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October Post 8

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Lori Lee

Oct 28, 2014



I hate to admit this, but "deep hanging out" or cruising the internet on these sites, is the most mind numbing wast of time. I feel like I've just wasted hours reading bad language and meaningless content. I have visited buzzfeed, meme generator, and numerous links around and about, and I feel like I need to Clorox my brain. I am no good at this. I haven't seen much repetition, other than a lot of folks like to use the word "f*ck".

← Reply



Prof. McNeill

Oct 29, 2014



This is good honesty--I appreciate you being willing to share frustration and annoyance! :)

I think this is also a good illustration of the potential reality of ethnographic work. Imagine that you were hired as a professional folklorist to do an *offline* ethnography of a folk culture you really have no interest in or that you find distasteful (or offensive or boring or stupid). We don't always get to work with only the people or communities we'd choose to work with.

This is one of the reasons that the field notes reading suggests working to separate your own emotional reactions from those of the people you're observing and to avoid etic value judgments (I believe it's on the 7th page of the PDF that's posted). Definitely articulate what you yourself are feeling and thinking--hiding or denying your reactions won't help--but also try to articulate what *they* seem to be feeling or thinking. As the reading suggests--note *how* things happen more than explaining *why* you think they do.

Would the people interacting on the sites you looked at agree that their content is meaningless? Would they agree that their language is bad? If you think yes, then what evidence can you find for the motivation to use bad language or share meaningless content? Can you get any sense of what *they* find valuable about the content they're engaging with, even while you don't personally find it valuable?

And since this is a group effort, you can also perhaps find a form of research that better suits your own interests. Rather than starting with the websites we've listed as field sites, perhaps try searching some of the topics/events /issues we've posted as being currently relevant--these also comprise "sites" for ethnographic observation. Targeting more specific themes might be a way to avoid the general clutter of the web.

← Reply



Lori Lee

Oct 29, 2014



Thanks Lynne. You are so right. I have a lot to learn. I'm quick with my own opinion and I need to be able to go into a research setting without it. I'll practice.

← Reply



Prof. McNeill

Oct 30, 2014



Practice never stops--seasoned ethnographers find themselves in these kinds of situations, and it's never much easier, just more familiar. :)

← Reply