



How to write fieldnotes

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Recap from last session

In module 1 we looked at:

- What is a fieldnote?
- When should you write a fieldnote?
- What should a fieldnote consist of?

Learning outcomes

By the end of this presentation, students should be able to:

- describe the qualities/characteristics of a good fieldnote
- highlight important things to consider before and when writing fieldnotes

Video: How to write a fieldnote

PLEASE FOLLOW THE LINK BELOW TO WATCH THE VIDEO

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mp2UQQt4Mdl>

TASK

What are the characteristics of a good fieldnote?

Hint: list the characteristics on a paper and compare to those to the video in previous slide.

Tips on writing fieldnotes

- When writing fieldnotes, ask yourself:
 - What surprised me?
 - What interested me?
 - What disturbed me?
 - If I did the observation again, what would I pay attention to?
- You can arrange notes chronologically (from beginning to end of the day/observation period, or focus on the highlights and observations that were more interesting/shocking to your work)
- Expand rapid notes to detailed notes as soon as you can

Tips on writing fieldnotes cont'd...

- Seek prior informed consent before taking notes/recordings/photos.
- Keep your notes anonymous unless consent is given for making personal information public
- Notebooks should be small enough to store in a pocket or small bag (A4 or A6)
- Always have a spare pen
- Develop your own shortcuts/signs/codes for speed and privacy
- Make sure to keep a good relationship with the observed/interviewees



Notetaking style can change on a case-by-case basis



A few short notes is more useful than notes that never leave your head

OFFLINE ACTIVITY 1

Please discuss and answer the following questions:

1. What does it mean for a fieldnote to be objective?
2. What does it mean for a fieldnote to be descriptive?
3. How brief should a fieldnote be?

OFFLINE ACTIVITY 2

Considering the three characteristics of a fieldnote, write some fieldnotes on any observations of your liking from your compound e.g. it could be fieldnotes on your visit to a neighbor, fieldnotes from your visit to the market, or fieldnotes from observing your children.

Resources

- <https://stats4sd.org/resources/451>
- <https://medium.com/media-ethnography/field-notes-and-participant-observation-in-ethnographic-studies-a-skill-summary-bb74e3881258>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mp2UQQt4Mdl>