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ARTS-L0108

**Methods of gathering data, or:
*Tools of investigation and vehicles
for thought***

(With thanks to Les Back and Nirmal Puwar. *Live Methods*)

Eeva Berglund – 8 January 2019 – Interviewing 1

- On notes (and anticipating ethical and procedural issues around 'data')
- Interviewing
- Online research (and interviewing)

Preoccupation with 'open' and 'raw' data e.g. Am Anth Vol.120(3) September 2018

AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGIST

MULTIMODAL ANTHROPOLOGIES

Essay

What Does “Open Data” Mean for Ethnographic Research?

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Imagine a world in which troves of ethnographic data could be made available, searchable, and reusable with privacy protection and ethical care by anthropologists and research participants working in a shared problem space. Superimpose this hypothetical vision for data sharing on a dystopic but not necessarily distant projection in which basic privacy protection and respect for collective protocols regulating the circulation, visibility, and reappropriation of cultural materials are utterly disregarded. When asking colleagues in sociocultural anthropology their opinion, the slightest suggestion of sharing “raw materials” based on years of one’s hard ethnographic labor is a touchy subject. Defensiveness is underpinned by ideas about ownership that accompany well-established parameters for what counts as *fieldwork* and *field data*. Protection, disclosure, anonymization, and sharing dynamics are further complicated by the fraught power

and Masco (2015) have discussed the parallels between ethnography and espionage at the height of the Cold War to draw our attention to a fundamental shift in the contemporary conditions of field research under a new configuration of the surveillance apparatus. Due to state-sponsored mass surveillance campaigns, surveillance technologies have substantially grown in scope, demanding that we attend to emergent forms of technopolitics more than ever (Hirschkind, Abreu, and Caduff 2017; Sharkey and Suchman 2013).

In this landscape of information politics, the question of “collaborative ethnography” is best treated as an object of inquiry, not a point of departure. It goes without saying that we have been increasingly “collaborative” in that entangling ourselves in social relations and obligations are necessary conditions for ethnographic research. We have been reminded of this point by various colleagues in recent propositions for turning “collaboration” inside out (Riles 2015) or creating experimental “collaboratories” for concept work (Collier 2007) and “paraethnographic” engagements as

Sketching, mapping, doodling etc. as recording but also elicitation (devices)

Not just in humanities, fashion or in particularly visual contexts but anywhere, by anyone, even those of us who consider ourselves not to be "able to" draw

E.g. Causey, Andrew. 2017. *Drawn to see: drawing as an ethnographic method*. University of Toronto Press.

ON FIELDNOTES

- Are they for you or to share? What form do they take?
- What information do / should they include?
 - Physical setting, what people (others) do, patterns and frequencies of interaction, directions of action. Sometimes who is present & when.
 - Formal and informal actions. Verbal and nonverbal communication.
 - Things you expected to observe but did not.
- Features of notes
 - Detailed and accurate, legible. Easy to follow – this can be fixed over time.
 - Descriptive to the degree you need and perhaps a little more.
 - You can add interpretive or reflective comments – usually kept separately.

FIELDNOTE TABLE

BY EEVA

<u>METANOTES</u> (REFLECTIVE COMMENTS)	<u>CONTENT /</u> <u>OBSERVATION</u>	<u>FOR LATER</u>
<p>EASY INTERV. TO ORGANISE.</p> <p>PRACTICE MORE TRICKY. NOISY. SHE WAS DISTRACTED BY HER PHONE/EMAIL</p>	<p>190103 'FLINT OWL CAFE', LEWES, c. 11:30 (SEE 171012)</p> <p>JANE SMITH / ACTIVIST GROUP X</p> <p>SHE WAS THERE ALREADY - RECOGNISED EACH O. FROM PHOTOS. SHOOK HANDS QUITE FORMAL. BUT DECIDED AGAINST CONSENT FORM (THIS WAS JUST TO GET ACQUAINTED)</p> <p>EXPLAINED ABOUT THIS PHASE OF THE PROJECT AND THAT MAY NOT LEAD TO ANYTHING.</p> <p>AGREED NOT TO RECORD. SEE NOTEBOOK FOR COURSE OF DISC.</p>	<p>190108 REASON FOR DISTRACTION WAS PERSONAL (CHILD CARE). (WHY NOT TELL ME THEN?!)</p> <p>- CHASE UP LOCAL NEWSPAPER FOR EVENTS OF 2003</p>

Some types of notations that may yield or become data

- **Scratch notes, jottings, and mnemonics, on paper or on a device**
- **Photos, sketches, maps, logs**
- **Diaries and journals**
- **Field reports**
 - Narrative (both text and images)
 - in tabular form (in columns)
- **Transcripts, or textual re-presentations of language and speech**
- ***Inscriptions* (Latour & Woolgar)**

See Roger Sanjek 'A vocabulary for fieldnotes', *Fieldnotes: The makings of anthropology*

Task 3

Devise a filing system. Provide a short guide to describe and justify your system.

For your portfolio (no need to submit anything at this point)

'Getting started'



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A useful resource available via Aalto

Byrne, D. (2017) Data collection. *Project Planner*. 10.4135/9781526408563.

<http://methods.sagepub.com.libproxy.aalto.fi/project-planner/data-collection>

How Can I Generate My Own Data?	+
What Is Sampling?	+
Is My Research Representative?	+
How Can I Use Sources of Existing Data?	+
Where Can I Find Secondary Data Sources?	+
Checklist: Practical Considerations in Using Secondary Data	+
What Are Big Data and Social Network Data?	+
What Is Metadata?	+
What Is Data Mining?	+
How Can I Use Panel Data and Census Data?	+
What Is a Systematic Review?	+
How Can I Carry Out Research Using Documents?	+
What Are Participatory Methods and Action Research?	+

Do take a realist(ic) approach

- does the topic (site etc) really interest me?
- is this a problem amenable to scientific/systematic enquiry?
- are there adequate resources?
- will the research Q or process lead to unresolvable ethical problems?
- is the topic of theoretical or practical interest?

If you cheat on these you will probably regret it (H. Russel Bernard, *Social Research Methods*, e.g. 2013)

Interviews



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Discussion of Warren's text

In two (?) groups, compare your definitions of the 'qualitative interview'

You can also consider

- what kinds of interviewing have you done?**
- what feels difficult about interviewing?**
- what about Warren's text might you challenge?**
- what words might you use/not use to describe your interviewees?**

David Silverman, 2017, 'How was it for you?'

"... quantitative researchers [...] argue that, if you want to understand perceptions and motives, pre-tested, multiple choice interview questions are more likely to provide reliable data than apparently 'open-ended' questions administered to small, non-random samples. A recognition of such shaky foundations is seen in the way that many PhD students doing open-ended interviews regularly ask their supervisors: 'what are the right questions to ask?' and 'how many interviews do I need?'. Rather than study how people behave (something inaccessible to quantitative researchers except through laboratory studies or crude counts of actions on the internet), *most qualitative researchers choose to study perceptions* and then inexorably find themselves in a losing battle with the real strengths of quantitative research."



Interviewing in the age of the interview. Tips from David Silverman 2017

1. Improve the transparency of the interview set-up (for example, explaining what interviewees are told about the purposes of the study).
2. Attend fully to the actions of the interviewer (including sequences of talk involving both interviewer and interviewee; improved transcription detail)
4. Improve analysis of interview data by attending to how interviews are flooded with social science categories, assumptions and research agendas.
7. Do not presuppose cognitive, individualist assumptions about human actors.

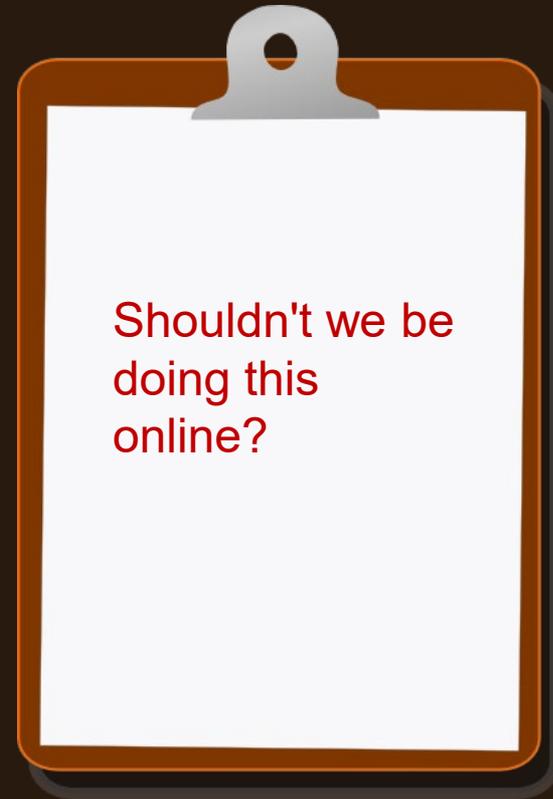
Atkinson and Silverman's critiques (see readings for today)

- The romantic modern subject in the 20th century
 - Self-knowledge as authentic?
 - Shaped by/through mass media and its political life
 - Immediacy of intimacy but also of photography
 - ⇒ We live in an interview society that values self-revelation (1997)
 - Let's study it!
- Interactional information in interviews – hesitation; backtracking; interrupting; challenging; talking is action (achieves things)
- "Ignore what you already know about your interviewees"

Typical motivations for doing interviews as part of human / qualitative study

- Soliciting views, experiences, motivations.
- Getting close to "lived experience".
- Establishing sequences of events or significant elements of life trajectories.
- Encouraging openness to share sensitive issues that are difficult to articulate in brief or in public.

- Also, specific uses of interviews, e.g. Delphi to synthesize expert views, Life Story interviews, Focus Groups
 - Detail matters, history matters
 - All have pitfalls – we can learn from others' mistakes!



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- Encouraging openness to share sensitive issues that are difficult to articulate in brief or in public.
- Even to achieve an "authentic gaze into the soul of another" (Paul Atkinson & David Silverman 1997).

⇒ Makes assumptions about SOCIETY, CULTURE, PERSON/SELF

Qualitative interviewing

- Structured – are like verbally administered questionnaires
- Semi-structured – based around key questions
- Unstructured – open-ended
- Individual, group, focus group, life-history and biographical. Informal or formal, by telephone, skype or even email.
- For follow up, triangulate, complement, previously generated materials and ideas.

The practice of interviewing



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Standardized survey interviews and questionnaires

- Representative samples are important – qualitative meets quantitative
- Snowballing samples create different kinds of *research populations*
- Anonymity takes different forms
- Is often sequential with open-ended or semi-structured enquiry

Making the best of the chance to interview

Things to consider in a typical *semi-structured interview situation*:

- Access – how will you recruit and invite interviewees?
- Thematizing – what the interviewer/researcher wants
- Openness – what the interviewee wants
- To record or not to record?
- Main questions
- *Probes* and follow-up questions
- Equipment, place and time!

Some things to include in an interview

Making sure the interviewee:

- Is thanked
- Understands the purpose of the interview
- Knows the approximate time needed in advance

Making sure the interviewer:

- Has prepared the questions appropriately and done the pre-research required
- Understands the responses and if not, asks for clarification
- Establishes whether follow-up is possible

Learning from others' mistakes

- Everything is potential data, not just the speech (let alone words alone).
- Place, who are present & around, i.e. context, what everyone does, what artefacts or tools come into play.
- Often respondents have continued to speak after the tape recorders have been turned off.
- Interview fieldnotes should include lots of things that are not speech or words!

Learning from others' mistakes / successes

- Time can be crucial – a leisurely conversation that generates new insight can be rewarding for everyone
- Many people like talking about themselves
- Good background research
- A nose for a good interviewee – E.g. Berglund (2009) 'Making space in Finland's new economy', in *Boundless Worlds: An Anthropological Approach to Movement*, Peter W. Kirby (ed.).
- Copious, clear notes, make it possible to benefit from them 25 years later.

Standard qualitative interviewing also involves

- Establishing trust – negotiating
- Possibly making transcripts available to interviewees
- Usually an audit-trail of the rights and responsibilities of those involved. E.g. release-notes, consent forms, ethics release forms etc, usually based on the requirements of funding bodies and research institutions.
- Increasingly it may involve considering who your data belongs to! Open science will affect how all data is generated, managed and made use of.

Sample interview release form

In order to assist the Author in the preparation of the Work, I have agreed to be interviewed and to provide information and other materials to be used in connection with the Work, including my personal experiences, remarks, and recollections as well as any photographs and documents that I may choose to give to the Author (the Interview Materials).

I hereby grant and assign to the Author and his/her licensees, successors, and assigns the following rights in connection with the Interview Materials for use as part of the Work or any advertising, packaging, or promotional materials for the Work, in any and all editions, versions, and media, in perpetuity and throughout the world.

1. The right to quote or paraphrase all or any portion of the Interview Materials, and to generally use and publish the Interview Materials, including my experiences, recollections, incidents, remarks, dialogue, actions, and information, as well as any photographs and documents that I may give to the Author.
2. The right to use my name, image, and biographical data.
3. The right to develop, produce, distribute, advertise, promote, or otherwise exploit the Work as a book or any other Work in any manner that the Author or his/her assigns deems appropriate. I understand and acknowledge that the Author or his/her assigns will be the sole owner of all copyright and other rights in and to the Work.

https://www.dukeupress.edu/Assets/Downloads/DUP_SampleInterviewRelease.pdf

Some things to include in *records* of interviews

- The Date, time and location and other relevant details for retrieval later
- Information needed about the interviewee (and the interviewer)
- Any notes on release forms
- **Before** you head out to do your interview, check that recording equipment works.
- Allow for time for messing up.
- **After** Label records, make duplicates, and store them safely!
- Go through your notes and add interpretive commentary and expand on mnemonics.
- Transcribe what you need to (or get it done by someone else) quickly, and check the transcription against the original.

The philosophy of interviewing?



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Thick and thin description

- See C. Geertz 1973, drawing on Gilbert Ryle
- Thickness requires:
 - What is said
 - How it is said and how people act
 - What artefacts are used and what impacts they have
- But thick description may not be the most valuable thing you get from a good interview.

Interviewing and the digital life



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Conversational methods and the digital life

- Digital devices can appear in social research as
 - Research focus – how do people use devices
 - Research tools – inscription or measuring devices
 - Socio-technical assemblages – where EVERYBODY potentially uses digital devices (a kind of research tool):
 - quantified self and other learning / self-improvement technologies
 - surveillance (of self and others) for commercial and government uses
 - Everyday life at home, at play, at work...

Two examples of using digital tools

- Internet discussion forums

E.g. diffusion of small-scale renewable energy technologies (heat-pumps, pellet burning, solar) Sampsa Hyysalo et al.

- Expert interviews, snowballing and online forums
- Find patterns
 - Establish paths of transformation and motives
- Statistical analysis but also descriptive content and narrative analysis

- Online mapping

E.g. PPGIS public participation GIS SoftGIS Methodology - 1/02/2011 Building Bridges in Urban Planning by Marketta Kyttä & Maarit Kahila

- Internet based surveys that combine location data with subjective evaluations of specific locations
- Complement participatory planning workshops and meetings
- After ten years, planners still find it hard to use the data effectively

One-off or consecutive interviews?

- Is all conversation interviewing?
- 'Thin' information can still be 'rich' information
 - With top-ranking, articulate people who are not worried about their status or issues of confidentiality
- Interviewing is often costly

Brief discussion of the exercises so far



Emerging dilemmas



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Open data and corporate styles in the management of qualitative research

What does 'open' mean?

What is the GDPR?

How does it impact our work?

See e.g. Luis Felipe Rosado Murillo 'Multimodal anthropologies', 'What does "open data" mean for ethnographic research"? In AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGIST, VOL.120(3), SEPT. 2018

More long standing dilemmas



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Sameness and difference

On agreeing with respondents

- What does it add to knowledge, does it just confirm our own biases?
- Can it be dishonest, encouraging people to keep talking.

On respondents we don't like

- E.g. in Social Movement research, too little research is done on groups researchers don't like, or 'repugnant Others' (Sandra Harding)
- Access is a problem