

# What is ethnography?

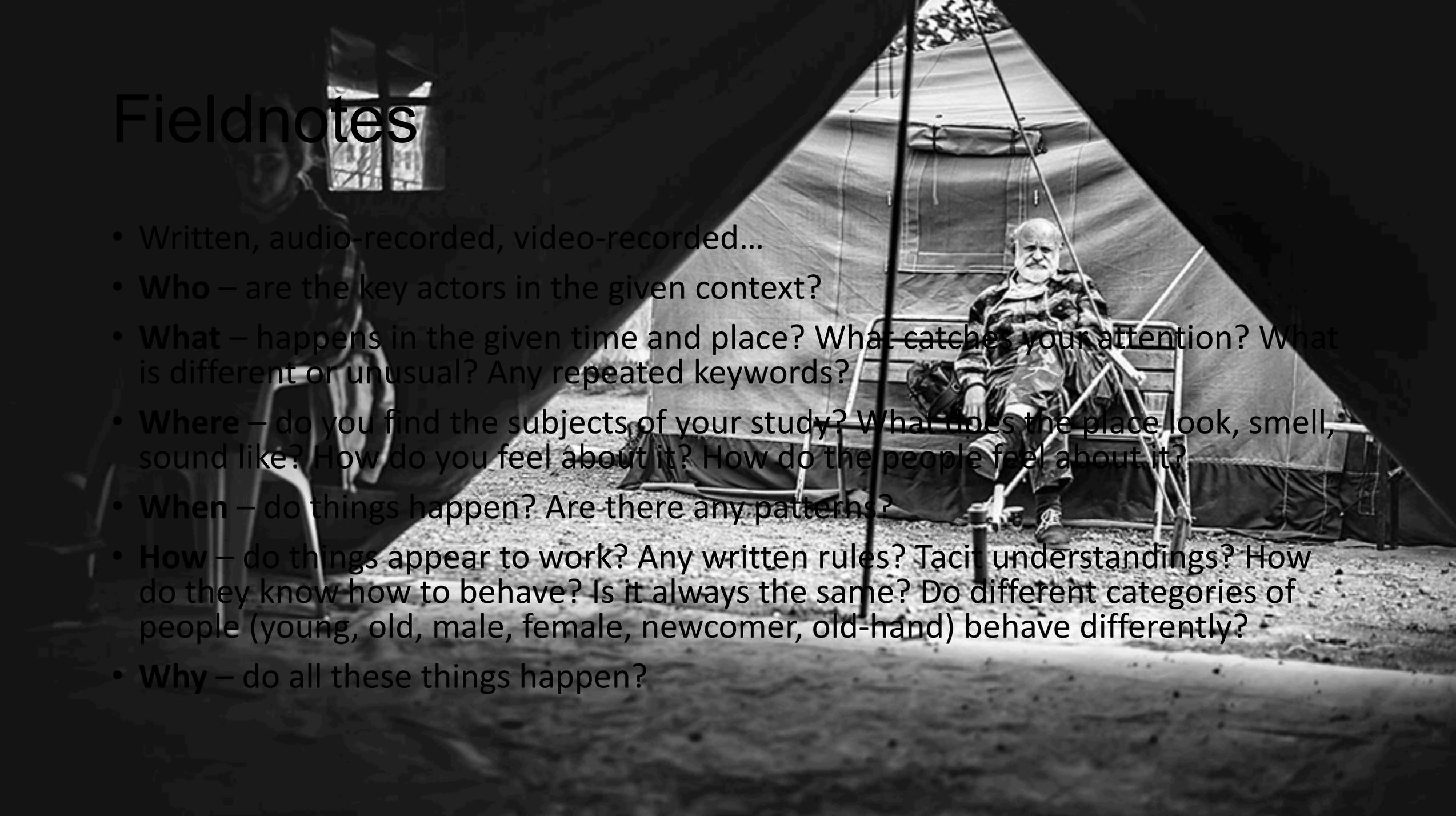
- A method where the researcher observes and often participates in naturally groups to document their culture (symbols, norms, values, beliefs,...)
- Not a single method, rather a family of approaches
- Uncovering meanings, describing a culture” and life from the “the native point of view”
- People’s identities evolve and are locally intertwined within the context in which they act
- Ethnographers must be able to immerse themselves in the given context
  - The issue of access becomes important
- Carried out in naturally occurring settings
- Relatively long-term data collection process (days, weeks, months, years)
- Relies on participant observation, or personal engagement
- Employs other types of data as well as that from observation: experiential data from participation; interviews (informal and perhaps also formal); documents (elicited and/or already available)
- Data are recorded in the form of ‘unstructured’ fieldnotes and/or through electronic recording (audio or audio-visual)

# Ethnographic methods

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MNj5y-GsJFk>
- Observation
  - Participant
    - Fully participating
    - Partially participating
  - Non-participant
  - Overt or covert
- Interviews
  - Semi-Structured
  - In-depth
  - How not to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E2Q3-0HyeUA>
- Fieldnotes
- Behavioral recordings
- Artifact Analysis
- Triangulation
- Lamination



# Fieldnotes



- Written, audio-recorded, video-recorded...
- **Who** – are the key actors in the given context?
- **What** – happens in the given time and place? What catches your attention? What is different or unusual? Any repeated keywords?
- **Where** – do you find the subjects of your study? What does the place look, smell, sound like? How do you feel about it? How do the people feel about it?
- **When** – do things happen? Are there any patterns?
- **How** – do things appear to work? Any written rules? Tacit understandings? How do they know how to behave? Is it always the same? Do different categories of people (young, old, male, female, newcomer, old-hand) behave differently?
- **Why** – do all these things happen?

# After taking fieldnotes

- Ethnography, in large part, may be said to take place in and through the fieldnotes
- Impressions or responses to the notes that you've previously taken. Do they seem "partial" or "incomplete?" Has your understanding changed since you took them? If so, how?
- Do your notes raise any questions? Are these questions about the subjects of your study? Might they also be about how you're conducting your study? Think also about how you're going about your work.
- Do you need to make any adjustments to your approach? If so, what? How will you go about making those changes and why? What have you learned about the process?
- What do you need to ask people in order to answer questions raised that you cannot answer on your own based on your observations?
- Do you find that there are things that you would like to know more about that would require further study? What are these things?
- Much of fieldwork involves serendipity. We unexpectedly find things. We discover. So, there are many "surprises." What surprised you? Why? Listen to your reactions.
- Are there noticeable differences between what you think or believe to be "true" regarding the people and places you are studying and what you are finding that the "locals" or "natives" think or believe about themselves?
- How do you think you are perceived/received by the group or in the place where you are working? What is the nature of this relationship? What sort of things do people say and do because of your presence?
- Coding

# Observations to consider

- Amount of free time and will to spend it meaningfully
- Will to participate and talk, discuss, share, speak out, being a partner
- Have chance to decide for themselves
- Partial self-victimization in sharing their story
- Being proud of battling their problems, not giving up
- Need for being seen as a human being
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sF19L00KbAI>
- Feeling unworthy of having own voice, solidarity, low self-esteem, shame, self-blame
- Other minorities?
- How do they see current migration?

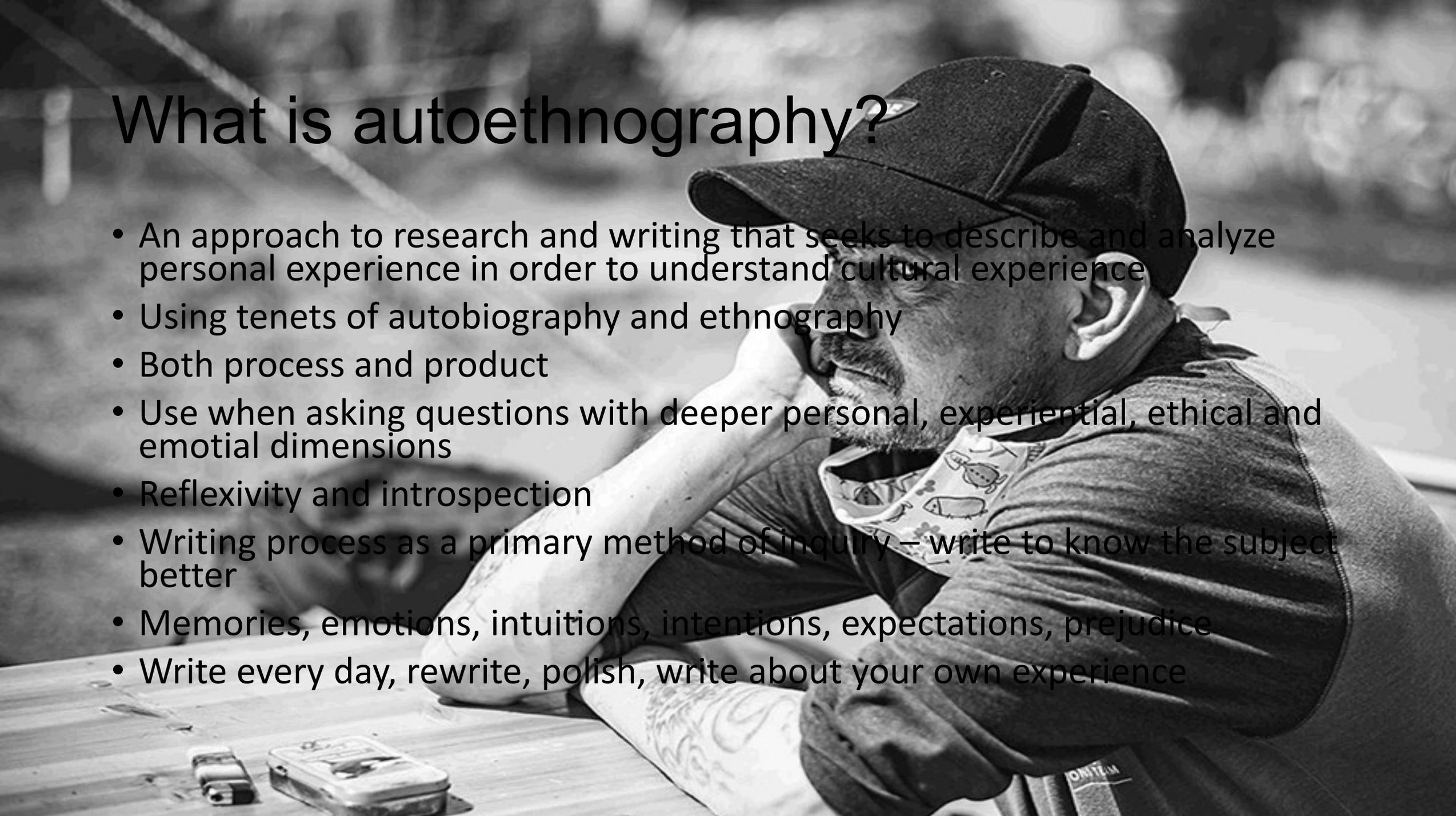


# Advantages and disadvantages

- Deeper understanding of the phenomenon and its context
- Exploratory nature, flexibility – especially related to social change and human behavior
- Observation in its natural setting
- Triangulation of methods
- Close insight
- Time
- Time
- Access
- Requires deep knowledge of the studied phenomenon
- Risk of losing objectivity after long-term immersion in the field
- Reactive effects
- Not generalizable
- Ethics

# What is autoethnography?

- An approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and analyze personal experience in order to understand cultural experience
- Using tenets of autobiography and ethnography
- Both process and product
- Use when asking questions with deeper personal, experiential, ethical and emotional dimensions
- Reflexivity and introspection
- Writing process as a primary method of inquiry – write to know the subject better
- Memories, emotions, intuitions, intentions, expectations, prejudice
- Write every day, rewrite, polish, write about your own experience





# Should we do ethnography?

- A desire to know what people do in practice, and what they really believe (rather than what they say they do, or say they believe, on questionnaires, in formal interviews, or in public or even private documents)
- A concern to understand the contextual meanings that inform people's conduct, since only with such understanding can we explain this conduct, or even describe it accurately
- A commitment to discover how people's lives are affected by the situations they face
- A focus on how attitudes and actions unfold over time
- Any outcomes we wish to explain are likely to be a product of complex processes
- It involves a distinctive attitude or sensibility, and being prepared to 'learn other cultures': this involves suspending one's assumptions and evaluations

# What is ethnographic journalism?

- Employment of immersion strategies adopted from social science for distinct storytelling purposes
- Used to portray human environments from within
- A highly interpretive practice in which you search for meanings rather than facts per se
- Examining the 'inner truths' of group through immersion by which the members of the group in question are the ultimate authorities regarding the significance of events
- Using ethnographic methods to report on the subject with high accuracy, rich description, insider point of view



# Where to in the field?

Joining outreach, cameras, audio-recorders, diary, fieldnotes

- Illegally inhabited buildings
- Streets and the parks
- Homeless shelters
- Homeless hostels
- Overcrowded housing
- Tent villages