

Workshopping Ideas for your Ethnographic Sketch¹

In preparation for your written sketch (a first attempt at a rough draft), spend time freewriting on each of the following prompts based on the fieldwork you have done so far. This is fastwriting, so you need not worry about grammar mistakes- just write as fast and as long as you can. The idea is to think through the act of writing.

Use what you produce here to help you in crafting your sketch, as well as in developing your future plans for fieldwork. This can allow you to see what questions you need to ask, what observations and artifacts you need to still gather, and what background research you may need to conduct.

1. **Narrative of Thought.** For this prompt, you are tracing your train of thought. Write about what you thought about your cultural group, previous to conducting any fieldwork. What assumptions, biases, conceptions (or misconceptions) did you have about your subjects? How did this change? What were you expecting vs. what you saw/heard? What did you find out? What do you think now? – You are tracing how your thoughts/feelings/ideas have evolved about your cultural group as you became more familiar with it.
2. **“Look at strands in the web.”** Most cultural groups have common features, like shared language, clothing, behaviors, beliefs, food, artifacts, which can be examined in order to gain a deeper understanding of that group. For this prompts, pick as many of the following features (but at least 2) to write about:
 - a. **Shared Language**
 - b. **Shared Artifacts (objects)**
 - c. **Shared beliefs or attitudes**
 - d. **Common motivations (for being participants in the group)**
 - e. **Common rituals or traditions**
 - f. **Other common behaviors**
3. **“Examine one strand.”** Choose *one* of the features from your freewriting in #2 and generate as much writing as you can about it. Think in terms of observations you have had, responses you have received, and detailed descriptions and anecdotes. You can also spend your time crafting questions to ask subjects, regarding this strand as well as a more detailed plan for gathering more evidence to describe this strand.
4. **Re-read what you have written so far. Based on your initial observation(s) and what you have written so far, try to explain to me in 1 or 2 sentences what you are trying to say about your cultural group.**

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