

# Participant observation

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Your Participant Observation There is a corner cafe at the end of the street and I chose that locale for this paper. Participatory observation involves immersion and time, so one can fully understand the motivations and behavior of the people involved in the scenario one is observing. The following are my excerpts on my three-day observation in the cafe:

November 17, Saturday. Today is the first day I will conduct the participatory observation in this cafe. This is the only cafe in the neighbourhood, that is why I am thinking that many people are ought to go here. I will spend an hour's worth of my time here every day, doing some of my school work, starting from 10: 30 am. The people during this time are the early birds, as the cafe just opened. They come here for breakfast. The crowd is mixed.

There are families who probably go here every weekend for their breakfast; I spotted three. The families are young. There are also young couples who come for breakfast and several older people. There are also people who dine alone like me, and they all have laptops. I am thinking that, like me, they are also working or studying. As today is the first day, I will sit back and try to size up go here. Most of them have money to spend for non-necessities like these. November 18, Sunday. More people today, as Sunday is family day.

The family that was here yesterday came back. The family consists of parents and two children, probably 8 and 5, both boys. The children are quietly eating their French toasts, the mother is always on her phone and the father reads the newspaper drinking his coffee. They do this for an hour.

Then on the next table is an old man with a newspaper, eating a bagel. He doesn't stay long. There is a woman who sat outside the cafe, chain smoking as she types away on her laptop. She is about 25 years old. There is a nice, casual friendly air and the baristas are smiley and friendly. November 19,

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Monday. I suppose that since today is Monday, people will come early as today is the start of the work week (and school week). So I come round at 8am. The cafe is busier as it is full of yuppies. No families now, as I think the children are busy preparing for school. The woman I saw on the phone is there though (still on the phone, I might add) ordering for her green tea to-go and going to her car as soon as she has her drink. Most of the people here are in their smart clothes, so I am thinking that they are going to their offices. I since I am rarely up this early, I just realized that most of my neighbours are corporate workers. No one lingers to enjoy a slow breakfast. At 9, when I was preparing to go, the old man that was year yesterday came and smiled at me, meaning that he recognized me. I smiled back. I also realized that one can actually form a friendship by being a regular here.

Questions a. Did you participate, observe or somewhere in between? Does this have any implications for your data? I observed more than participate. Yes of course, I participated, like I smiled at the old man; and by being there of course, is participation itself. I am part of the picture, part of the environment. Does this have an implication on my data? I do not think so. As a public place, people are expected to hang out there like I did. I blended in perfectly and I don't think I threatened anyone enough to make them change their behavior drastically.

b. Was the setting for your research project open or closed? Were some parts inaccessible to you? It was an open setting. It is public, after all. People come and go there and do things that they are wont to do. It's quite relaxed too. The parts that are inaccessible are those inside the kitchen, as well, the customers are not supposed to know what happens inside the kitchen, but I think that's a different setting altogether, with different rules to follow and all.

c. Did you have to negotiate

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access to the field? Does accessibility have any implications for your research? No, I did not have to negotiate. I just came in and observed. Yes, accessibility has implications for my research: with it comes a more natural, relaxed environment as the people do not know they are being studied. I think it's more real. d. How did you feel during the participant observation? To what extent these feelings affected your project? I was really interested as I took the hat of the social scientist. I feel validated to people watch. I think these affected my project positively as I am keen to observe and take notes. The results were thorough and detailed as I was really enthusiastic about it all. I loved doing it.