

Assessing Student Use of the Library with Ethnographic Methods

Mariana Regalado
Brooklyn College, CUNY

Maura Smale
New York City College of
Technology, CUNY

Southeastern NY Library Resources Council

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Today's plan

- Our research
- Cognitive mapping exercise
- Ethnographic assessment in libraries
- *Break*
- Working lunch: qualitative data analysis and coding exercise
- From data to action
- Wrapup

Learning outcomes

By the end of this workshop, participants will

- Be familiar with the differences between qualitative and quantitative research methods and results
- Be familiar with the steps of qualitative data analysis, including transcribing, coding, and analyzing data
- Understand the strengths and challenges of several ethnographic research methods in order to determine their usefulness for library assessment

Our research



The City College
of New York



Brooklyn
College

2009-2011: photo surveys, mapping diaries,
retrospective research process interviews, faculty
interviews



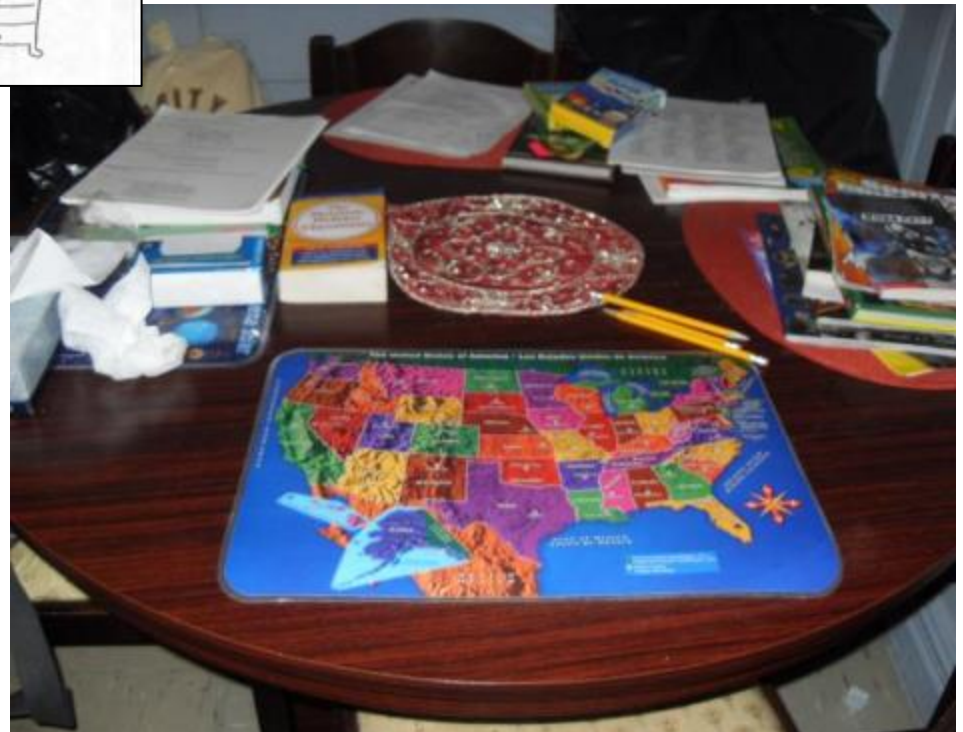
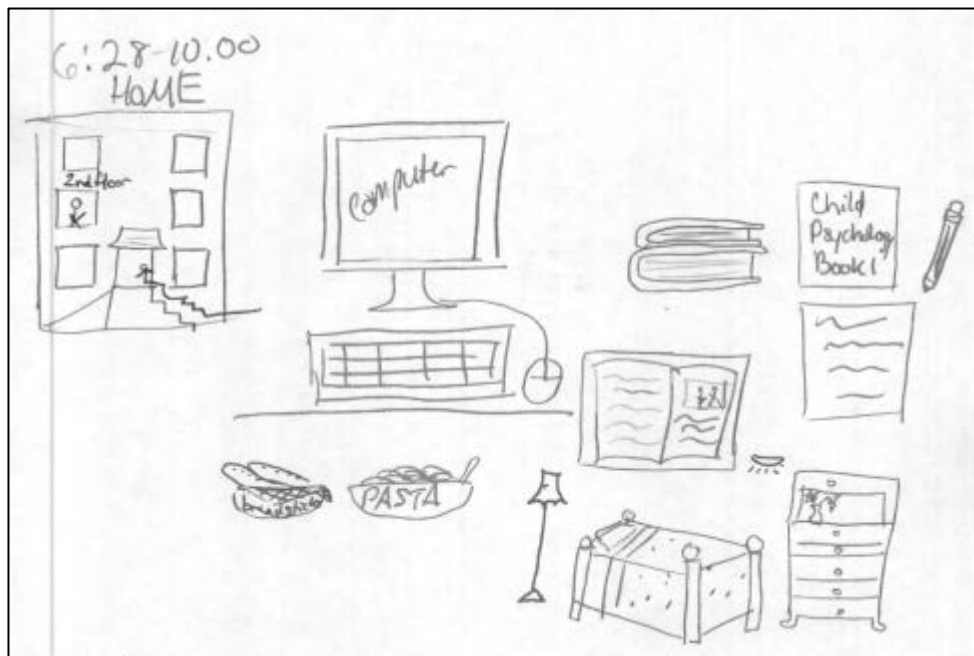
Brooklyn
College

2015-2016: mapping diaries, tech-specific interviews,
student/faculty questionnaire on hybrid/online
courses

What have we learned about

- where students do their academic work,
- the technology they use to do their work, and
- their process for doing research?





Queens



6:30-7:30 am
woke up &
left

8:00



BUS
(ride)



TRAIN
(ride)

Bus Ride



Approx.
20 mins.

TRAIN Ride



Approx.
1 hr.

School



class 1

9:30 -
10:45

class 2

Lunch

12:00 - 12:45



eat 3:00 -
6:45

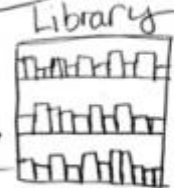


Friends

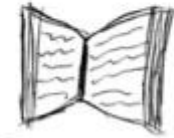
3rd



4:40 -
5:00 pm



12:45 - 3:00







Intentionality

“When I go home, I get distracted easily.

Here, it's very quiet, you know,
you can't be loud, you can't talk.

So I like being under those rules here.

I can concentrate a lot better,
and I'm actually doing a lot better now
in school than last semester.”



“My smartphone. I am able to access my grades, type up a paper, review a power point, etc. in the palm of my hand.”



“I personally don't use a smartphone or tablet for schoolwork but have been present numerous times while my friends' work was **deleted** or **would not upload** from one of these devices.”



“My first year, I didn’t have the Microsoft Word application so I couldn’t type essays. So I would spend HOURS on hours sitting here and trying to focus while people are chewing gum and talking on the phone and arguing and hitting each other. It says it’s a ‘Learning Resource Center’ but in actuality it’s a ‘Hang Out With Your Friends and Look at Your Cousin’s Wedding Pictures Center’ . . . ‘on Facebook.’”

Student Resource Center

"We are Here to Serve You Better!"

TH 202



ABSOLUTELY NO FOOD
OR DRINK IN THE LAB!!



CELL PHONES!

PLEASE LEAVE OR TURN OFF
AT THE LAB

THE SRC WILL BE
CLOSED ON
WED APRIL 27, 2011
WE WILL REOPEN ON
THURS APRIL 28, 2011

THE SRC WILL BE
CLOSED ON
WED APRIL 27, 2011
WE WILL REOPEN ON
THURS APRIL 28, 2011

WE WOULD LIKE
TO THANK YOU FOR
YOUR VISIT TO THE
STUDENT RESOURCE
CENTER. WE
WILL REOPEN ON
THURS APRIL 28, 2011



THE SRC WILL BE
CLOSED ON
WED APRIL 27, 2011
WE WILL REOPEN ON
THURS APRIL 28, 2011

NO FOOD PERMITTED
IN THE SRC. PLEASE
DO NOT BRING FOOD
OR DRINK INTO THE
SRC. WE WILL
REOPEN ON
THURS APRIL 28, 2011

NO
PRINTING

THE SRC WILL BE
CLOSED ON
WED APRIL 27, 2011
WE WILL REOPEN ON
THURS APRIL 28, 2011

STUDENT RESOURCE CENTER

LAB 2

- Computers
- Internet
- Printing
- Copying

LAB 1

- Computers
- Internet
- Printing
- Copying

LOUNGE

- Microwaves
- Games
- TV
- Video Games

“I would make sure that
the website being used
never has to be ‘under construction’
and I would make sure it is
always running as quickly and
efficiently as possible.”

“The most frustrating thing is our schools wifi. When in on campus trying to watch our videos it doesn't load properly,
it will pause frequently.”



Bus Ride



Library "Book Search"



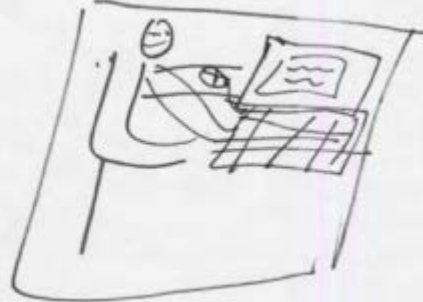
Reading



Thinking + Writing



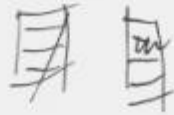
Finally start



Day 1



Coming up
with idea



Brainstorming



Research

Day 2 - Day 20



Lazy Period

Day 21



Realization

Day 22

Back brainstorming

Day 23 - 28



Frantic Period

Day 29



Lack of sleep

Day 30



Relief



Topic Family
ho
Nervous.

“Once I got the idea of what I wanted to write about, let's see, that was quick.”

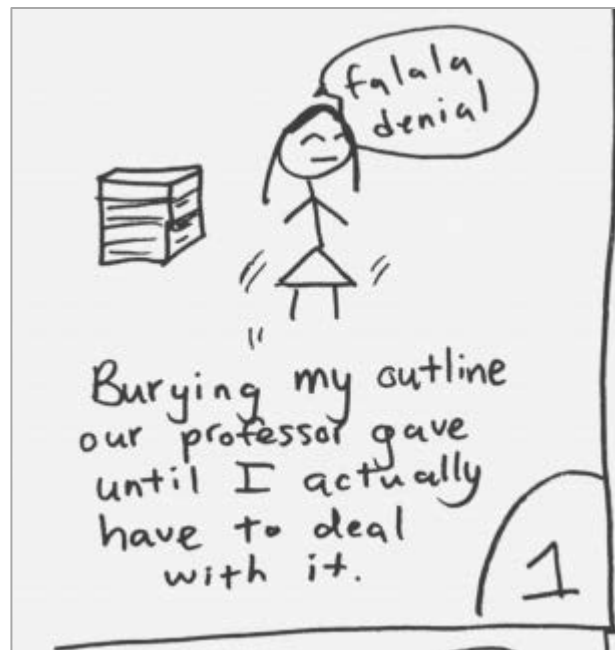
College Paper

Procrastination

Day 2 - Day 20



Lazy Period

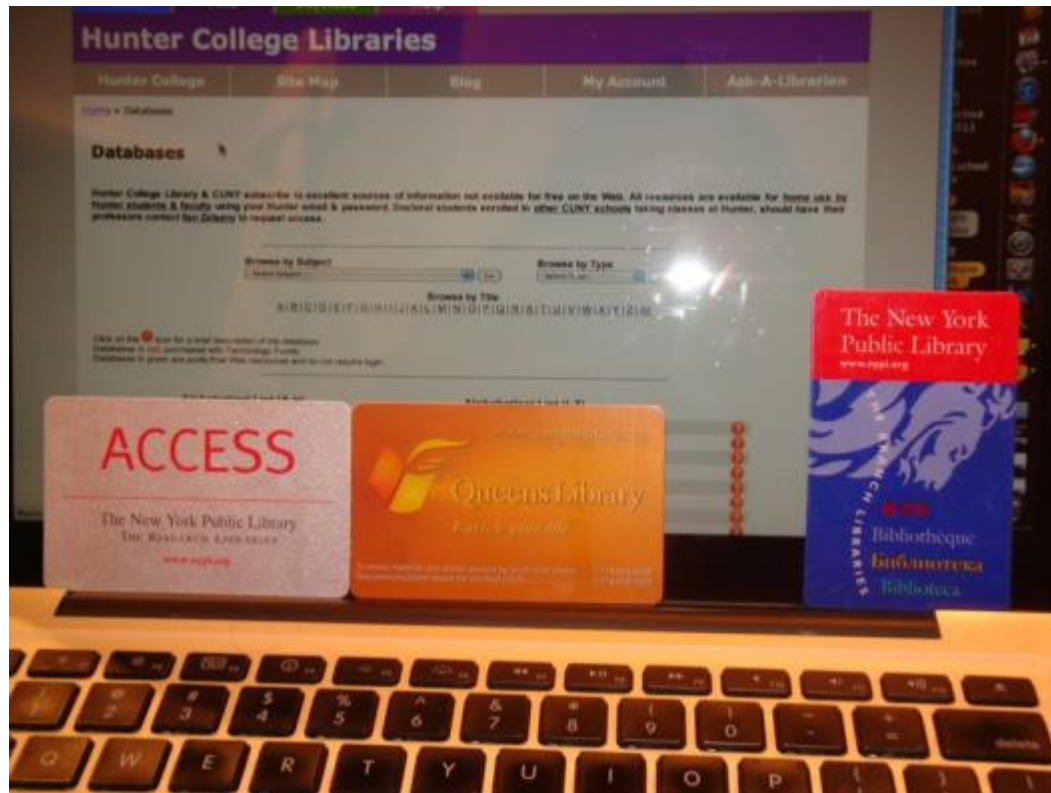


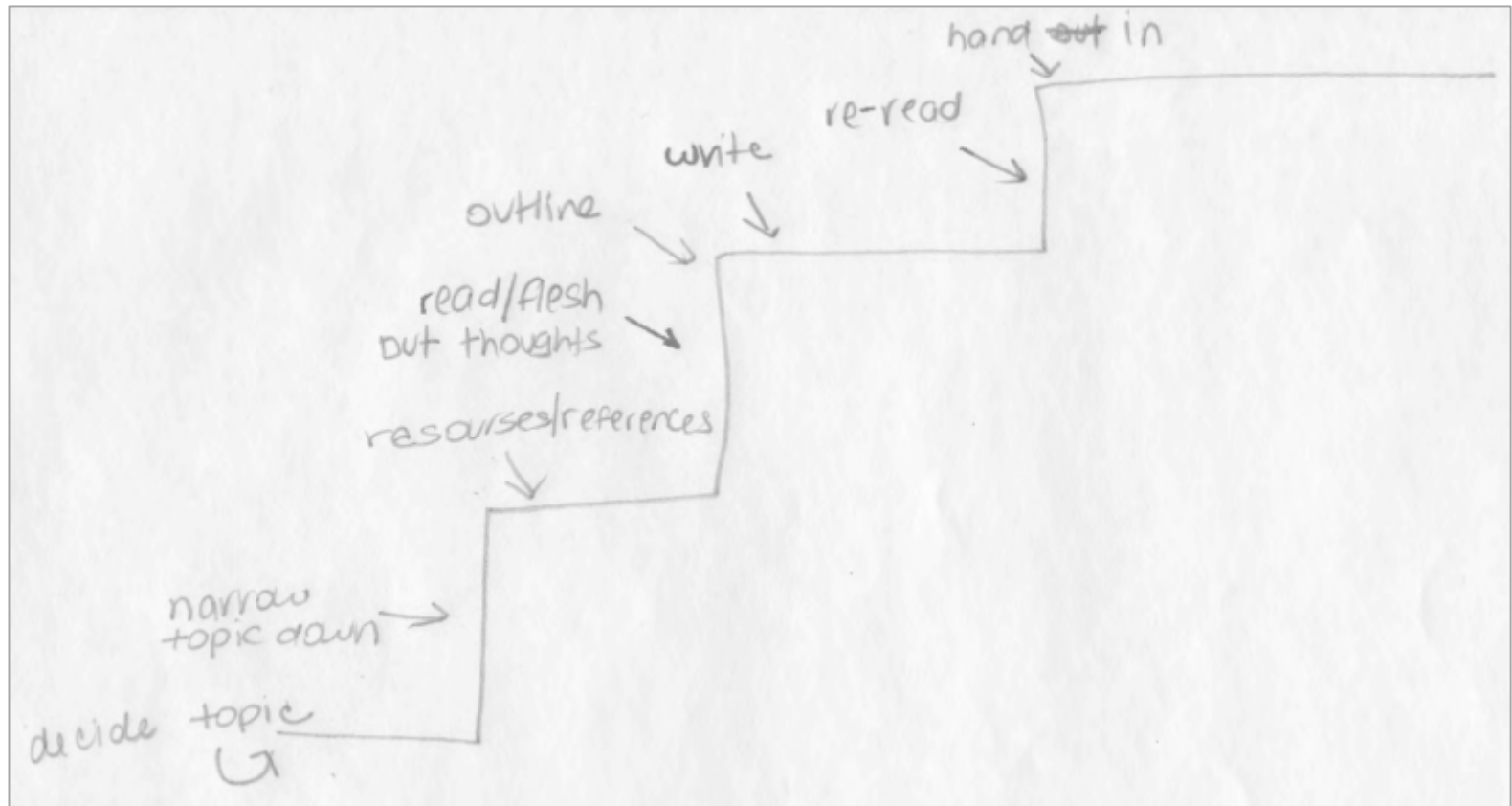
"No, I waited a little bit, you know. Because I wanted to make sure I had a nice grasp of what we were doing."



“The next part was **trying to navigate the CUNY website** which did run me into about **two or three hours worth of a headache**, followed by another **fifteen minutes on Google**, where immediately it was the **first link.**”

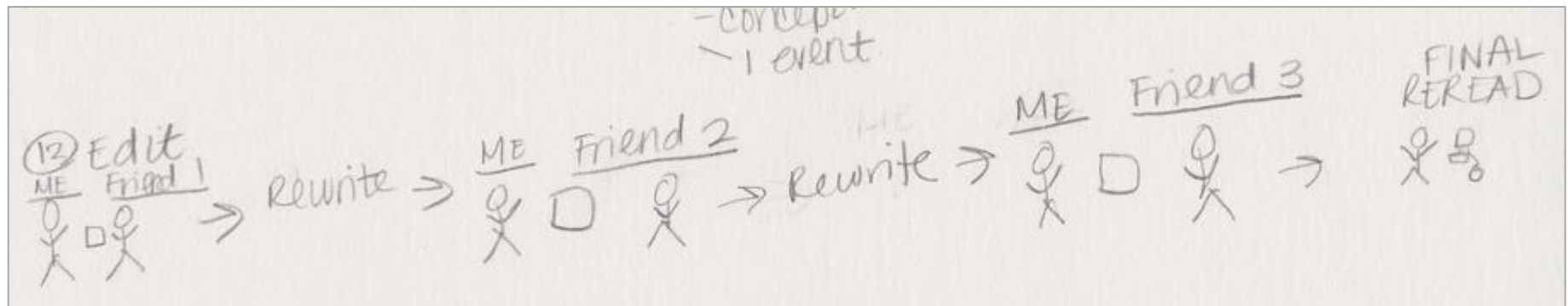
“[The librarians have] helped me searching, like, what's the better way to search for a term which is kind of interesting 'cause I didn't think that would really help my research but it does.”





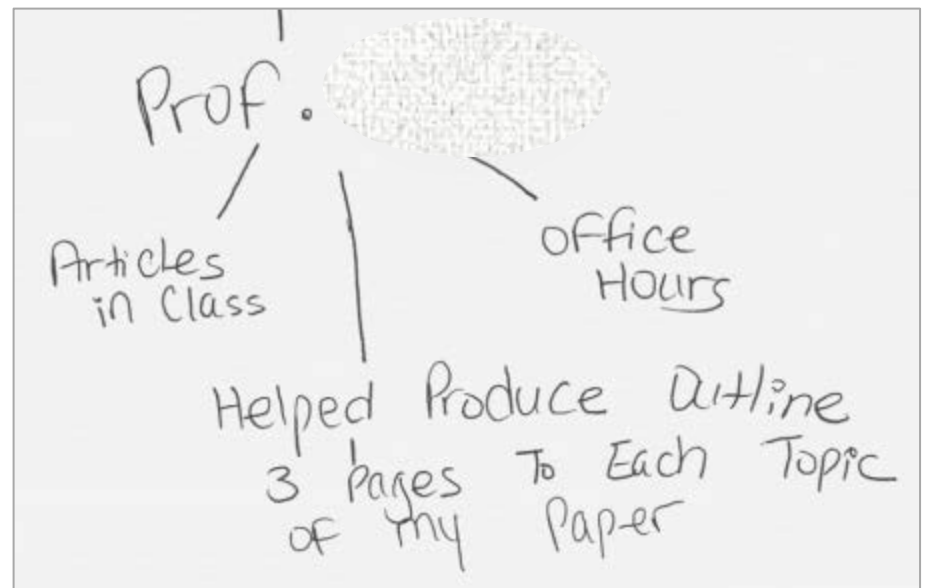
“This sort of forced me to do each little step and report back constantly to the teacher. The orchestratedness of it allowed me to not procrastinate.”

“[In class workshopping] was interesting ‘cause I, like, reading other people’s work, and especially when we’re in the same class, you know? I don’t . . . I mean, we didn’t wanna be too critical and mark up our classmate’s papers . . . And the feedback was good, like, what they thought of it.”



“I don’t get as much help as I would like . . . So right now I’m writing a research paper and . . . I actually wanted someone to look over it with me, but **the library doesn’t do that, the other **Writing Center does** that and they’re always so full ‘cause **there’s not enough tutors.**”**

“[Writing tutors] explain it more easily than the professors.”



What have we learned?

- ask our students!
- be flexible wherever possible
- advocate for access and support
- connect and collaborate across campus

Mapping Exercise

Pencils ready?

1. Take 2 minutes to sketch a map of your learning spaces
 - It's what "learning spaces" means to you.
 - Don't worry about the quality of the drawing!
2. Label the features on your map

Pair and share with your neighbor

- What do you notice in your drawing?
- Where do you do your best work?
- What spaces aren't a good fit for you?
- What kinds of tools do you use for your work?

Share out

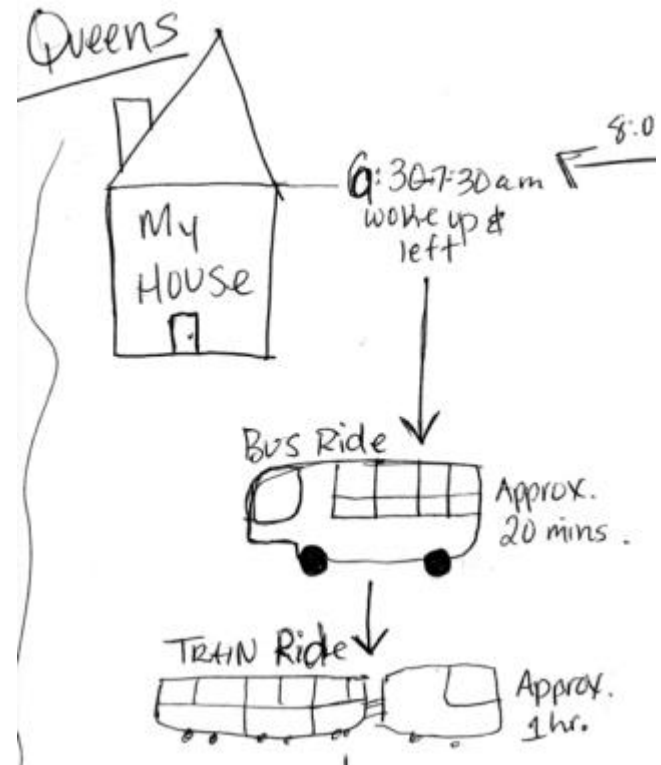
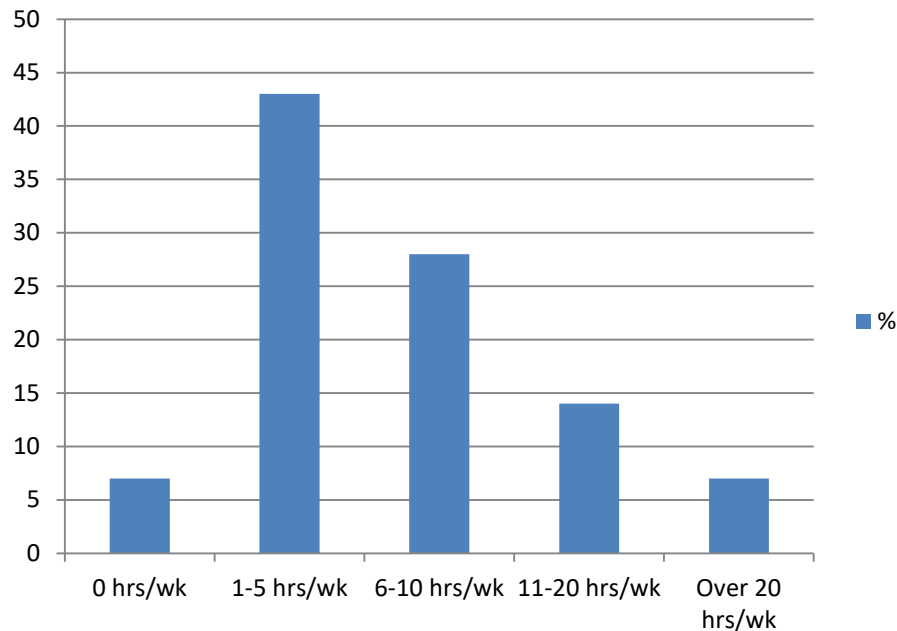
If you'd like to share, tell us about your map.

- What do you notice in your drawing?
- Where do you do your best work?
- What spaces aren't a good fit for you?
- What kinds of tools do you use for your work?

Overview: Ethnographic Research

Quantitative vs. qualitative

CUNY Students' Commute Time



Challenges of qualitative

- Time-consuming to collect data
- Time-consuming to analyze data
- Yields TONS of messy data
- Validation can be difficult
- Results not generalizable

Strengths of qualitative

- Categories are constructed from data
- Unconstrained by cause/effect relationships
- Identify variables that cannot be easily measured
- Complex reasoning
- Researcher is situated in the study

Develop your research project

- Develop clear goal(s)
- Determine interaction type
- Draft questions/prompts

Plan your research project

- Assess resources
- Identify participant population
- Secure approvals

Prepare and collect data

- Equipment
- Incentives
- Recruitment
- Reminders
- Problematic participants
- Unforeseen circumstances
- Keeping track of data

[illegible]

Selected Ethnographic Methods

Interviews

- Typically one-on-one with semi-structured questions
- Can be wide variation in that general frame
 - Some interviews use a list of questions, interviewer and participant meet once
 - Others use probes or prompts/stimuli, ask participant to do something during or before the interview

Sample interview types

- Photo survey
- Mapping/time log
- In-depth interview
- Process interview
- Focus groups
- And there are more!
 - Space design/space use
 - Other image-based stimuli

Conducting the interview

- How long should the interview be?
 - It depends!
- Where will the interview be held?
 - It depends!
 - Strive for privacy if possible
 - If you are recording, avoid areas with lots of background noise

Interview challenges

- Leading questions
- Space for answers
- Problematic participants
- (Possibly: technical issues)

INTERVIEWER: Okay, the night before a big assignment is due. Tell me what you see in this picture.

STUDENT: Okay, well, this is a picture of me getting my editing done on the assignment. I try to read over and read over as much as possible because professors tend to take off marks for not proofreading. They say, "Oh, you didn't take your time and do this assignment, so I'm just gonna take off five points. So what I do is I try to read over several times and what I also do is I have someone else read over for me 'cause my professor says that sometimes you won't recognize a mistake but somebody else will.

INTERVIEWER: That's true even with very, very experienced writers. And where are you in that picture?

STUDENT: I am in the bedroom that I stay with my cousins. That's the computer; I'm sitting by the computer. So, we have a desktop in our bedroom so I was just editing that night.

INTERVIEWER: And so do you use the computers here at the college as well?

STUDENT: Yes I do use the computers at the college as well. Sometimes they're occupied so what I do is that I just sit in the back and there's a lounge area when enter. You can chill out until a computer is free.

INTERVIEWER: Did your professor give you any recommendations or restrictions for outside sources? So, not including the textbook and the notes, but any outside sources. Did she say you *had* to use *these* kinds of sources or you couldn't use *those* kinds of sources?

STUDENT: No.

INTERVIEWER: Did she require you to use any library resources or any books? Or she said you didn't have to?

STUDENT: Yeah.... She said we can use the library sources.

INTERVIEWER: But was it required?

STUDENT: Mm... Nah, I don't think so.

INTERVIEWER: Did you use any library resources for the paper?

STUDENT: Nah. Just the textbook.

INTERVIEWER: Just the textbook and the outside web sources?

STUDENT: Mm-hmm.

Space use observation

- Allows for examining behavior in a natural setting
- Is non-intrusive
- Should capture data at different times of the day, week, semester, or the time patterns relevant to your library
- Consider if particular or random times work best

Space use observation

- Collect consistently (esp. w/multiple observers)
 - Template/checklist
 - Map of area to make notations
 - Use codes ("L" for laptop, "G" for group, etc.)
 - SUMA: <https://www.lib.ncsu.edu/projects/suma>
- Leave room for anecdotes and comment and photos

Let's take a break!

- Take 10-15 minutes to
 - have a break!
 - grab your lunch!
- Then we'll have a working lunch

Qualitative Data Analysis

Audience → analysis

Your research goal and audience will determine how much time you spend on data analysis.

What can data look like?

- Notes
- Audio recording
- Video recording
- Screen captures
- Drawings
- Photos

What is transcription?

- In qualitative research, the audio or video capture of an interview or focus group is rendered into written form
- This process *changes* the data, meaning can be lost or added



Transcription options

- Automatic transcription
- Pay for it
 - outsource
 - hire a grad student
- Do it yourself
- Take notes (paraphrase)
- Code the audio/video



Consider: how much time and funding do you have?

Codes and coding

- Codes are labels attached to a phrase or image
- Codes emerge from:
 - Descriptive attributes of the data
 - Frequency counts
 - Reading the text
- Many ways of coding; our approach is geared toward practice and not theory or model building

Codes and themes

- It can be tempting to code everything. Seek balance between too many and too few codes: aim for a few dozen, not more!
- Themes are a higher level of categorization that identify major elements of your entire content analysis: aim for 4-5 themes at most

Coding exercise

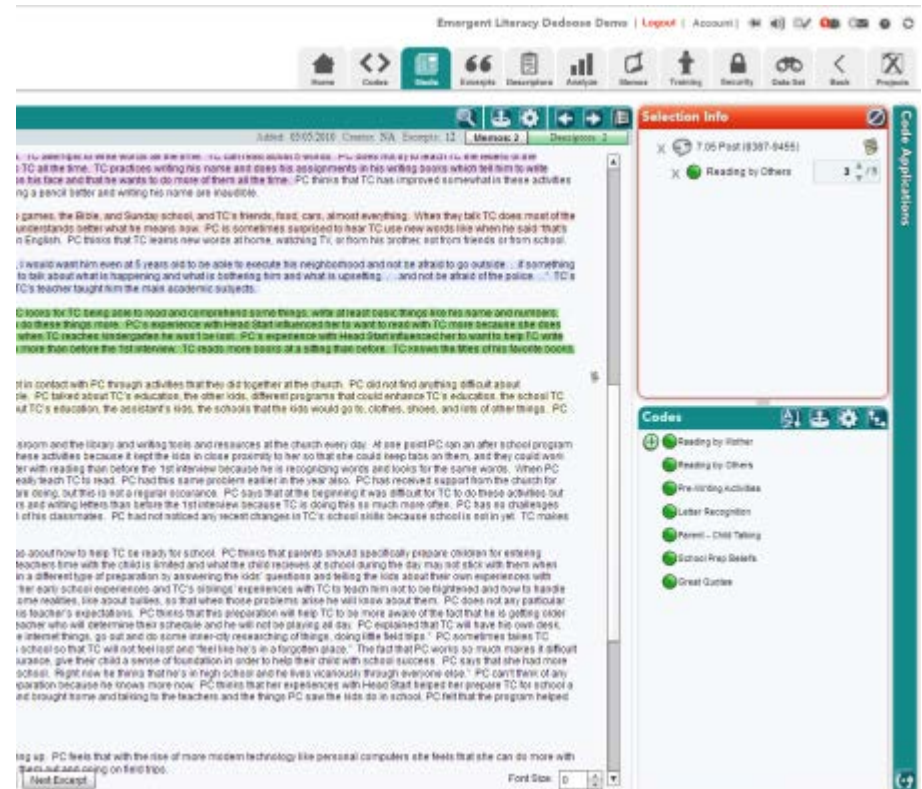
- Read transcript #1
- Create codes from transcript #1
 - Use the coding worksheet
- Code transcript #2
 - Write codes directly on the transcript
- Pair and share with your neighbor

Share out

- What are some codes you developed?
- What was most challenging?
- Is there anything you would do differently after discussing this with your neighbor?

Coding tools

- Excel, Google Spreadsheets
- Software applications:
 - NViVO
 - ATLAS.ti
 - Dedoose
 - (among others)



Wrapping Up

Why use ethnographic methods?

- Capture the range of experience
- Explore individual experiences
- Understand processes
- Answer questions you never thought to ask
- Identify service gaps



Reflection

- What are your research questions (what do you want to know)?
- Why/how do you anticipate that ethnographic methods might be helpful to answering your research questions?
- Which ethnographic methods do you think will work best in your setting?

Thank you!

Maura Smale

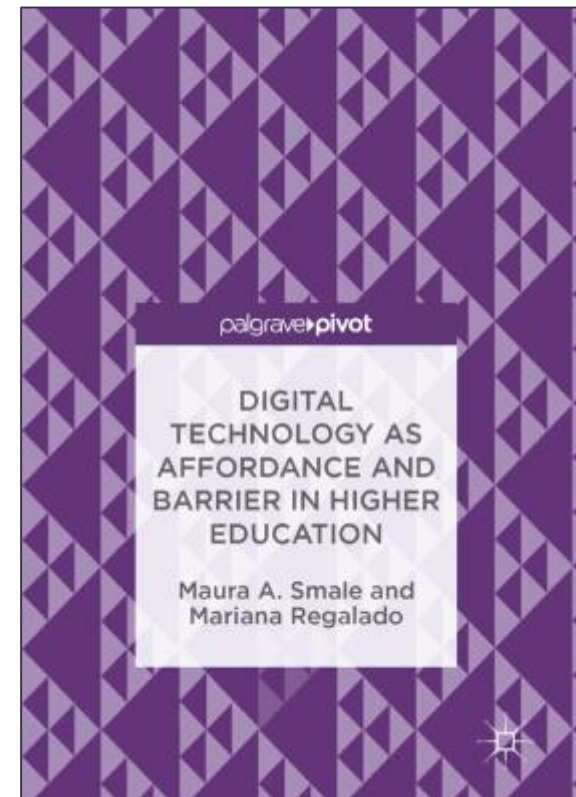
msmale@citytech.cuny.edu
[@mauraweb](https://www.instagram.com/mauraweb)

Mariana Regalado

regalado@brooklyn.cuny.edu

<http://ushep.commons.gc.cuny.edu>

<http://ushep.net>



Works Cited & Image Credits

- Guest, G., MacQueen, K. M., & Namey, E. E. (2012). *Applied thematic analysis*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- Layder, D. (2013). Data analysis: Concepts & coding. In *Doing excellent small-scale research*. (pp. 129-159). London: SAGE Publications Ltd. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781473913936.n8>
- Scribe sculpture: Tropenmuseum, part of the National Museum of World Cultures. [Houten beeld voorstellend een man die een lontarblad beschrijft.](#)