

Ethnographic project on the cultural activity cultural studies essay



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\n[/toc]\n \nLauren ClarkeK1110434As a grownup it's likely you will spend around 23 working days of a year in a queue (BBC News, 2000). I've chosen the topic of queuing using the ethnographic style of research. Ethnography is based on the description and analysis of a society or culture through observational work on a complete cycle of events that regularly occur as that society interacts with its environment (Lutz 1986 cited in Bell, 2010).

Ethnography can be described as " involving the researcher participating directly in the setting, if not also the activities, in order to collect data in a systematic manner but without meaning being imposed on them externally."

(Brewer 2000 cited in Bell 2010)Queuing is defined as " a file or line of people/vehicles waiting their turn" for something (Dictionary. com 2012). At least once a day people are subject to queuing e. g. use of public transport, financial institutions, customer-service points and paying for groceries.

Within British culture queuing is viewed as sacrosanct and the term " first come first served" is an innate belief. It's like an unspoken code of take your turn and don't break the queue. However, 90% of a survey found that long queue's are what people cannot tolerate when shopping

(Significancemagazine. org. 2011). People queue but don't enjoy doing so or want to wait indefinitely. My ethnography paper on queuing deals with the context of people queuing to enter a social event, namely a nightclub. I've

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chosen a social event as although people will be required to queue to enter, it's their choice to enter the event in anticipation of enjoying the experience after queuing as opposed to when they have to queue e. g. to pay for food produce or to use a toilet. I regularly attend nightclubs and concerts and have witnessed queue jumping occurring which will be one of my focal points. I will use the method of observation and participation to gather my data and record it is using field notes. This enables me to give my own insight into the everyday practice of queuing and queue jumping, which takes places throughout different cultures. The setting takes place in a queue outside a nightclub in the London Borough of Shoreditch around 11.30pm approximately. It's a relatively cold night at around 3°C (worldweatheronline. com, 2012). People braved the cold with the intention of entering the Sunday night event at the nightclub to hear their favourite DJs and music, and to socialise with friends. Participants included: P1: Bouncers/Security personnel P2: queuers P2. 1: My group P3: non-queuers (people who arrived and entered the venue without obviously having queued) The purpose of this activity of queuing is to gain entry to the venue whilst adhering to the concept of " first come first served". I observed people arriving singly and in groups. I can see metal barriers positioned close to the entrance of the venue and security staff (aka bouncers) are stationed at the entrance in order to manage the queue and allow entry to the venue in an orderly fashion. The queue appears to stretch for at least 100m down the road from the entrance to the venue and where my group joins the queue. As various people arrive and join the queue conversations can be overheard estimating how long it will take in time before achieving entry into the venue. Conversations are mainly between couples/groups that arrived

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together. I could hear people talking about how they attended the " all-dayer" event earlier in the day. (An " all-dayer" is where people arrive from the afternoon and are entertained until the early hours of the following morning). Intermittently the security staff walk down the line to carry out inspection of the queuing process and perhaps to estimate numbers, the length of queuing time and possibly to read people and situations such as unsociable behaviour. The tone and manner of the people in the queue appears mainly polite, friendly and patient. After a period of time queuing various groups start to interact and communicate with other groups. Their conversations were also about the length of time they had been queuing, which ranged from between 45 minutes, one hour and more. However as time elapsed without what seemed to be much movement in their position in the queue and the still further distance to the entrance of the venue, occasionally there were verbal outbursts of annoyance. This became more animated at times when it was noticed that some people maybe managing to queue jump. The ' bouncers' appeared to be directing some people to a newly created queue they were controlling. This resulted in surges in the crowd and also many people becoming more impatient, pushing forward whilst trying somewhat unsuccessfully to move further up the queue. The main questions directed at the security staff were shouted out in regard to (1) why the queue was not moving; (2) why were some people who had not queued, been allowed to enter the venue before others (see appendix 1 for further questions that were asked). The questions were mainly ignored by the security staff or answered with a polite " please continue to wait patiently". My group had been waiting for an hour and a couple of members apologised as they stated they were not prepared to wait any longer in the <https://assignbuster.com/ethnographic-project-on-the-cultural-activity-cultural-studies-essay/>

cold and said their goodbyes to us. They complained that they were not happy with the queue system and were no longer prepared to wait in the cold indefinitely. I, along with the rest of my friends, continued to queue in the hope that our camaraderie would block our disappointment at the length of time we, like others, were having to take part in the queuing culture, without any real estimation of duration of our continued wait. Once again the 'bouncers' appeared to be directing some people to the queue they created and were controlling, on realising many in the queue were experiencing the same unfair conditions, I observed that members of different groups began to interact with friendly breakaway conversations, the main topic being the cold weather and the indefinite wait for what should be a good night of music and dancing, as they all edged closer to the entrance. Many others in the queue were likewise discussing the supervision of the security staff and how they were carrying out their duties together with the shortcomings of this particular queuing system on the night of 18th November 2012. (See appendix 2 for description of interactions between participants). It took my party 1 hour and 20 minutes. I used covert observations whilst identifying the small culture of the queuing system in relation to people, including myself and friends. I used covert methods of observation simply because overtly studying/observing members of the public without their agreement, in order to collect/use field notes, could have led to negative interactions/verbal disagreements which could create ethical issues. I identified 3 main patterns that reoccurred throughout the queuing experience (see appendix 3 for a step by step view of the patterns): The pattern of how queue jumping can occur, how others queue without queue jumping and how bouncers ignored questions on the subject. Generally people didn't appreciate queue jumpers - <https://assignbuster.com/ethnographic-project-on-the-cultural-activity-cultural-studies-essay/>

people who manage to enter venues without following the unspoken code of conduct of first come first served/queuing in an orderly and fair fashion. The first come, first served notion is a social norm/ritual seen throughout many cultures especially cultures within the United Kingdom as the fashion of queuing differs in different countries for instance the USA and in Spain and France where queue jumping is not frowned upon or seen as disrespectful as they have the mentality and social norm of " every man for him self" when it comes to queuing (BBC News, 2000). I, along with members of my group and others observed that there was queue jumping going on - The ' bouncers' directed some people to a newly created queue they were controlling and facilitating a system of queue jumping. The communicative competence linking to the social norm of this scenario is that the people queuing would usually suffer in silence with the odd muttering. This can be seen in my observations, instead of mutterings though there is shouting and it is taken further with ' surges' to show annoyance. However people suffer in silence for the majority of the time until they feel there is an injustice. The Social parameters to queue jumping show that normally people who do queue jump or allow people to queue jump will experience some form of backlash. In this instance it is the shouting and surges that occur. Queuing just like any other behaviour has rules attached in order to attempt to maintain order and minimise negative effects that could be dangerous and cause problems. Surging can be argued as dangerous as it could lead to someone being trampled. Although the bouncers do communicate with the people queuing, it is based upon their terms. Situations that arise which they don't want to acknowledge seem not to exist when questions are asked about them. They ignore the questions like it has not been asked. Education. com(n. d.) defines <https://assignbuster.com/ethnographic-project-on-the-cultural-activity-cultural-studies-essay/>

communicative competence as the capacity to converse/correspond with someone of a target language, " with emphasis on communication of ideas than correctness of language". However in this instance the bouncers are failing to communicate competently. This could be because they can not find a valid reason to express thus they are unable to communicate competently. In conclusion the phenomenon of queuing will differ depending on the context it's occurring. For example queuing for a night club will differ from queuing in a bank. However the standardised etiquette for queuing remains similar. Queue jumping is frowned upon within in all contexts however can occur anywhere. It is easier to facilitate if the individual has a person with authority (bouncer or security guard) to help them. As if they don't the queue will police its self and queue jumping will be minimised.

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Appendix 1

Questions Security/Bouncers were asked and their responses. P2 - people queuing ask the following questions" How long left to wait?" " Why are ' those' (gesture of pointing to wards individuals who have not joined the back of the queue) getting in first?" " Why is the queue not moving?" " How is your night going?" " Is it ' live' inside (Live referring to the tone and vibe of inside the club)?" " What is taking so long?" P1 - The Security/bouncers replied to the questions with the following answers" Not long left please continue to wait patiently" This question was constantly ignored" Search process is taking longer than usual we apologise but continue to wait patiently it should not be long now" " Fine thank you" " I don't know, I haven't been inside as I have to work the door for the night" " Search process is taking longer than usual we apologise but continue to wait patiently it should not be long now"

Appendix 2

Interactions between people queuingThe interactions between people queuing change through out the time of queuing. At the start many stick to just communicating and interacting within the group they came with or know. Talking about what they have done earlier in the day. This however changes the longer the people have been queuing as after a while group
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begin to communicate and interact with other groups within the queue. The usual question to arise is " How long have you been waiting?". The manner is usually friendly and light hearted as everyone is in the same predicament - queuing for entry. You can see group mentality taking place when they feel they are being ' wronged' for example when people who haven't queued are let in front of them. This creates surges of pushing and shouting to show their frustrations. However the queue never turns on one other only on the queue jumpers and potential queue jumpers, although not all queue jumpers are caught. Interactions between the bouncer and people queuingThe interactions between the bouncers and people queuing are minimal at times. This is as bouncers will only answer specific questions. Any questions linked to queue jumping/jumpers that they have facilitated are 100% ignored. When the people queuing do interact with bouncers its usually friendly but very brief unless you are a regular face. However if you know the bouncer the interaction is considerably longer with what could be considered perks from knowing the bouncer - faster entry, queue jump. Interactions between the bouncersThese interactions are mainly friendly. They all wear headsets in which they communicate through. It does get heated once and a while when a bouncer may choose to speak out against they queue jumping but this is quickly close down as too not draw attention to. They have banter amongst themselves including the bouncers inside the building