Woodcutter, Fisherman, Clown

Participant Observation as Reciprocity and Belonging Realized Imperfectly

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Acknowledgement and Disclaimer

• Indirect Dissertation Funding Through 9/11 GI Bill
• This material is the result of work supported with resources and the use of facilities at the James A. Haley Veterans’ Hospital
• The contents of this presentation do not represent the views of the Department of Veterans Affairs or the United States Government.
Acknowledgments

• Dissertation Committee
  – USF Anthropology: David Himmelgreen (Advisor), Heide Castañeda, Rebecca Zarger
  – USF College of Public Health: Ran Nisbett, Rita Debate
  – UMass Amherst: Thomas Leatherman

• CINDRR: James A. Haley Veterans Hospital
  Colleagues: Gail Powel-Cope, Karen Besterman-Dahan, Latricia Allen, Vanessa Panaite, Margaeux Chavez
Agenda

• Contextual Orientation
• Participant Observation as Science and Reciprocity
• In the Field: Data Collection, Rapport, Belonging
• Doing One’s Bit
• Farmer Brown
• Woodcutter

• Woodcutter
• Fisherman
• Clown
• Balancing: Belonging, Beneficence, and Limitations
• What’s Next
• Questions and Contact Information
Contextual Orientation

- Dissertation fieldwork on Roatán, Islas de La Bahia (Bay Islands, Honduras)
- Research Objective: Global Financial Crisis in Local Context
  - Livelihoods
  - Food Access
  - Dietary Diversity and Adequacy
  - Food Security
- Participant Observation as Contextualizing Quantitative Results
Participant Observation as Science and Engagement

• Signature method of cultural anthropology
• Objective science and distance from community
• Current Synthesis of Science and Voice
• Balancing Ethical Principles with Scientific Rigor
• Principal of beneficence (do no harm)
In the Field: Data, Rapport, Belonging

- Participant observation as a process
- Taking time to build rapport
- Professional distance
- Situational distance
- Shared experiences and degrees of belonging
- Dissertation and future VA research
Doing One’s Bit: Small Chores at a Dive Shop

- West End Tourism and Scuba Diving
- Participant Observation as Hanging Out and Helping Out
- Light Work
- Open Water Course
- Rapport Building
Farmer Brown: Periodic Episodes of Labor and Conversation

- ‘Plantation’ Labor as Livelihood Data Collection
- As Reciprocity for Information
- As Rapport Building
- Tradition Honored in the Breach
Woodcutter: Helping a Champa Take Shape

- Helping with Champa as a Favor
- Champa Chores as Participant Observation
- Seeing Development Trajectory over Time
- Sweat, Aches, Data, and Relationships
Fisherman: Distance Reduced by Shared Experience

- Participant observation as shared experience
- Stuck in the tourist zone
- Tropical Storm and Social Readjustment
- Co-participant, Co-survivor
Clown: Comic Ineptitude and the Practice of Ethnographic Field-work

- Anthropologist as Comically Inept Learner
  - Coconut Preparation and Fear of Amputation
  - The Non-arboreal Primate
  - Scuba tank maintenance, certification, and safety
- Limits to Participation in Participant Observation
- Remediation, Rapport Building
- Sharing vulnerability and humanity as belonging

Courtesy of http://images.huffingtonpost.com/2016-03-10-1457636591-9827957-coconuts.jpg
Balancing: Limitations and the Principle of Beneficence

- Lean in or Step Back
- Limits of One’s Beneficence
- Reciprocity and Undue Influence
- Mutuality and Engagement
- Fine-grained Narrative and Rigor
What’s Next: Participant Observation and VA Research

- Participant observation in trans-disciplinary team research
- Participant observation with limited time and funds
- Government regulations and mores
- Adapting and maintaining reciprocity
Questions and Contact Information

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