

Peterson, Kristin and Valerie Olson. 2024. *The Ethnographer's Way. A Handbook for Multidimensional Research Design*. Durham and London: Duke University Press. 376 pp. Pb.: \$29.95. ISBN: 9781478030157.

Book review by

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In *The Ethnographer's Way*, anthropologists Kristin Peterson and Valerie Olson provide a transformative, innovative, and iterative “multidimensional” approach to ethnographic research design. A “multidimensional” approach can be understood as a collective and holistic “try-and-refine” *nonstandard* process to research design – which provides researchers the opportunity to conceptualize diverse and multifaceted concepts and aims with the intention of producing cogent ethnographic projects. Moreover, this approach allows researchers to connect the learning process with their scholarship – from the development of the topic of study to the formation of research questions – through an imaginative and engaging process.

Peterson and Olson's (2024) handbook seeks to disrupt the reproduction of positivistic, hierarchical, neoliberal, and settler colonial methodological praxis – which prescribes to qualities of individualism, conformity, and competitiveness. In doing so, the authors offer a path for ethnographers to foster a culture built on curiosity, compassion, and communities of practice in the ethnographic design process. Throughout each module, this handbook guides researchers in *concept work* exercises, which engage them in multidimensional research design.

The *first module* is intended for the researcher to forge research design imaginaries. This module allows the researcher to narrate their project's inchoate concepts, aims, contexts, and (possible) future directions through an intuitive and creative process.

In the *second module*, the researcher begins to identify three key intersecting literatures in their ethnographic study design, including one area-specific and two topically-relevant

discourses. This module specifically engages the researcher in connecting the three key interrelated bodies of work, which first began its development during the research imaginary stage.

The researcher develops a one-page concept map which interlinks (potentially) salient theoretical and empirical ideas into their project during the following module. The objective of this module is to allow the researcher to visually represent their ethnographic research study.

The *fourth module* engages the researcher in linking key concepts to identify multidimensional literatures. The purpose of this module is to allow the researcher to innovatively identify a combination of core central concepts which will provide a unique contribution to the scholarly literature.

The researcher develops and clarifies their research project's objective(s) and multidimensional directions during the *fifth module*. This module is intended for the researcher to write a short narrative distilling their project's aims and scopes with the concept combinations.

The researcher will then identify a phrase which encapsulates the structural tensegrity with the project's conceptual multidimensionality – or, that is to say, the ability to cohesively encompass core concepts, salient objectives, and distinctive elements of the research. By using an iterative, intuitive, and sense-making approach, the *sixth module* engages the researcher in refining the research description, as well as their project's core theoretical and ethnographic concepts.

The *seventh module* is intended for the researcher to identify their primary research question and the project's significance. This module provides a space of wonder and curiosity for the researcher to develop an overarching, concise, and comprehensive research question – which will ultimately justify the project's intellectual and scholarly merit, along with the broader societal impacts.

The researcher identifies sub-questions which will inform the primary research question and the data collection process during the eighth module. The objective of this module is for the researcher to identify effective and interlinking data-gathering questions, which may also be used to aid in refining and merging the research description, intellectual merit, social significance, and the overall multidimensionality of the ethnographic project.

In the *ninth module*, the researcher develops field-based inquiries which directly link to the data collection questions and methods of inquiry. The purpose of this module is for

the researcher to identify interactive methods and questions, which will be used to articulate practical and conceptual elements of their research project with the collection of ethnographic data.

The *final module* allows the researcher to apply the project's outline in preparation for grant proposal writing, the completion of any necessary ethical board reviews, as well as the conduct of multidimensional field research. This module specifically engages the researcher in how to propose a theoretically and conceptually innovative and succinct ethnographic research project which will be used to obtain grant funding.

Overall, Peterson and Olson's (2024) handbook offers an excellent, clear, and accessible multidisciplinary step-by-step guide to designing ethnographic fieldwork methods and research. I highly recommend this handbook for undergraduate and graduate students working toward developing intuitive research design skills while fulfilling their culminating experience project requirements. I also recommend this handbook for faculty and instructors interested in reinvigorating their ethnographic methodological approaches and preparing for course instruction in research design.