

Field Note Assignment; Part 3 and Part 4

Observing is an activity we are always doing. It is one of the ways we learn. In engaging inquiry we use questions to focus our observing. Field Notes are a means of gathering information related to this focused observing and also become a means of intensifying it. In the “field” references research that is not done in a vacuumed laboratory, but rather in a normal life setting. Field notes are a means of gathering all this information and collecting it in the same place. Field notes can consist of images, charts, drawings, comments, stories, narratives, poems - data gathered in varied mediums from varied forms of observing.

You have been gathering data on a “potent object” which we have defined most recently as follows:

“A potent object is an observing tool. It is something that has the qualities of an object (tactile and visual resonance) and can be used as a tool for noticing and discussing cultural flows: - a potent object is potent if it can be used to find and discuss intriguing cultural veins - ones rich with cultural information. Thus Barbie is a rich potent object because it connects through both tactile and visual resources to technologies of gender, and provides a means for unearthing these, noticing them and analyzing them. The gun, as we have discussed in class - also connects to technologies of gender - particularly as these connect with the arena of violence and also with the realm which connects the personal, the political and the pedagogical (learning).

Information is gathered around these “potent objects” in interesting formations in relationship to technology and society - and thus when we find them - they become interesting observational tools. For example, both Barbie and the gun are influenced by the technology around plastic industries, marketing, distribution, design. Both are influential and influenced by the fashion industries and its conscious and unconscious influences on clothing and image. Both are influential (however indirectly from the view point of school as an official learning site) on learning and childhood. Generally an object is potent if it connects with personal and public spheres - and if is a technology that also has acquired a cultural presence that can be traced and analyzed.”

In part 1 of your field-note assignment you engaged in some very general observing around the object you chose. You gathered data informally and perhaps had an opportunity to present and even engage in verbal analysis of your data in tutorial. You may have gathered your data on scraps of paper. Your goal in part 1 was to become more intense in observing your potent object and its place in your world/the world. If you did not have the opportunity to present your data gathered, and discuss it with someone verbally - you should do this - as this verbal/conversational stage of data gathering can be very helpful for analysis. We will give you an opportunity to do this in class on the 26 of Oct. with a neighbor - but you may wish to create a situation of sharing for yourself with a family member or friend or classmate.

In part 2 of this field note assignment you have engaged in more formal and purposeful observation about your “potent object”. You have gathered specific kinds of data. You have tried to stabilize your data gathering by gathering it at a specific place and time. You will have an opportunity to share what you have found out in class today, briefly - and we will think about how the varied kinds of data gathering and questions have served as windows or frames for viewing.

Part 3 of this assignment: Study of the technologies involved:

- A. Working with your potent object you have noticed its intersections with technologies: you are to become more observant about this part of your object and research it. Most “potent objects” combine several technologies: what are the ones that are involved in yours (this may include physical technologies, marketing technologies, etc.) What is the relationship between the technologies involved, and the history of the object: Is there a connection between the technological developments involved in this object and its role in (our?) culture. Has this potent object had pre-cursors and what will it likely give rise to in the future? How does technology affect the dispersion of this object in our world - and thus its use in global, local and national settings? Is there anyway that the technologies involved with this object have contributed negatively to the local/national or global cultures and their environments?
- B. Design: Notice how the object uses color, texture, space, and other design factors. See if you can find information related to its design. Does this connect to its marketing? How have the technologies involved with this object worked with the human body and its sensory and other needs. Is there one or two particular senses that this object appeals to? Pick one of these and analyze how the object appeals to that sense. How does this object connect to human scale - does this affect the object's meaning and use in our culture (and in your culture). Is there a way the object has been designed to communicate to a certain feeling or sense in the body?
- C. What else have you noticed about this object's relationship to technology?

Part 4: Write a two or three page summary (1.5 spacing) of what you found with your potent object: As follows:

- A. Introduction to potent object: describe object - and why you initially chose and were attracted to it.
- B. Describe your general and initial data gathering in which you did general observing related to the object and information/society/technology (Part 1)
- C. Describe your more formal data gathering: (Part 2)
- D. Describe your technological analysis and data gathering
- E. Analysis and Findings: Thinking about the relationship of this object to our topic area: information/society/technology: look over your data. After looking over your data - describe a few key patterns and findings that seem to have arisen as part of your research and report them, Identify one that might be projects that you could pursue more in depth, and how you might do this.

- F. Summary and closing statement: Draw this summary to a close in a final paragraph. Be sure to make a final summative statement about what you found out about your potent object and information/technology and culture.