Advantages vs. disadvantages to participant-observation:

**Advantages:**

Enhances quality of data

--you can establish good relationships with people, which leads to ...

more honesty

more info

--You can observe firsthand the differences between what people say they do and what they actually do (ideal vs. real culture)

Learn about subtle things that people do not talk about: explicit versus tacit

you can tell when people are lying or hiding things

You learn how to formulate sensible questions

You can see how life changes throughout the season

case-studies

reaction to events is immediate rather than dimmed or intensified or otherwise altered by time

conversational exploration of ideas (see Raybeck:96)gives true emic view

Enhances quality of THE interpretation of data

--You can get a better sense of how your research topic fits into their lives as a whole (holistic)

constant cross-checking or triangulation

Encourages the formulation of new research questions and hypotheses grounded in on-the-scene observation

--You can learn things that you may have never thought to ask about

--is more collaborative: in the production of knowledge, gives some control to the people you study

May be only viable mode of research (as with deviant sub-culturesdrug dealers, bank robbers, gangsters, gangs, poachers) [I do work on smugglers]

**Disadvantages:** --The sample size is going to be small because it is time-consuming

**-**-The anthropologist’s rapport with people might lead to bias in his/her findings

Because p-o is so time-consuming, rarely does another anthropologist study the same questions with the same people, so there is seldom any verification of the reliability/reproducibility of the findings.

control of research less in hands of researcher

--It is difficult to record information while you are participating in certain events

--Your presence might affect peoples behavior

--You may feel some moral responsibility to get involved in peoples lives which may take time from your research

anecdotalnot scientific enough

synchronicunless you probe this through interviews and questions, you might get a static view of how things are at the point when you are there.

forced to confront the paradox of cultural relativism

personally taxing [see readings]

\* culture shock and cross-cultural misunderstandings

\* Infantilizing

\* Lack of privacy

\* Physical discomforts, dangers

\* Different cultural norms about gift-giving