

Week 7: Ethnography and participation

Your Webinar Hosts



Andrew Jeavons
CEO
Survey Analytics



Gina Yeagley
Director of Marketing
Survey Analytics

Access the Webinar Replay on How to Use Tablets for Digital Ethnography Research



Sorry we missed you for this webinar. The original air date was May 16, 2013. We have uploaded the video and slides for you to access this presentation at your convenience

Overview

- Ethnography and 'live methods'
- Ethnography and digital ethnography
- Group research projects and live methods
- Preparation for interview on ethnography
- Interview

Review

- Ethnography as way of studying how media is 'consumed' – by audiences, by fans, by social groups
- Ethnography as study of how media objects circulate and are transformed

different platforms with different sub-cultures, etc

Participation

- 'Thus, by participation I refer to amateurs acting together individually, collectively, or with organizations in fields otherwise dominated by gatekeepers or professionals' (Fish, 2013)

Ethnography as making media

- Use of **writing**
- Use of **photography** and **film**
 - **Anthropological film-makers**
- Use of digital **platforms**

How to make media as **part** of research?

- Make images or recordings as **empirical data** to be analysed
 - e.g. photos/videos of city streets
- Make images/videos/recordings as part of an **visual essay**
- **Ask participants** to take photos or make videos, and then look at them together
 - Interview participants about what they made and what it means to them

Live methods again

- Manifesto
 - New tools for live/realtime
 - Avoid the trap of the now
 - See the whole without totalizing
 - Make methods more artful and crafty
 - Develop empirical devices that reinvent relations to social
 - Curate knowledge on public platforms
 - Utilize senses equally
 - Lively words
 - Recover history of inventive craft
 - Take time
 - Engage political and ethical issues without arrogance

Exercise: live methods

- Take one point from the 'live methods' (by Back and Puwar) that relates to your group research project, and discuss it with your neighbour to ensure you grasp it.
- Discuss how you might practically actualise that point using equipment, devices, objects or infrastructures you have access to right here in the classroom.
- Write a list of the practical steps you would need to do to perform to do it.

Digital ethnography: access new places

- Places that would be difficult to access – geographically or socially

There have been and continue to be many uses of digital technologies in my qualitative research. My past work was focussed on exploring a transnational Muslim music subculture with a complex, geographically distributed organizational structure (Murthy, 2010, 2012). Because of high levels of Islamophobia in Europe, the USA, and Canada, musicians in this subculture turned to MySpace, Facebook, and Twitter to interact with each other and their fans. Some of the participants of this subculture only engaged in these online spaces due to apprehensions about attending physical events. Others used these online spaces to augment their participation in this subculture.

Digital ethnography as engagement or form of accountability

- All ethnography 'engages' participants (a.k.a. 'informants')

My research has also leveraged blog technologies to keep private and public field notes. As I have written about my specific implementation of blogs and e-fieldnotes elsewhere (Murthy, 2011), I will only briefly mention my use of them. Using a WordPress-powered blog[1], I created public entries regarding my research and invited participants to respond via comments to blog posts or via e-mail. I recruited several respondents after their interactions with my research blog. Additionally, the Google Maps/Flickr mashup and the stream of related tweets from Twitter were embedded into the blog. The use of this blog was an important aspect of my combination of digital with conventional ethnographic methods. It is also a prime example of how digital work is not a threat to face-to-face work, but rather can augment the ways in which ethnographic work is publicly disseminated. Importantly, several of my respondents appreciated the existence of the blog as it provided one way in which they could see where my research was going and they felt more invested in the research by seeing concrete manifestations of its progress. I have used my work to highlight some

Digital ethnography as new mode of writing

- Digital media as both object of research *and* research tool
- Smartphones permit use of video and audio as documentation
- Digital devices offer new ways of being present in the field
- New ethical challenges -- how to anonymize?

Digital ethnography as 'live method'

- Re-ordering the relations between data-gathering, analysis and circulation
- Looking outside 'academic methods' and repurposing art/activist approaches
- Reassess how digital tools shape our understanding of social life

Group research project: digital ethnography

- Discuss a digital ethnographic study that would:
 - Deal with problems of geography and social inclusion
 - Provide some way for participants to engage in the research (see 'Live Methods' manifesto)
- Write a brief outline (300-450 words) describing how you imagine this study would work in practice.

Interview preparation

- Following normal practice, construct 3 questions in your research groups that address:
 - Researchers as **participants** in media cultures
 - The liveness of methods
 - The challenges of digital ethnography in 'convergence cultures'.