

# Writing an abstract

[Science](#), [Anthropology](#)



Source Hong, Lawrence K., & Duff, Robert W. (2002). Modulated participant-observation: Managing the dilemma of distance in field research. *Field Methods*, 14(2), 190 - 196.

#### Key Words

Participant-observation, observer-as-participant, participant-as-observer, point of equilibrium, teamwork.

#### Methods

Hong and Duff adopted a teamwork approach in seeking to find a solution to the dilemma of balance in participant-observation in field research in social sciences. With the two rotating in their alternate roles between observer-as-participant and participant-as-observer so as to minimize on development of a mind-set, they adopted the modulated participant-observation process in their dance club research. The researchers made preliminary observation of social and physical spaces of the two sampled Los Angeles dance clubs at the initiation phase. They then sought to acquire peripheral personal information from the respondents at the understanding phase by engaging the respondents on a one-to-one conversation. In the acceptance phase, the last phase for the observer-as-participant role - the researchers obtained the much possible intimate information that they could through respondents' spontaneous expressions of opinions and comments.

#### Summary

This article acknowledges the existence of the dilemma of distance in social sciences research, where seeking for a balance between observation and participation remains a major issue. The current recommended solutions for balancing between observation and participation have been cited as being

ineffective because of the difficulty in determining the equilibrium during research. This leaves the researcher to bear the challenge of the dilemma as opposed to offering a solution.

Appreciating this limitation, Hong and Duff (2002) in their dance club research sought to provide an alternative strategy. They adopted a teamwork approach through rotating and alternating roles of participant-as-observer and observer-as-participant. They undertook a four-step process to gather intimate information from dancers in the Los Angeles clubs: initiation, understanding, acceptance and trust development consecutively. The role of observer-as-participant in the last phase was to ensure that the participant-as-observer does not get intimate with the respondents, to avoid overrapport and restricted vision. This provision for checks and balances by the observer-as-participant could be the basis for this proposed alternative solution to the distance dilemma in field research.

### Analysis

The article serves as an important source of information on how to tackle the distance dilemma in field research having collated findings from a series of research studies by the researchers. It therefore enforces the reliability of the findings. The researchers also adequately and appropriately refer to secondary sources to put forth their claims, hence making the arguments in the article valid. Finally, the inclusion of the brief summary at the beginning, which would pass for an abstract, at the beginning of the article forms an important part of this work in giving a quick preview of what the article entails.

Nonetheless, the article fails to follow the standard research article format

which makes the findings of the research difficult to point out. The researchers do not give an analysis of their findings to show how this process solved the distance dilemma. Additionally, the article suggests the proposed alternative as being perfect as it does not discuss any of its limitations, thus negatively impacting on the reliability and validity of the findings.

#### Other References

On participant-observation:

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Tedlock, B. (1991). From participant observation to observation of participant: The emergence of narrative ethnography. *Journal of Anthropological Research*, 47(1), 69 -94.