

Workshop in Methods

Watching Closely: Reflections on the Methods of Direct Observation

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Ethnographers rely on three related activities to conduct research in the field: observation, conversation, and participation. Observing others in their environments and using this data to inform and share conclusions is an essential part of any fieldworker's toolkit. Of these three activities, ethnographers' observational muscles tend to be their weakest.



In this talk, Christena Nippert-Eng offers her own contribution to the strengthening of direct observation research based on her recent book, *Watching Closely: A Guide to Ethnographic Observation* (Oxford, Nov 2015). The book includes nine exercises for practicing observational skills, including a preparatory briefing and post-exercise discussion. A companion website includes sample responses to each exercise from previous students, who practiced by observing Chicago's Lincoln Park Zoo gorillas.

Nippert-Eng hopes to encourage the use of more creative ways of collecting and analyzing data, such as sketching, diagramming, and photography, while helping fieldworkers develop more concrete expectations for the potential uses and meanings of ethnographic data. The goal is for ethnographers to not only strengthen their core skills, mindset, and creativity, but also to produce research that is more scientifically rigorous and persuasive.

Friday, February 12, 2016, 2-4pm

Social Science Research Commons Grand Hall
Woodburn Hall 200