

Hunter s thompson's hell's angels case study essay



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Spending such a large amount of time as a participant observer helped influence Thompson's attitude and social behaviour towards the Hell's Angels. By living their lifestyle " drinking in Angels bars, on runs and parties" in the middle of summer he became accustomed to covert life and to their social norms to a point he wasn't even sure if he was carrying out research on the gang or being " slowly absorbed by them". With no clear divide it equally had an impact on his relationships outside of the group, friends of Thompson would often find Hell's Angels in his apartment and eventually he was evicted because of his association with them.

The benefits Thompson gained from a covert participant observation were invaluable. This method made it possible for Thompson to gain in-depth access to the Hell's Angels, a group that would not normally allow themselves to be studied. Since the group under observation were not aware they are being analysed, the problem of an observer effect was avoided. By becoming a member of a group Thompson could personally experience incidents and events and, by so doing, arrive at a richer, more detailed account of the factors that promote and motivate their behaviour.

Other research methods that could provide an insight into the Hell's Angels:
Non-participant covert observation – the main advantage is the ability to observe the natural behaviour and attitudes of the group without the risks attributed to participant observation. Open questions – that would allow the group to answer in any way they see possible without being persuaded to move in any particular direction. Other research methods like structured interviews and questionnaires are possible but may fail to give a realistic insight.