

Paper 5: Analysis of Notes

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1 Assignment

You are to provide five pages of field notes which are accompanied by two pages of evaluation of the field notes. The analysis is an assessment of what the notes are telling you about your site, hypothesis, variables, structure of relationships within the site. What is missing? What are the notes telling you to do next? What are you doing wrong or right?

2 Essay

My notes originally concentrated on exactly *what* people were doing. Or rather, what they were doing *there*. Our first line of reasoning was to trace the people's desire to come to the coffee shop. But this has changed now, and so the notes show a kind of reversal. Whereas before I was getting all the data I could collect, now I cannot seem to get enough of the right data.

The notes show, however, that I have tried different strategies as far as localising myself in a particular place. I have sat in the back; i have sat in the front and even in the "luminal section." I went into the back room to see if there was something new or different there. But it ended up freaking out one of the employees. He thought I was a health inspector or something... which is ironic because for the length of time that I have been frequenting the coffee house, I have known him and he has known me. I have even gone there in

the morning to investigate this ‘Rodney’ character who’s been identified by several individuals as “lazy.” I don’t know if that was too successful, I’ll try it again tomorrow morning. I did pseudo-interview a customer... a narrative. It was an Eastern European woman reading some art book. It seems to have been awkward for me to do that.

As far as the relationships are concerned, it seems like a lot of the employee’s friends or acquaintances frequent the coffee house. It doesn’t seem like there’s much in the notes at all (directly) of relationships. It seems like people drop in and say hello to the employees as they are passing by. But also I noticed that local shop owners come to the coffee house a lot.

Something I noticed that worked quite well was the use of narratives for getting information from employees. I got some information from Maggie as to what really gets her mad while working (viz. customers’ treatment of her.) For example, not leaving tips, or high maintenance customers that don’t leave tips show her that they don’t care about the job that she is working in. Another thing that frustrates her is when she doesn’t have enough customers - when there isn’t enough to do - the day tends to drag on. One last thing that I found was the different customer waves. There seems to be one at 8PM and another wave at 10PM (on Friday evenings.) Other than that, it seems to be pretty empty and boring.

What exactly the notes are telling me to do next is unclear. However, I know what does work and what doesn’t work (or is difficult to do.) Narratives are a plus (in addition to normal note taking.) I seem to be able to get much more information than normal that way. It’s kind of like a window into the mind of the employees. What I find interesting, however, is the fact that some of these employees are so willing to give up the information - with the confirmation question: “is this useful information...or am I just babbling?” More narratives seems like the way to go.

The hypothesis: people get increasingly frustrated as their time to leave approaches ... I am getting enough data. People are frustrated when they are at work, but it is usually brought with them into work from their personal lives. There doesn’t seem to be a direct link between one’s frustration and the approach of the employee’s time to leave, except under the circumstance of tiredness. So maybe I should start asking if they are tired and then monitor their activities under those circumstances. I should also check to see if they have other jobs. It was stated that they needed this second job for extra money, but that they were tired because they came straight from their previous job.