

Study Questions for Palys & Atchison (2007) excerpt regarding *Observations and Ethnography*

1. Louise wants to do an observational study of cocaine use among West Vancouver's *nouveau riche*, but she's unsure what role to adopt on the continuum from "complete participant" to "complete observer."
 - a. Compare and contrast each of the possible roles in terms of the **ethical issues** and **reactivity** involved.
 - b. What other **advantages and disadvantages** do you see to the various roles in this situation?
2. Adam wants to do some research with the RCMP regarding interrogation procedures. He is not quite sure about just **how knowledgeable** he should attempt/appear to be at the outset of the research and comes to you for advice. You indicate that some researchers suggest that taking the **role of a "learner"** is the best way to approach a new setting while others suggest that it is far better to come across as **very knowledgeable**. But Adam wants more details. "What *are* the advantages and disadvantages of the two approaches? And which do you think I should do in *this* situation, and why?" How will you respond?
3. Why does Lofland think it important to distinguish between "**knowing**" and "**knowing about**"? What for him are the **four essential elements** that are required for "knowing"?
4. Differentiating possible observer roles on a continuum ranging from complete participant to complete observer was standard for many years, and the chapter in fact opened with exactly those categorizations. However, more recently, some researchers have suggested that the **continuum is problematic**. On what basis do they say so?
 - a. Does this connect at all to the notion of **reflexivity** that we discussed in the first half of the course?
 - b. How does it connect to notions of "**voice**" and "**privilege**"?
5. What are some of the elements of a research setting that you should look at when you start doing observational research, i.e., **who** and **what** might you observe?