Write a Research Proposal for Your Ethnography

After you have explored your topic by thinking about it, writing about it, and conducting some preliminary research, you need to bring your ideas together in the form of a two-page or so proposal that you will submit to your instructor. This is similar to the type of proposal one might do for a scholarly journal. For an ethnography proposal, your readers will assume that through the preliminary research you've been conducting you have developed research questions and a method of gathering more information that will guide your inquiry.

Your proposal should include:

- A working title

- An Introduction (what the discourse community is, why you're interested in it, and/or any hypotheses you may have about that group)

- Background information (history of the community, why you think it *is* a discourse community)

- Research Questions (what do you hope to be able to answer in your study?)

- Methodology (what info will you gather and how will you gather it? Texts and genres to examine? Questionnaires? Interviews? Observations of meetings and electronic texts?)

- Goals (what you hope to accomplish with this research – regarding this group or discourse communities in general)

- A biographical note that explains your interest, experience, and/or expertise regarding this discourse community and/or its purposes

John Q. Public

Prof. Gary Vaughn

ENGL 2089

Ethnography Proposal

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Title (tentative):   Not a Stock Photo: Developing a New Community out of the Darkroom

Introduction: The UC photography club is still in its infancy, so while it meets John Swales'

definition for a discourse community, its structures remains fairly fluid. This makes it an

interesting candidate for analyzing how a discourse community forms. The formal leadership

which originally formed the group has not always been the most consistent, so it will be

interesting as well to analyze how leadership changes as the community establishes itself.

Background: The University of Cincinnati Photography club is a relatively new organization.

Formed last spring, it has not had much time to gather more than a small group of consistent

members. Its members vary from DAAP majors to science majors, but all share some interest in

semi-serious photography. It is run by its founder and president, but with other members

stepping in when he is not present.

 To become established at the university, it necessarily has the stated goal of teaching

varying levels of photography knowledge (1). Its Facebook group for members and Google

document and surveys represent its methods of intercommunication (2). Most members share

photos and give and receive feedback on them (3), and that is actually the primary means of

learning in the group. Meetings usually take 2 forms, a gathering to discuss in one location, or a gathering to move and take photos. As a new group, the specifics of these meetings change significantly over time, which could bring up questions of whether this really is a discourse community yet (4). The photography club no doubt has its own specific lexis, with all kinds of technical language from the camera component standpoint and the artistic compositional standpoint (5). Lastly, as a new community, the founders have taken the leadership positions, so the normal college stratification by class year is not present since the older members have not necessarily been present the longest. There are definitely levels of experience that dictate roles in the community, but that differs from many college organizations (6).

Research Questions: What shifts does a group need to make to become a discourse community? How are leadership roles established (besides by formal election)?

Methodology: I plan to look into club history and past events, and interview several members of the club about the club leadership and their reasons for joining the club.

Goals: 1) Understand how a discourse community forms and grows 2) Understand the role of authority and conflict in the community

Bio: John Q. Public is a new member of the club, and one of several engineering student members. Due to the many snow days, he has only attended 3 meetings and is still fairly new to the group, and he will use this research project as a way to get to know the group better.