

Ethnographic Project 1 Following a Process



Author taking tissue sample for genetic testing from the antler velvet of a semi-domestic reindeer in the Eastern Saian Mountains, Irkutskaja Oblast', Russia. Photograph 2014 © by K. Klovkov.

Purpose

This assignment is designed to practice close, nuanced, qualitative observation skills. Close observation allows the anthropologist to pay attention to details that are often overlooked. Nuance refers to “a subtle difference in or shade of meaning, expression, or sound” (Oxford Dictionary). The dictionary provides the example, “the effect of the music is nuanced by the social situation of the listeners” (ibid.). Thus, the meanings of objects, actions, and situations may not always be evident at first sight. It takes a deeper look – a nuanced look. Qualitative observations are concerned with individual cases, even if they are not replicable or statistically representative. The goal is not immediate generalizability, but a deeper understanding of specific processes in a particular time and place. To identify nuance, we first need quality detail.

Grading

Completing this assignment is mandatory to pass the course. The assignment is worth up to 15% of the total course grade. As you can see, points will be allocated for the inclusion of specific elements, and points can also be deducted for not following proper format. Be sure to include an introduction, a body with four paragraphs, and a conclusion. The format and rubrics sections below give you a detailed idea of the expected structure and content of the assignment.

Format

There is no title page, but your personal information is listed at the top of the first page. The font type is Times New Roman, the font size is 12-point, line spacing is single, there are 1-inch margins all around, and page numbers at the bottom of each page. The word count (excluding header, title, and bibliography) should not exceed 850 words. Citation follows Harvard style for in-text citation and bibliographic entries at the end of the assignment (if needed). If you prefer a different style, be sure to follow it consistently. If you have any questions about the assignment, please do not hesitate to contact the instructor well ahead of the assignment’s due date. The grading of this assignment may be handled by a teaching assistant (TA).

Use a (phone) camera to document your chosen process. Take lots of photos and select the 10 most essential ones to illustrate key actions. When framing your shots, be sure you have sufficient light, all shots are focused, all described elements are easily and completely visible, and there is no distortion in the images. Number your selected photos. Create a table with 10 cells, one for each photo. Write an accompanying text, single spaced, of around 850 words, describing the process step-by-step in a storied approach, referencing key shots in your table. Flesh out your text, following the example below. Be sure to research and use the correct terminology for all actions and items in your description. Submit your finished assignment on URCourses in PDF format.

AI

You are allowed to use generative AI as a non-recoverable source, such as personal communication. Cite as follows: In your text (ChatGPT, personal communication, September 29, 2024); in your bibliography OpenAI. 2024. *ChatGPT* (Mar 14 version) [Large Language Model]. Be sure to cite a generative AI tool every time you use any material (or idea) stemming from it. Alternatively, acknowledge every use of an AI tool in a footnote, explaining its specific role. Verify all sources cited by the tool, and **never allow AI to be the author of your work**. Where generative AI is allowed to author in part or in whole, the assignment will be annulled.

Scenario Ideas

Here are five scenarios from which you are to select one:

1. Brewing coffee or making tea
2. Starting up your car in winter
3. Feeding your pet
4. Setting up a meeting with friends
5. Putting on a pair of shoes
6. Other (consult with instructor)

Example and Rubrics

- Has complete header (1)
- Offers clear title (1)

Author: Alex Oehler
 Course: Anth 100, Winter 2024 (Dr. Oehler)
 Assignment: Ethnographic Project 1
 Selected Scenario: Laying down a horse

Title: From Colt to Gelding

Introduction

- Has a hook (1)
- Offers a thesis (1)
- Gives an outline (1)

“On a wet and cold morning in May, Borzhon, and his youngest son Bator (b. 1990), walked over to their corrals to collect a young colt (**hook**). Bator led the horse by his halter to the front of his father’s house where he maneuvered him to an open space of well-packed sandy soil with patches of short grass. Five meters away, three other horses stood hitched to the family’s serge [hitching post]. Bator calmly positioned the colt to face the house in preparation of a technique used in laying down horses for hoof work (**purpose/thesis**). This morning it was not shoes that had to be attached or removed. Badma had arrived two days earlier to castrate the colts. This colt was the last one awaiting the procedure. With Bator’s every attempt to wind a rope around his front legs, the colt would shake it loose again. What set out as a delicate dance, in which Bator and the horse slowly went round and round—the one to bind, the other to remain free—eventually grew into a dense encounter more resembling a controlled wrestling match. I will describe this match with the aid of a series of photographs (from a to t illustration 5.1) (**outline**).

Photo Sequence

- Has clear sequence (1)
- Is well lit/focused (1)
- All is centred/visible (1)

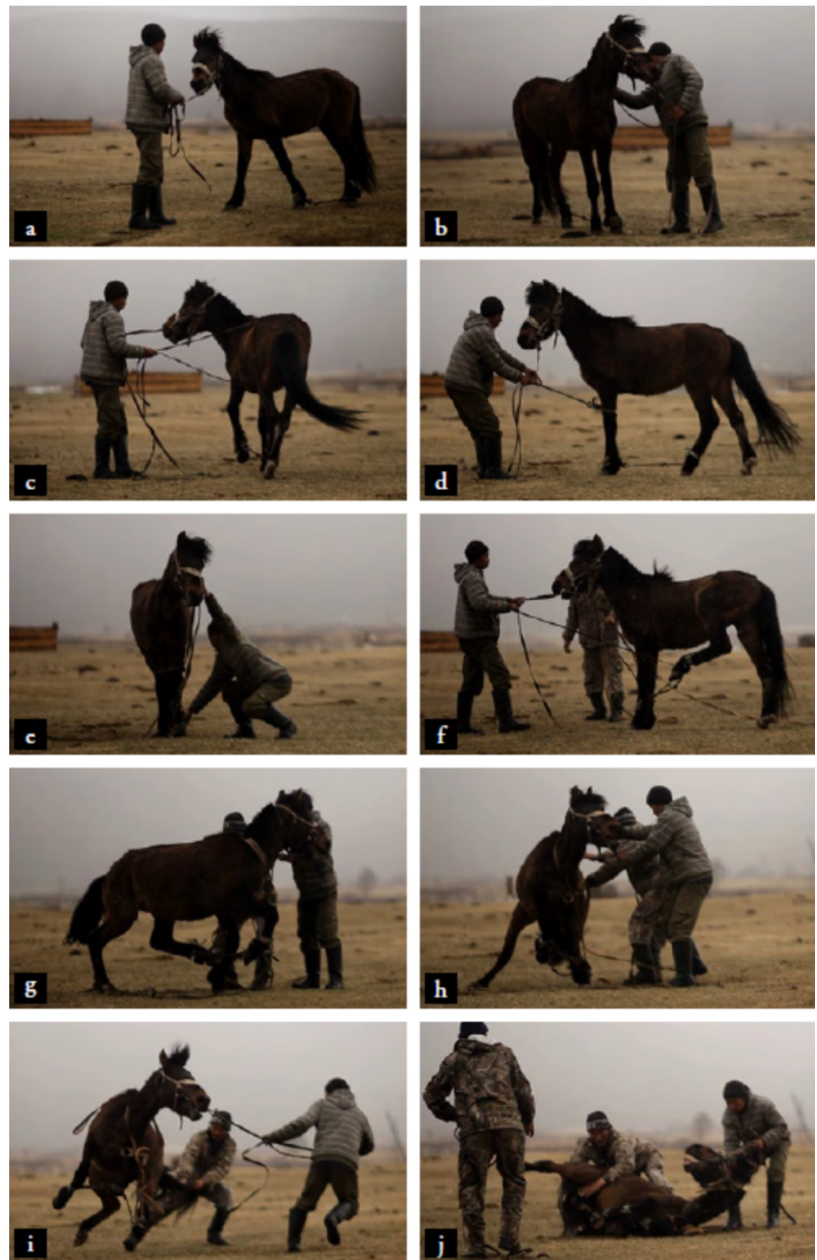


Illustration 5.1. Laying down a horse, steps a to j. Photographs by the author.

Descriptive Observation

- Uses a storied narrative (1)
- Carefully describes (1)
- Uses proper terminology (1)

Standing face to face with the horse, Bator was now holding on to a rope, one end of which was connected to the colt's halter (a). The animal's left front and rear legs had already been hobbled by a rope contraption with toggle fasteners (Rus. *trenog*) (**terminology**). The hobble ensured that the horse did not gallop away. Then Baianbata, Bator's uncle, handed Bator a second rope.

Holding the halter rope and one end of the second rope in his left hand, and standing on the left side of the horse, Bator carefully ran the other end of the second rope across the horse's back (b). When the rope touched the ground, he reached between the horse's legs for its end. Now holding both ends of the second rope in his right hand, and the halter rope in his left, the horse was tethered to Bator, both at its muzzle and from withers to brisket (c). Tying one end of the second rope to itself, forming a large noose with a flexible knot, Bator skillfully pulled the noose over the horse's head, gradually tightening it at the colt's upper forearms (d). Holding halter and the rope end of the tightened noose

in his left hand, just below the horse's muzzle, Bator now carefully lowered to his own feet (e). From here he secured the hobble to include both front pasterns with the rear left pastern, after which he released the noose from the forearms. The colt was now fully hobbled.

Now tying the middle of the second rope to the halter, Bator ran one end of it under the hobble, around the left rear pastern, and from there back through the halter tie ring, forming a triangle that could be tightened, and which brought the cannon of the rear towards the forearm (f). At the same time, this mechanism also lowered the head, preparing the animal for a smooth rolling transition to the ground. But when the horse still refused to lay down, Bator released the lasso, and Borzhon entered the picture.

Interpretative Observation

- Focuses on meaning (1)
- Identifies intentions (1)

Tying a wider piece of webbing around the horse's neck, Borzhon now took the lasso from Bator and quickly formed a self-tightening loop, which he ran under the neck's webbing. With the horse's left rear leg raised to the forearm once more, the animal was now standing on three legs (g). Borzhon's involvement had signaled a transition in this horse-human contact: Bator's earlier dance-like motions were now being replaced by a tactile assertiveness more akin to wrestling (h) (**meaning**). Not only was Borzhon getting tired of the game, he did not want the other horses to be alarmed by the tenseness of the situation (**intention**). They were, in fact, already beginning to move back and forth nervously. Still moving in circles, but ever more abruptly, Borzhon finally gave the colt's tail a powerful jerk (i). With his hooves in the air, the colt had finally been sent onto his left side, in which position Borzhon drew his tail through the groin to keep him on the ground, as Bator prepared to hold down the head (j).

Conclusion

- Summarizes (1)
- Interprets (1)

Bator and Borzhon were gradually introducing the colt to a procedure that in future would require less time, involve little resistance and require fewer implements (**summary**). This being the colt's first time to be laid down, he could not know what was expected of him in this communicative encounter. The gentle tugging of Bator's ropes did not yet resonate with the animal, as there had not yet been established any memories of similar encounters (**interpretation**). And given his agitated state, which might upset nearby horses, Borzhon had no desire to draw out this learning process. Instead, the horse needed to be calmly and firmly guided into the final position of these movements. He had to be put on his side; aided by his master (Rus. *khoziain*) to overcome his anxiety."

Excerpt from: Oehler, A. 2020. *Beyond Wild and Tame: Sioit Encounters in a Sentient Landscape*. New York: Berghahn Books. Pp. 130-132.

Layout

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Illustration 5.1. Laying down a horse, steps a to j. Photographs by the author.

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