

Participant observer/ethnographer immerses him- or herself in a group for an extended period of time, observing behaviour, listening to what is said in conversations both between others and with the fieldworker, and asking questions.

Getting involved

- ▶ A researcher can not work undercover, for ethical reasons he/she must openly state what are the goals, aim of the research.
- ▶ People must be informed about the research, must know how the information will be used, must have access to the findings of the research.
- ▶ How to earn trust?
Introduced by a gatekeeper that has some authority (can vouch for the researcher, in some cases – only a gatekeeper can ensure entrance (hospital, gangs, etc.), but also risky – research can be influenced by gatekeepers' power or viewpoint).
Involving themselves actively in everyday activities, learning language, slang, etc.
Time – the more time spent, the more trust could be earned.

Social boundaries and objectivity

Keeping boundaries for researcher might be difficult:

- ▶ Must remain personally not involved and capable of objectivity.
- ▶ And at the same time – part of the group.
- ▶ Risk of getting involved in a conflict.

What an ethnographer does during the fieldwork:

- ▶ Observes everyday events in the natural environment.
- ▶ Gets involved in the environment, experiences the everyday life personally.
- ▶ Must combine insiders' perspective and also analyze them as an outsider.
- ▶ Uses multiple methods and social skills in a flexible way, depending on the situation.
- ▶ Covers research data in long, thick descriptions, maps, photos.
- ▶ Sees the environment in a holistic sense and individually in a social context.
- ▶ Understands the field, observes the environment in an empathetic sense.
- ▶ Notices explicit and tacit elements of culture.
- ▶ Observes the process without interfering and expressing opinion.
- ▶ Inevitably experiences stress, ethical dilemmas and ambiguities.

Steps of ethnographic fieldwork:

1. Prepare for the fieldwork, read the available literature and shed prejudices.
2. Find the field and find a way to it.
3. Enter the field and start connecting with people.
4. Take on a social role and understand the social relations, find a way to connect with people (Risk to gain enemies when the field is chosen).
5. Listen, observe and collect data (start analyzing the data, raise working hypothesis, problem questions, conduct interviews) Believe unconditionally in everything you are told and do not believe in anything 😊
6. Retract from the fieldwork.
7. Write the analysis.

Advantages of the participant observation

- ▶ Data from the primary source – authenticity.
- ▶ Possibility to notice not only what people say, but also what they do. Important to analyze nonverbal communication, hidden behaviour, cultural elements.
- ▶ The data is exhaustive and deep.
- ▶ The method is flexible, you can change the angle of the research during the research.

Disadvantages of the participant observation:

- ▶ Not all the data from fieldwork notes can be published.
- ▶ Data collection is not systematic. The possibility to change the angle of the research is an advantage, but it can also end up with a superficial understanding of the research.
- ▶ Takes a long time and requires a lot of funding. A researcher must spend a lot of time and a researcher can not depend on those that he/she researches.
- ▶ The success of the research depends highly on the professionalism of the researcher, the ability to get involved, communicate, analyse, notice, distinguish the roles of the researcher and participant, to remain objective.
- ▶ The risk of influencing the field remains, even without intention, presence of the researcher influences the group, the field.