



# FIELD RESEARCH GUIDE

For your individual and group projects, you will find it useful (read: we expect you) to complement the broad survey analyses you do with in-depth field research. Ethnography work, at first, can be overwhelming, confusing and troubling, because it oftentimes yields unpredictable and uncontrollable results. However, it does something that sitting in front of a spreadsheet will not do : It will make you feel.

## WHAT

Your goal in engaging in early ethnography research is *not* to validate a specific set of questions you have to get a statistically relevant answer. Your goal is to step back, watch and listen, and be inspired and surprised by what stakeholders of your chosen brand have to offer you. Remember this rule.

## 2 : 1 RULE

MOTHER NATURE GAVE US TWO EARS AND ONE MOUTH SO THAT WE WOULD USE THEM IN THAT PROPORTION

## HOW

The D.school Bootcamp Bootleg (from Day 1) has a number of different research methods including notes on shadowing a user, mapping activities, and how to be the best 'fly on the wall'. We recommend two activities to start : (1) Be the user, and (2) Engage in conversation with a large number of stakeholders while you are walking in the shoes of the 'user'. Afterwards, decompress, document and share stories. The 2:1 rule also applies for mining field research : It takes at least two hours to thoroughly mine every one hour of research in the field.

Here are six favorite trade secrets from the world's best ethnographers :

- 1 GO WITH A FRIEND** This makes it a lot more fun and a whole lot more manageable. Switch back and forth being the person who engages and the person who documents + photographs
- 2 BE PREPARED** Bring a notebook, a camera and backup material (like business cards). Practice your introduction i.e. "Hi, I'm a student working on . . ."
- 3 GET IN THEIR SHOES** Feel the experience to really truly understand it. This also allows you to build rapport and empathize with other users very quickly.
- 4 PERSIST W. RESPECT** You will fail to engage a lot. People will turn you down for one reason or other. Do not be discouraged. Try multiple channels at multiple times. Be patient.
- 5 MINE THE GAPS** Watch for contradictions. If someone is saying positive things about a brand but is frowning or pausing awkwardly, ask why. And vice versa.
- 6 SHOW AND TELL** If you feel comfortable, ask your user to show you what he means, by sharing with you artifacts or miming. You never know what you'll learn.