



Introduction to fieldnotes

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An intro to fieldnotes

By the end of this presentation, students should be able to list the basic contents of a fieldnote.

This presentation will cover:

- ❖ What are field notes?
- ❖ When should you write field notes?
- ❖ What should field notes contain?
- ❖ Why should we write fieldnotes?

What are fieldnotes?

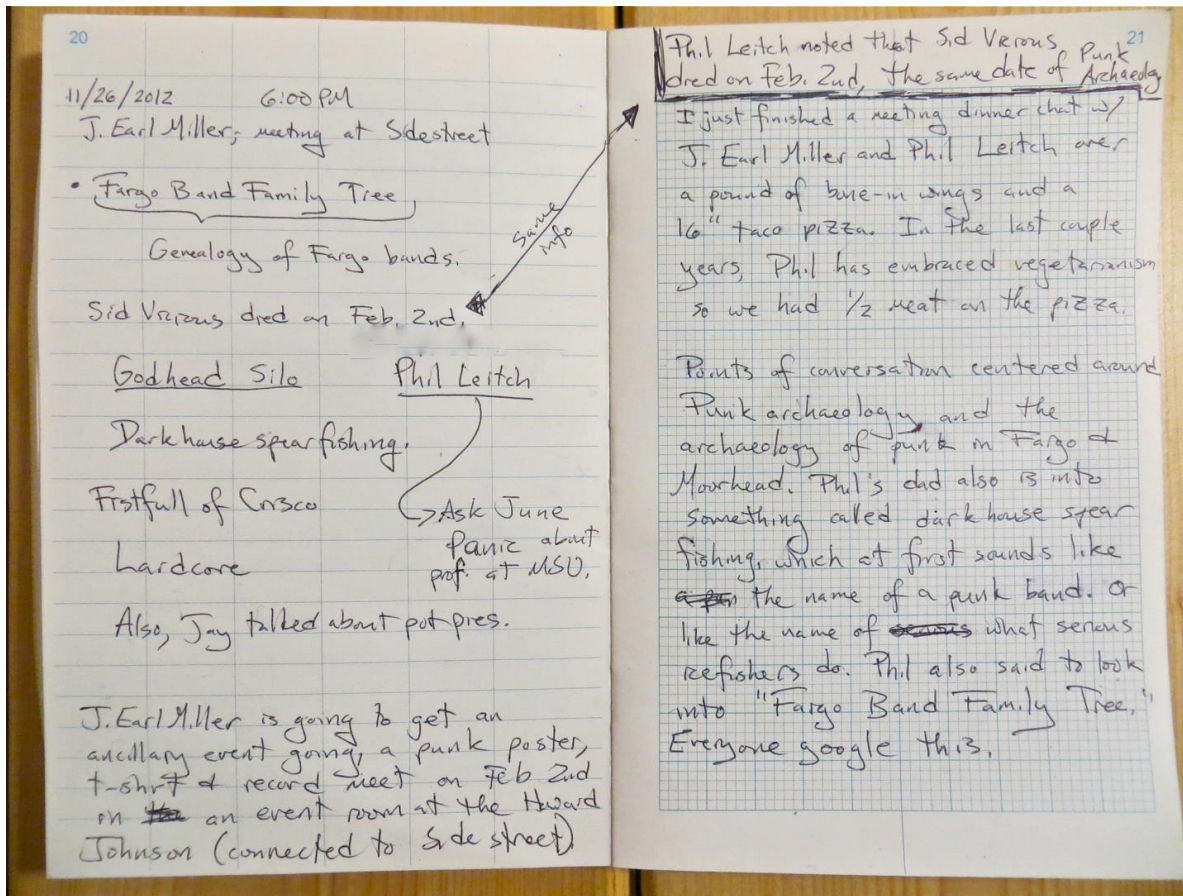
- Fieldnotes are written quickly to capture essence of a situation and to help refresh memory later
 - Begin as *Rapid notes* ..later extended to *detailed (desk) notes*
- Helps one understand and reflect on their research and the data they collect
- The desk notes are what can be used as part of data for analysis

Rapid notes	Detailed notes
Could be bullet points, quick drawings, photos, short videos, audio recordings	- contains fuller descriptions of observations from quick notes
Anything short that can help you expand on important details later in the day	Should be written as soon as possible after the end of the observation period

How detailed should fieldnotes be?

- Depends on the focus of research and research question
 - Depends on the detail necessary for your research
 - Depends on how good your memory is (but enough for others to understand what you observed for the purpose of providing evidence of your research!)
- ❖ These elements needs to be agreed between the team – researcher, data managers, field staff, farmers.

When should you write field notes?



Ideally, any time you are in the field – should be written for any and every field activity



Have a record of comments and observations you made for every day of field work

What should field notes contain?

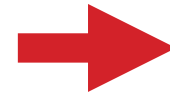
Descriptive information

- Date, time, context
- Physical environment
- Social environment
- Events, activities, main themes, conversations
- Direct quotes
- Your participation and possible impact of this
- Sensory impressions: sights, sounds, textures, smells, taste



Reflexive information

- Thoughts, impressions, questions that have arisen
- Specific analysis about something that happened and why.
- Clarifications and new ideas (e.g. for future observations or analysis)



Develop your own style

- How long/short your quick notes will be
- The more detailed the notes are, the more useful they will be in the long run

Why write field notes?

- Act as a source of reference of our observations (i.e. used to inform others of what you observed in the field)
- Capture data that could fill in gaps from other data collection methods
- Give room for documenting farmers' local knowledge and innovations
- Provide learning that could guide the modification of protocols
- Provide evidence on what is necessary to share with farmers (feedbacking information to farmers)

References

- <https://stats4sd.org/resources/451>
- Phillippi, J. & Lauderdale, J. (2018). A Guide to Field Notes for Qualitative Research: Context and Conversation. *Qualitative Health Research*, 28(3), 381–388.
- <https://medium.com/media-ethnography/field-notes-and-participant-observation-in-ethnographic-studies-a-skill-summary-bb74e3881258>