Playing Anthropologist For A Day (Lessons from Indiana Jones)

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We always recommend that team members accompany us for ethnographic encounters. It provides some key benefits:

- Better internalize and activate insights seen 1st hand
- Greater intimacy with the patient journey
- Ability to observe and ask questions
- Stepping into the world of Anthropology shared by Indiana Jones and co. is both cool and fun.
There Are No Instant Experts

Don’t be hard on yourself, and don’t stress about nailing the insight in one session, or in a few hours.

Be patient, observe, and focus, but cultural insight rarely drops into our laps, even after years of training.

We’re looking at the big picture and playing the long game.

‘Indiana Jones’ was not built in a day. Take it slow.
Some Ground Rules For Being An Anthropologist

Dress for ethnography, not the office. Casual apparel, and no corporate branded clothing, pens, notebooks, etc.

Wear socks (without holes) and easy to slip off shoes.

Anthropologists prefer casual dress, but not ‘Indiana Jones’ casual.
Some Ground Rules For Being An Anthropologist

Sit as though you are a friend in the home.

Turn off your cell phone. Or, if left on silent, don’t check it for updates/mail.

Ask before you take photos or video of objects. Respect their privacy.

Be gracious and withhold judgment regardless of their tastes.

Indiana Jones is gracious and composed when required.
Some Ground Rules For Being An Anthropologist

Your role is to be the anthropologist’s partner.

Being a note-taker or videographer gives you a reason to be there in the eyes of the respondent.

The respondent looks to one person to lead the session and discussion, and that needs to be your FSI moderator.

You can ask questions, but not many. Try to save them to the end.

There’s no ‘I’ in team, but there is in ‘Indiana Jones.’ *I* get to be Indiana Jones. You’re going to be Henry Jones Sr., but that’s cool too.
Some Observation Tips & Tactics

Photograph artifacts that are meaningful to the respondent.

Take a portrait of respondent, ideally holding or standing by something that defines them.

Capturing key insight is all about what you see around the subject of discussion.

Pay attention to what’s in the room and what it contributes to the respondent's behaviour, beliefs, attitudes, etc.

Indiana Jones takes care, and is a careful observer of his environment.
Observers, keep your eyes open for objects and areas in the house that reveal values and attitudes:

- The fridge door as family hub - calendars, family photos, kid art, etc.),
- Media collections like music/movies
- Art on display
- Recreational stuff like electronics, gaming consoles, etc.
- How the respondent dresses
- How tidy or untidy the house is
- Placement and access to key objects
Making Sense Of It All

Capture top of mind thoughts and themes you observed right away – a quick brain-dump post session is invaluable rather than relying on memory after the fact.

Don’t worry about format, just scrawl it all down or talk into a recording device.

We can worry about the theory and implications later.

Eventually, even Indy needs to share and activate his experience with others.
Insight, Strategy & Execution