Ethnographic Methods—Final Report

Your final report should be modeled loosely after a published paper in the social sciences (not humanistic anthropology), and should include (a) an introductory section that describes the research question and reviews relevant research, (b) a detailed description of your methods, (c) a summary of your results and (d) a discussion section. The balance among the sections will differ from a real paper, however. Details on each section are given below.

Due date is on the web. Submit to Canvas. No hard copy is required.

There are no page constraints, but something between 4 and 10 single-spaced pages would be appropriate. Take the space you need to do a thorough job, and then edit it by deleting redundant sections, unnecessary words, convoluted prose, and jargon.

Part I: Introduction and Background

Begin your report by explaining your research question, hypotheses if you have them, and how your research fits in the context of other research that has been done.

You should be able to take most or all of this directly from your proposal's introduction and background sections. However, you may have changed or focused your research question, and you may have done additional reading, so this gives you the opportunity to clean it up and improve it. Do not do any additional reading just for this report.

Part II: Methods

Explain your methods **in detail**. You may take this from the methods section of your research proposal, but it is likely to require editing, because what you actually did probably differed from what you had planned to do. I want to know what you did.

Specifically, explain how you chose your sample, and why, and enough about your procedure so that someone could copy it exactly just from reading the paper. Err on the side of more detail in this section, since this is a methods class!

Part III: Results

Getting answers to your research questions—even preliminary answers—is the fun part of research, so I want you to go over your data and summarize the results. Data that cannot be reduced to numbers can be described in prose. A combination is great: present the numbers and amplify it by giving examples.

Use the data analysis techniques you are familiar with, but be assured that I will not mark you down if you do not know how to analyze data. This is a course in data collection, not data analysis.

Even if you have never had a statistics course, however, you should be able to do simple summaries of the data. See the section below called "analyzing your data" for notes on how you might do this.

Include results that bear on your research question, and any other results that are interesting. If it is neither related to the question nor interesting, don't include it unless it provides important background information. Probably you will not have enough data to say anything statistically conclusive, even if you are using statistical tests, but you can discuss trends if there are any.

Please do not worry if your data do not show anything interesting. If the two subpopulations you are comparing turn out to be identical, if your plots look like snow in a Utah winter, if all the cells in the cross-tabulations look the same, its ok!!!! See next section.

Part IV: Discussion

People use the discussion section of a scientific paper to interpret the results, explain limitations of the data, suggest future avenues for research etc. You can do some of that here, but for the purposes of this project I want this section to be **primarily** a very detailed critique of your work (more than you would put in a published paper). Were your methods suitable? What worked and what didn't? What changes would you make if you were to follow up this project? You might think about the following (it is not an exhaustive list, just some ideas to think about):

a) Does the research you conducted suggest a better way to pose the research question? Did the study suggest other interesting research questions and/or hypotheses?

b) Are you now in a better position to identify a suitable population? To decide how to sample it? Were there sources of bias in the way you chose your sample?

c) Are you now in a better position to devise appropriate data-gathering techniques and instruments? Are there other techniques that you would like to use, and are there any that should be dropped?

d) Did you face problems of access or rapport? Do you think people were being honest with you (why do you think so)? Did you face any ethical dilemmas? Are there ways the problems could have been prevented or dealt with better?

e) Were people able to answer your questions (if you were interviewing)? Were you able to observe without significantly affecting their behavior (if you were doing an observational study)? Do any of your questions (or behavior codes, or experimental protocols) need modifying? How about the order of presentation? Be specific: if there was a badly-worded question, suggest an improvement here.

f) Were there technical problems with equipment? Were your note-taking methods satisfactory?

We all screw up—this is why people do pilot studies. You will not be graded down if you are able to make an elegant assessment of the screw-ups.

Analyzing your data

If you have quantitative data, I will expect you to summarize the data in ways that bear on your research question. If you are familiar with statistical analysis, then use what you are comfortable with. But if you don't know anything about data analysis, read on.

First of all, what you do with the data depends on the kind of variable you have.

A *categorical* variable takes a limited set of qualitatively different values. Gender, religion, color, species, are all categorical variables.

A *quantitative* variable is measured numerically, and you can do calculations with it (take an average, etc). There are different kinds of quantitative variables (discrete, continuous, ordinal). A discrete variable takes a finite, countable set of values, like the number of hours spent studying. A continuous variable is, well, continuous – like time, or distance.

Group means

If one variable is categorical (like sex, or location) and the other is continuous (like height or income), compare the groups on the continuous variable by reporting the average for each group.

Crosstabs (contingency tables)

You can make a cross-tabulation of the counts of two categorical variables, such as gender and major, or whether you are a dog or cat person. Here's an example:

	dog	cat	neither	total
anthro	5	10	5	20
engineering	3	4	21	28

In this example, you have interviewed more engineering students (28) than anthro students (20), so if you want to compare the pet preferences by major, you want to also give the row percents.

	dog	cat	neither	total
anthro	5	10	5	20
	25%	50%	25%	100%
engineering	3	4	21	28
	11%	14%	75%	100%

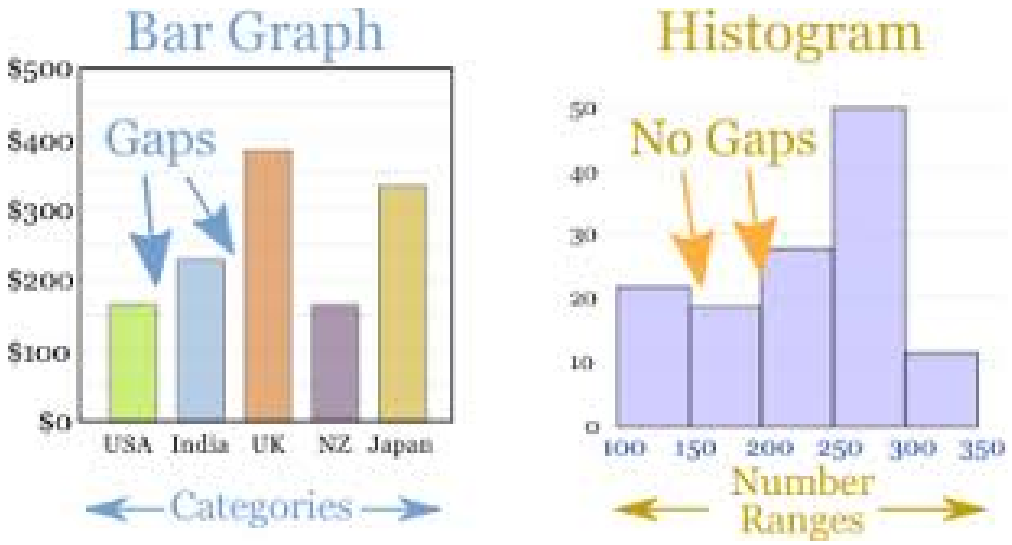
That way you will be able to see that engineering students in your sample are three times as likely as anthro students to not like either pet.

histograms and bar charts

You can also display many kinds of variables on a bar chart or a histogram. A bar chart shows the size of some categorical variable while a histogram break up a continuous variable into bins, and shows the size of each bin.

So, for example, if you want to know how many individuals there are in different majors (a categorical variable), or you want to compare the majors on some other continuous variable (say, income), you can make a bar chart. There would be a separate bar for each major, and the height of the bar would indicate the number in each major (or their average income).

If you want to know how many individuals there are at each age (a continuous variable), or you want to measure some other quantity (say, income) by age, you can make a histogram. Age would be broken up into bins of different age groups and the height of the bar would be the number (or average income) in each bin.



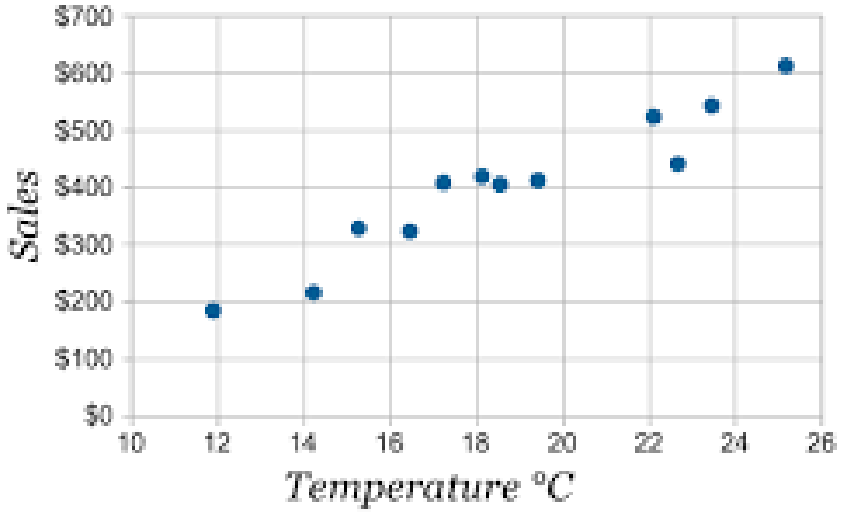
You don't have to make these for the paper, but it does help you visualize your data and understand it better. I encourage it for that reason. See below for how to do it ("low tech vs. higher tech").

Scatterplots

If you have two continuous variables, i.e. variables with values that are ordered from small to large (for example, number of pets owned and amount of furniture shredding experienced) and you want to know if they are associated, do a scatter plot. You can do this using excel or another spreadsheet program, or just by hand.

People typically distinguish between the independent variable (what you think is causing the relationship) and the dependent variable (what you are trying to predict). The convention is to put the independent variable (number of pets) on the x axis and the dependent variable (amt. of shredded furniture) on the y axis. Then each person (or household) you interview is a single point on the graph.

Here is an example of a scatterplot. As temperature increases, the amount of sales increased. (I pulled this off the web, and have no idea what this means - sales of icecream, maybe?).



Here is a very good 15 minute youtube tutorial on making scatterplots by hand, and interpreting them:

`https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PE_BpXTyKCE`

Low tech vs. higher tech

The low-tech way to do bar charts, scatterplots, etc. is to download some graph paper from the web, print it, label your axes and plot your points or draw your bars in pen, then scan it for your paper. You can insert it as an image. That would be fine.

The more high-tech way, since you are all familiar with spreadsheets, is to enter your data into a spreadsheet (excel, google sheets, etc) and use the program to make your scatterplot or other chart. That would be fine too, and a useful skill to develop.