of them, one after another, towards one and the same green. He [sic] then goes and collects the balls, comes back to where he [sic] was before, and does it again. What is he doing?" (Ryle 1971, 474)



A thin description would tell us exactly what is happening **physically**:
a person is repeatedly hitting a little round white object with a club
like device → they practice golf

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Thick description – golf as an example

A thick description would interpret the behavior within the context of the golf course and the game of golf, and ascribes thinking and intentionality to the observed behavior

“the golfer is practicing approach shots on the green in anticipation of a future real golf match - - with the hope that the practicing of approach shots at the present time will improve his approach shot skill in a real match at some time in the future.” (Ponteretto 2006, 539)

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CLIFFORD GEERTZ

Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight

The Raid

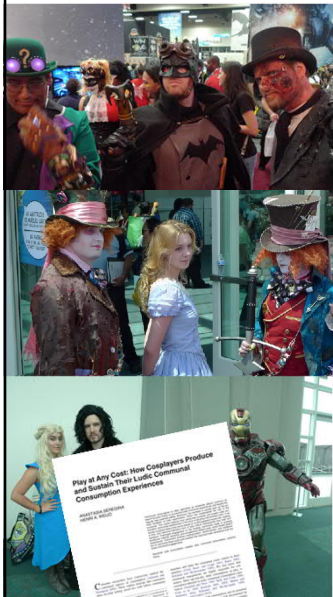
EARLY IN April of 1958, my wife and I arrived, malarial and diffident, in a Balinese village we intended, as anthropologists, to study. A small place, about five hundred people, and relatively remote, it was its own world. We were intruders, professional ones, and the villagers dealt with us as Balinese seem always to deal with people not part of their life who yet press themselves upon them: as though we were not there. For them, and to a degree for ourselves, we were nonpersons, specters, invisible men.



Beyond the storyline (which is only partially represented here), Geertz's essay is clearly an attempt-and a supremely successful one-at creative nonfiction writing. Unlike traditional scholarly essays that at that time adhered to formulas, this piece of scholarly work was a *story*. It was vivid, it was dramatic, it includes ironic reversals of fortune, it has a playful title and headings. It displayed a sense of humor. It was profound, yet accessible-a real academic page-turner.

[Vincent Crapanzano] argues that Geertz's interpretive story-a radical departure from the then-accepted literary form of the realist tale-is so narratively charming, the form of it is so rhetorically compelling, its language is so metaphorically powerful, and its style so literately fashionable, that is *must be* a fiction. It *can't be* ethnography. (Goodall 2001)

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Taking the reader "there"

"Cosplayers compensate for the lack of a ludic stage by "playing around" with their characters (Grayson 1999). For example, the amusing contrast of supposed demigods dealing with con inconveniences, like queuing for food or toilets or navigating crowded convention halls, often lent itself to intentionally off-key character play. One cosplayer, dressed as Marvel Comics' Thor, the Norse god of thunder, drew laughs in the men's room for his indignant commentary on the inferior quality of earth's porcelain urinals compared to the mighty privy craftsmanship on his home realm of Asgard. Portraying trickster characters is particularly conducive to playing around. The Marvel Comics character Deadpool, famous for addressing and even mocking the reader directly in comic books, is a popular cosplay due to the free license the character affords. We saw Deadpool cosplayers barge into photo ops uninvited, challenge other characters into duels in intentionally awkward pugilist stances, position weapon props as phallic gestures, spontaneously plunge into exaggerated death scenes, and solicit over-the-top-enthusiastic high-fives from con guests."

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Thick description

"A thick description - - **does more than record what a person is doing**. It goes beyond mere fact and surface appearances. It presents **detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships** that join persons to one another. Thick description evokes emotionality and self-feelings. It inserts history into experience. It establishes the significance of an experience, or the sequence of events, for the person or persons in question. In thick description, the voices, feelings, actions, and meanings of interacting individuals are heard."

(Denzin, 1989, 83)

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Practical matters

- How to gain access?
- “Hanging around” is not the point
 - while much of ethnography does involve ‘hanging around’ this is not its point but **a means**
- Plan time to write up!
- Record as soon as possible
- Note the date, time, location, identities
- Draw maps to remember
- Distinguish between verbatim and summarized conversation

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Possible issues

- Community ‘entry’ may take a long time
- Can be taxing and time-consuming
- Can be expensive
- Possibility that researcher is changing the natural way a culture behaves by being present
- Ethical matters

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are also in play during observational work, in addition to many kinds of observer effects. Still, as with Winston Churchill's oft-repeated quip that 'Democracy is the worst form of government, except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time', we might consider that, despite their challenges and limitations, observational techniques are the worst way to gather data about the lived experiences of consumers, except for all the other forms of gathering data.

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Next step

- If you haven't already, start planning on your interview
→ **make sure you reserve enough time for transcribing**
- Read Belk, R., Fischer, E., & Kozinets, R. V. (2012). Online observation and netnography. Qualitative consumer and marketing research(pp 92 -119).Sage

(Suggested reading: Caliendo, A. (2018). Digital methods for ethnography: Analytical concepts for ethnographers exploring social media environments. Journal of Contemporary Ethnography,47(5), 551-578.)

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