

Advanced Research Methods

DEVS306 (SOSS235/MCPS190)

Ethnography, fieldwork & interviews

Lalli Metsola

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What methods, what data?

- You want to study:
 - a) oriental dance as a medium of the bodily experience of its practitioners
 - b) the meanings of 'home' among immigrants from Nonsensia
 - c) the opinions of Amazian farmers concerning the ending of crop price subvention
 - d) the effects of the ending of crop price subvention to the livelihoods of Amazian farmers
 - e) the interactional strategies of the civil servants and residents of the municipality of Bureaucratia in the context of water service delivery reform
 - f) the reasons behind the drafting of the Veterans' Act in Rigidia

Quantity & quality



Ethnography

ARGONAUTS OF THE WESTERN PACIFIC

*An Account of Native Enterprise
and Adventure in the Archipelagoes
of Melanesian New Guinea*

BY

BRONISLAW MALINOWSKI

Ph.D. (Cracow), D.Sc. (London)

WITH A PREFACE

BY

SIR JAMES GEORGE FRAZER, F.B.A., F.R.S.

WITH 5 MAPS, 65 ILLUSTRATIONS, AND 2 FIGURES.

LONDON

ROUTLEDGE & KEGAN PAUL LTD.

NEW YORK: E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY, INC.



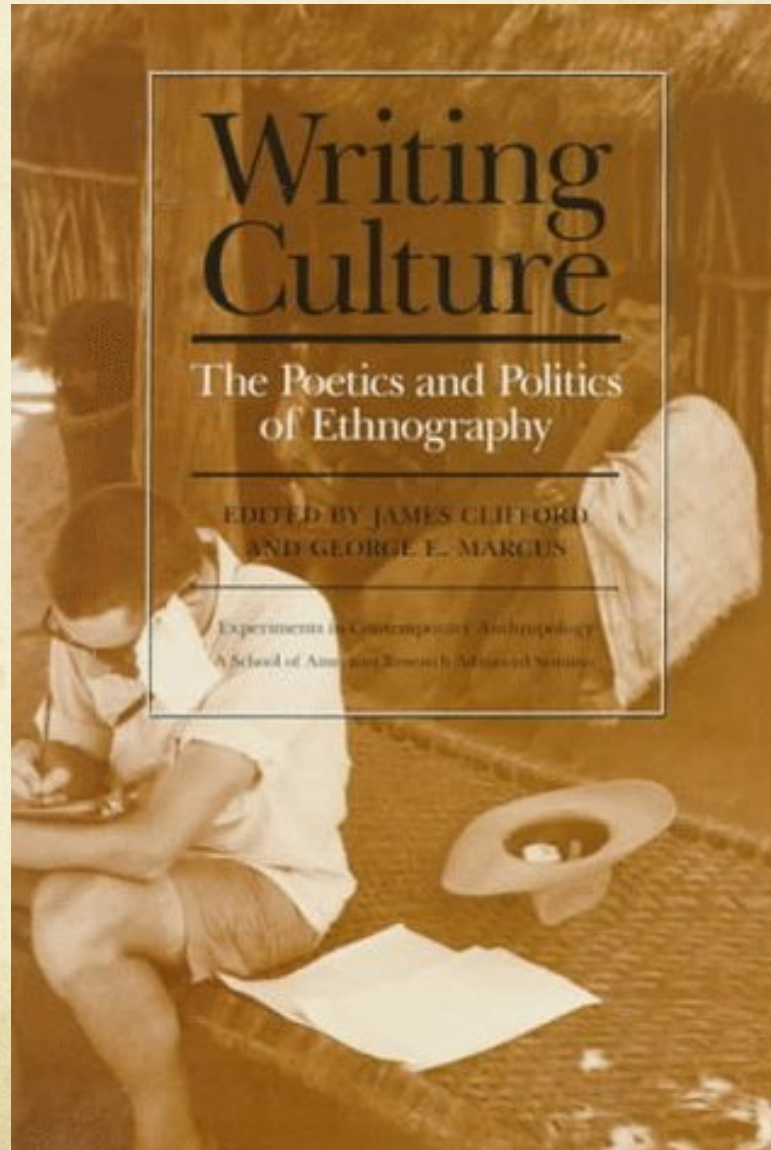
Why ethnography?

- Malinowski (*Argonauts of the Western Pacific* 1922): ‘...it must be remembered that what appears to us an extensive, complicated, and yet well ordered institution is the outcome of so many doings and pursuits, carried on by savages, who have no laws or aims or charters definitely laid down. They have no knowledge of the *total outline* of any of their social structure. They know their own motives, know the purpose of individual actions and the rules which apply to them, but how, out of these, the whole collective institution shapes, this is beyond their mental range. Not even the most intelligent native has any clear idea of the Kula as a big, organised social construction, still less of its sociological function and implications....The integration of all the details observed, the achievement of a sociological synthesis of all the various, relevant symptoms, is the task of the Ethnographer...the Ethnographer has to *construct* the picture of the big institution, very much as the physicist constructs his theory from the experimental data, which always have been within reach of everybody, but needed a consistent interpretation.’

Why ethnography?

- Watch:
- Ellen Isaacs on the 'hidden obvious'

Importance of position & perspective



Fieldwork





FIELD NOTES

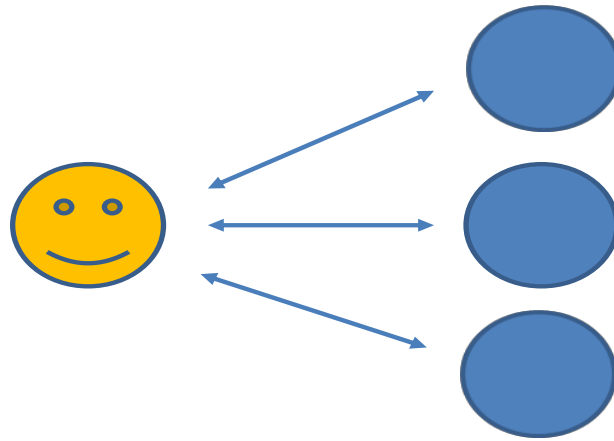
48-Page Memo Book
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Interviews





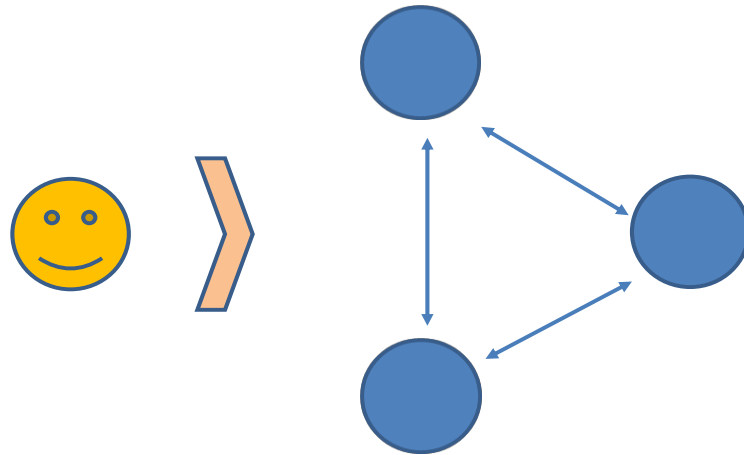
sources of evidence



interview

- Thanks to Jeremy Gould for the picture.

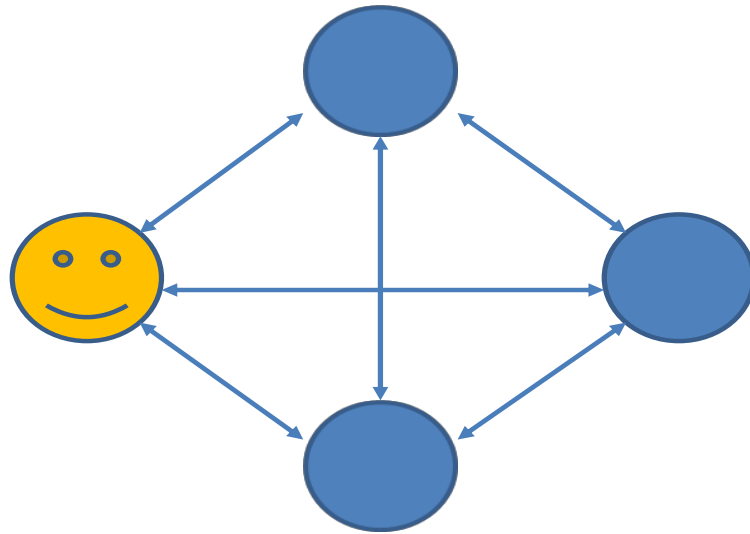
sources of evidence



observation

- Thanks to Jeremy Gould for the picture.

sources of evidence



hanging out

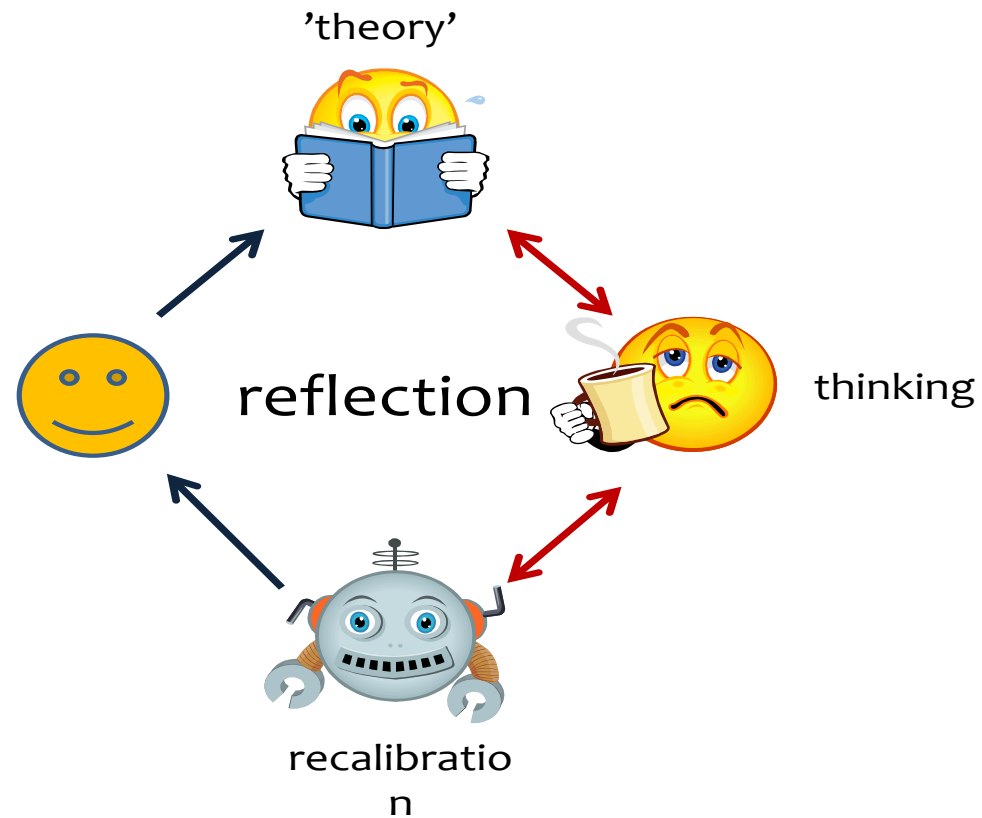
- Thanks to Jeremy Gould for the picture.

Analysis



Analytical models





- Thanks to Jeremy Gould for the picture.



Exercises

- an interview exercise, an observation exercise, and group work
- Both exercises are done in pairs
- The pairs should be the same in both exercises
- For group work, two pairs come together to form groups of four.

Exercises: interview

- Within the overall theme of immigration in Finland, think of a subtheme that interests you (possible examples include the influence of migration to family relations, employment, relations to former home country & experienced attitudes of the host society, but you are free to come up with any theme that you find interesting).
- Draft a list of questions with a view towards conducting an interview of approximately 15 minutes. The questions should be such that they focus the attention of the interviewee to the subtheme you have chosen and cover the various aspects of that theme. However, they should be sufficiently open-ended to allow the respondent room to think about your theme and to elicit substantial answers.
- Go to Gloria on either the 18th or the 21th March and arrange an interview with an immigrant; this has been agreed with the Centre.
- Think of how to introduce yourselves: tell that the interview is done as part of fulfilling the requirements of this course, explain that it will not be used for any other purpose and promise to protect the interviewee's identity. Try to make the interviewee feel at ease.

Exercises: interview

- Depending on who your interviewee is, think of and try to anticipate issues that are potentially disturbing to the interviewee – you don't need to cover them in this exercise interview; however, it is often hard to know beforehand what may trigger such reactions – therefore, remember to inform the interviewee that he/she can skip over a question if he/she so feels.
- Remember that if the interviewee answers your questions very briefly, you may prompt her/him to continue or you can devise follow-up questions on the basis of what the interviewee has told you.
- After the interview, transcribe the interview word-by-word, including what the interviewer said. You don't have to include non-word utterances (ehm, aa, etc.), pauses or changes in tone or pitch, unless you feel they tell you something significant. Give the interviewee a pseudonym. Send the transcript to Lalli.

Exercises: interview

- Analysis: discuss and write a report on the main issues that arose in the interview and what you think they tell of your chosen subtheme. Are there key issues, concepts, or themes that you would like to explore if you would do more interviews on the same topic. Would you reformulate some of your questions; how?
- Also think and write about the following questions:
- Did the interview differ from your interaction with the interviewee before or after the interview? How? What could be the reason(s)?
- Did your interview proceed according to the script (the questions that you had drafted beforehand) or did you have to improvise?
- What kinds of roles did different parties take in the interview situation? How vocal and self-assured were they? Do you think these issues are influenced by social and power structures beyond the interview or constructed by the interview situation itself?
- Were there occasions of misunderstanding or hesitation during the interview? How did the participants work their way out of them?
- Send the outcomes of your analytical discussion to Lalli (these don't have to be polished; rough notes are fine).

Exercises: observation

- Theme: age and gender differences in communication, possibly combined with some other thematic focus that you deem interesting and relevant
- Select a place and situation in which interaction among a group or groups of people takes place, observe and make detailed notes about what kinds of discussions and other communication takes place. Try to cover as much of what happens as possible but pay special attention to how age and gender seem to influence what people say, how they say it and how they behave. You can select a public space as a point of observation, e.g. a student restaurant, cafeteria or library, or ask permission to observe a more private gathering or e.g. a group of your friends.
- Both members of the pair make their separate notes. Compare them after the exercise and discuss and write down what were your significant findings. What similarities and differences were there in your notes.
- Use pseudonyms when reporting about people.
- Send your notes and the outcomes of your discussion to Lalli (these don't have to be polished; rough notes are fine).

Group presentations

- After you have done the above exercises in pairs, join with another pair to form a group of four. Compare and discuss the outcomes of the work you did in pairs and prepare a presentation of approximately 20 minutes. Choose yourself what specific issues you want to highlight & concentrate on in the presentation.
- In your discussion, make use of the insights of the lectures and readings.
- Prepare your presentation well in advance.