

METHODS 1: OBSERVATION, INTERVIEW, DOCUMENTS

INF5220

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Sisse Finken, Design group

OBSERVATION

- Observation is a way of generating empirical material in *naturally occurring settings*. Note taking ((+ photos, video, audio)) is important when observing.

Observation can be:

- Passive observation
- Participant observation

- Immersion – in and out (Madden 2010)
- Intersubjective understandings between researcher and researched (Madden 2010; Crang & Cook 2007)

OBSERVATION

- What people say they do and what we observe them do is not the same (ideal and manifest behavior) (Blomberg et al. 1993 + Crang and Cook 2007).
- Where are we, weather, time of day, location, who is present (for full list see Crang & Cook 2007:51- 2)
- Interviewing is part of participant observation
- Besides conversing with the one(s) studied, during participant observation, you can study/note the following when conducting observation – this also goes for interviewing:
 - Body language
 - Gestures
 - Cues that lend meaning to words
 - Setting of location
 - Other people present (The Sage Handbook 2005 + Crang & Cook 2007)
- No innocent positions (see youtube video)

OBSERVATION

- Targeted note-taking: Focus can be on objects, people, events, place. (Blomberg et al. 1993) – could be on human-artifact relation; on concepts practiced (e.g. identity, cooperation, or e.g. users); activities (planned, unplanned, where, how); interactions (with whom/what, how, where, frequency, directions, forms of communication (formal, informal, silent, loud, noise, etc.)); patterns, deviations, routines, rhythms, etc. (Crang & Cook 2007). It depends on your research question/topic.
- Be aware of loaded categories - instead provide detailed descriptions

INTERVIEW

- Not naturally occurring. 'Constructed' by researchers, and, as such, do not provide direct access to the experiences of the ones studied (Silverman 1998)
- Other artificial research environments: focus groups, experiments, survey, 'questionnaire's (Silverman 2005)
- Remember that naturally occurring data is coined by what you want to do with them; that is, no data is 'untouched by human hands' (Silverman 2005)

Interviews can be:

- Structured interviews (planned, strict procedure to be followed)
- Semi-structured interviews (few questions / a topic to discuss)
- Unstructured interviews (open-ended, no planned topic) (Sage Handbook 2005; Madden 2010)

INTERVIEW

How to ask questions

- ‘Grand-tour’: what, who, where and how? -> their words, their version
- Wherefore
- What do you mean, when you say..
- Can you tell more about how it can be that you do this, not that
- How did you get involved, interested, enrolled.. (Crang & Cook 2007 – see also Madden 2010:73)
- Be aware of loaded/leading questions (Madden 2010)
- ‘Why’ questions can be asked within qualitative research, but avoid using them (or wait as long as possible with asking them) – they lead to a path of means and ends / presuppose that the person knows why / mute open-ended answers / mute the relational (The Sage Handbook 2005 + Silverman 2005).

Issues to consider

- Information about your project
- Ethical considerations (informed consent – see course page for an example)
- Where (location, on the move)
- Who is present
- E-interviews / Online setting (Gisle's lecture on Sept. 19th)
- Follow the Norwegian rules from Datatilsynet – see the course page for link

Datatilsynet (Personvern) informs us that as long as the interview stays on the (analog/digital) recorder - not being transferred to a PC (computer) - and as long as you preserve the anonymity of your informants in your transcripts (personal data, places, etc. that leaves traces to who they are (aka Gisle's lecture)), and as long as you destroy the recording(s) after your exercise, you do not have to apply for permission to conduct the interview.

DOCUMENTS

- **texts already in the public sphere to serve as empirical material**

what and where to be found:

- Newspapers
- Libraries
- Local / state archives
- TV, radio, internet
- Screen dumps
- Letters
- Agreements
- Annual reports
- Marketed surveys
- Brochures (see eg. Crang & Cook 2007:67)

Group work

- How can you make use of Madden in your first assignment?
- What is embodiment?
- Take-aways about observation/interviewing

Literature not listed on syllabus

- The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research 2005
- Clifford, J. (1990): Notes on (Field)notes. In Sanjek, R. (edt.): *Fieldnotes. The Makings of Anthropology*. Cornell University Press. Pp. 47-70.
- Mautner, T. (2005): *The Penguin Dictionary of Philosophy*. Penguin Books.
- Sanjek, R. (1990): A vocabulary for Fieldnotes. In Sanjek, R. (edt.): *Fieldnotes. The Makings of Anthropology*. Cornell University Press. Pp. 92-121.
- Silverman, D. (2005): *Doing Qualitative Research*. Sage.