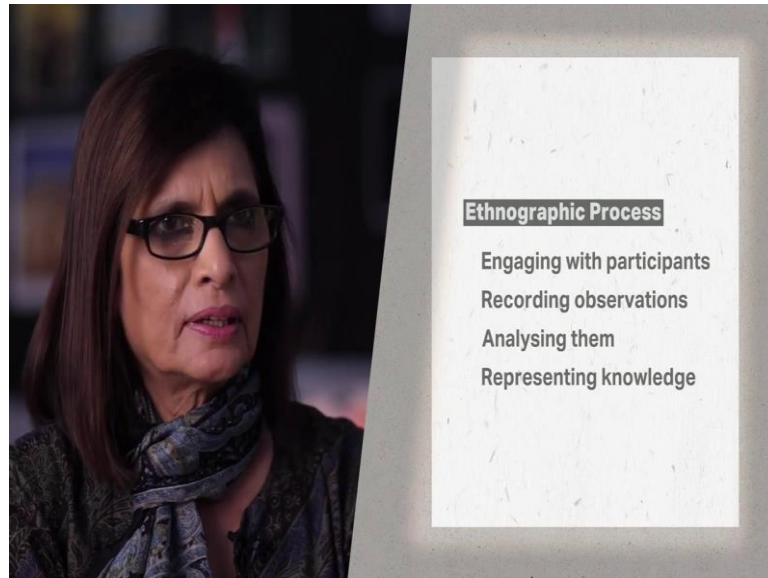


**Ethnography
Process or Product
Module 2 Section 3
Lecture 10**

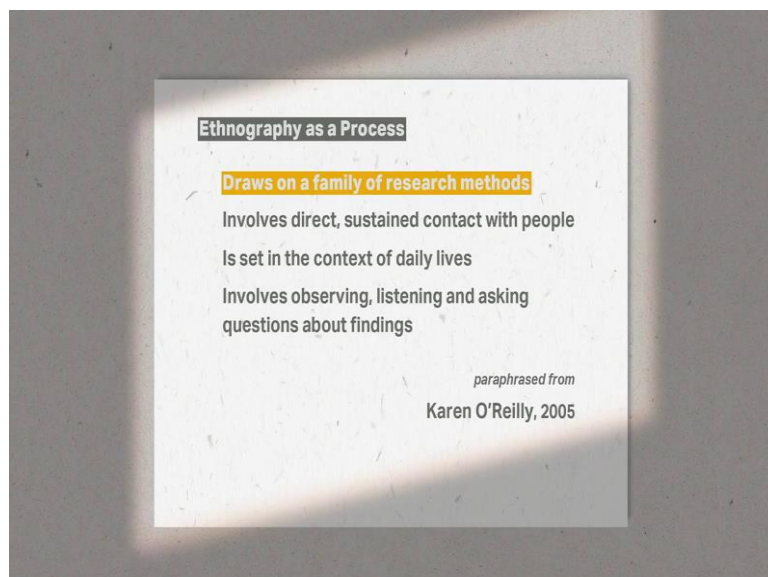
Let us return to our question of whether ethnography is a process or a product.

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If you consider these elements you may notice that each is both a process and the outcome of that process.

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Ethnography as a Process

Draws on a family of research methods

Involves direct, sustained contact with people

Is set in the context of daily lives

Involves observing, listening and asking questions about findings

paraphrased from

Karen O'Reilly, 2005

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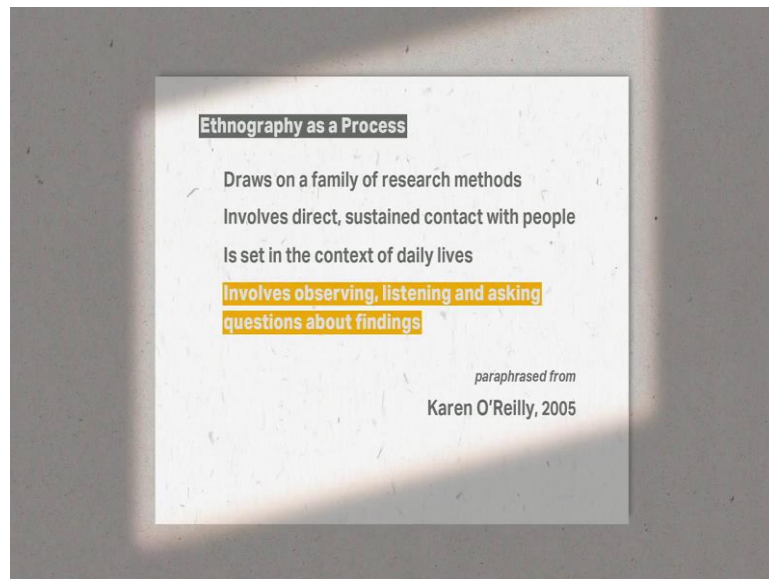
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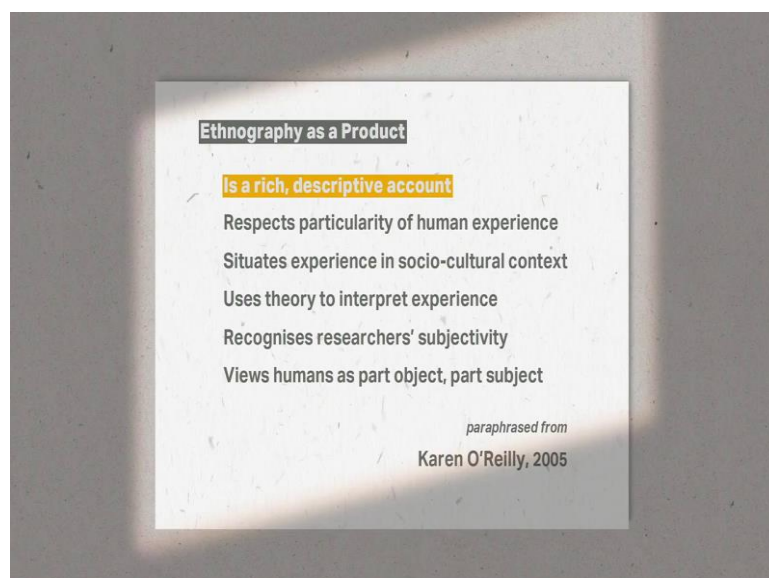
paraphrased from

Karen O'Reilly, 2005



Ethnography is a process. In ethnographic practice, we draw on various methods of research, such as interviews and observations. We are in direct contact with our participants in the context of their daily, social and cultural lives. We observe various phenomena and interactions and ask questions about what we observe

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Ethnography as a Product

Is a rich, descriptive account

Respects particularity of human experience

Situates experience in socio-cultural context

Uses theory to interpret experience

Recognises researchers' subjectivity

Views humans as part object, part subject

paraphrased from

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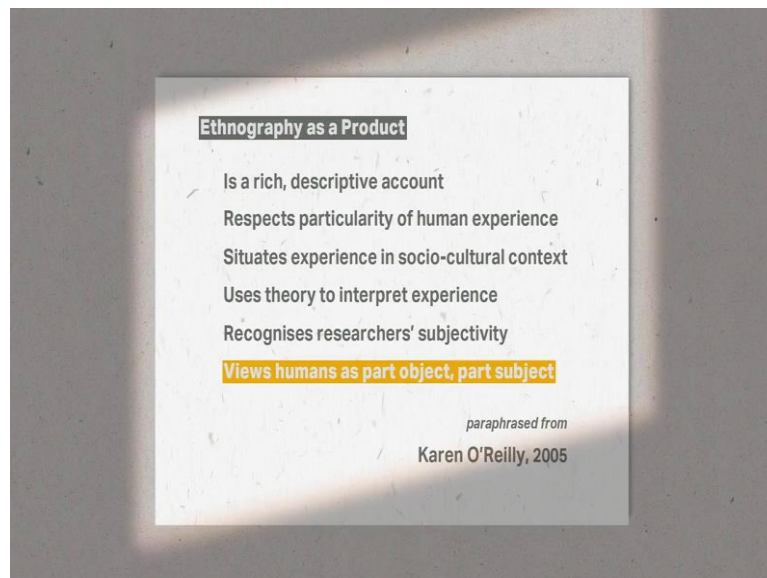
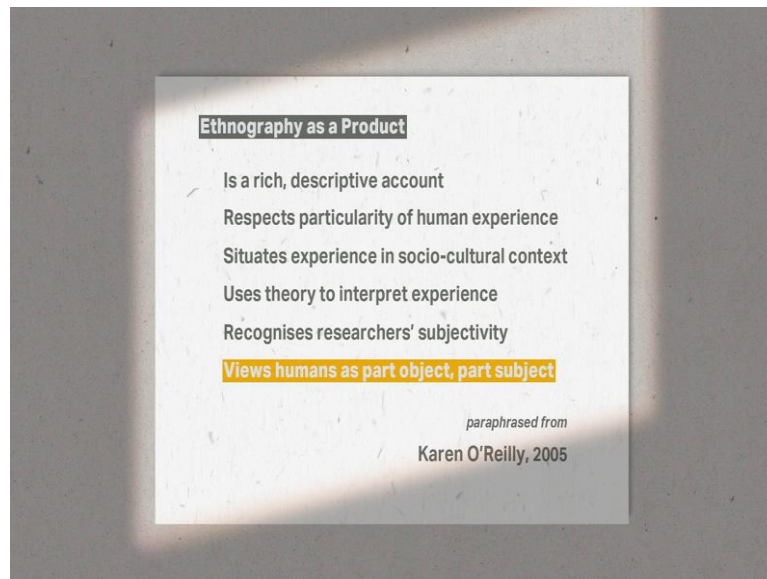
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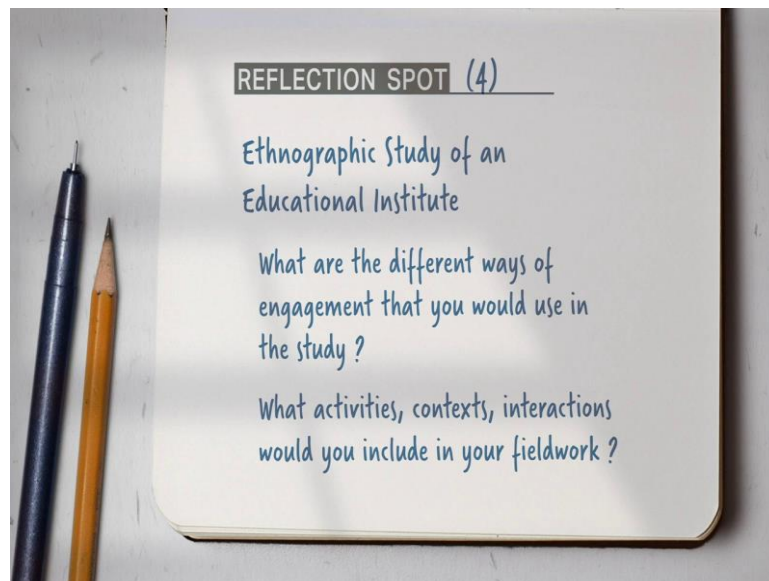
And it is also a product. As a product or an outcome of a process, ethnography is a rich, descriptive account of human experience. It respects the particularity of that experience and does not generalise it. It acknowledges the role of theory in shaping our understanding of human experience. And recognises that the representation we create is filtered through the ethnographer's subjectivity.

It presents the research participants as part object and part subject. This means that we learn about our participants and we learn from them. It acknowledges their agency in shaping their context and our research. Let us try and grasp this idea by referring to an earlier example.

We return to *the study of the students and teachers in a school, to explore their relationship*

with their institute.

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If you were designing this study, what are the different ways that you would use to engage with the participants?

What activities, contexts, interactions will you include in your fieldwork?

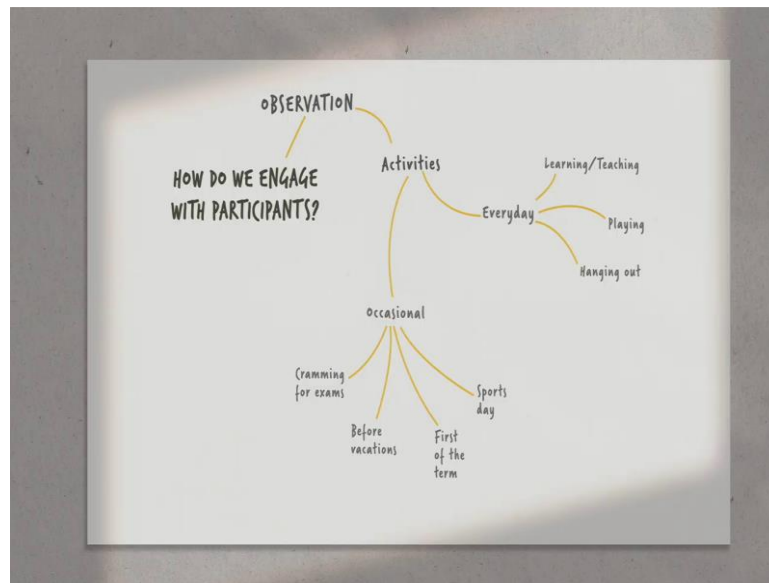
Pause the video and list down all the ways you can think of. Now let us see if some of your responses match with ours.

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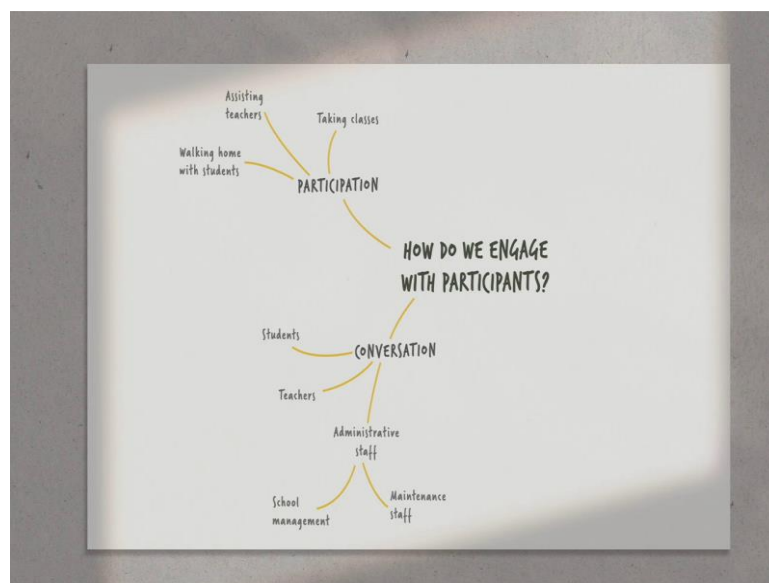
We could use multiple methods of engagement to learn about our participants. We could observe the formal and informal interactions between teachers and students in the classroom and outside of it. We could spend time with students and the teachers in spaces such as the staff room, the library, the canteen so on. We could also accompany some of them to their homes

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We could map a day in the life of the classroom by asking our participants to plot their daily activities across the timeline of a day. In this mapping, we could learn about the activities, artefacts, and relationships that make up the classroom.

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We could interview students, teachers, administrative staff and others. We could also

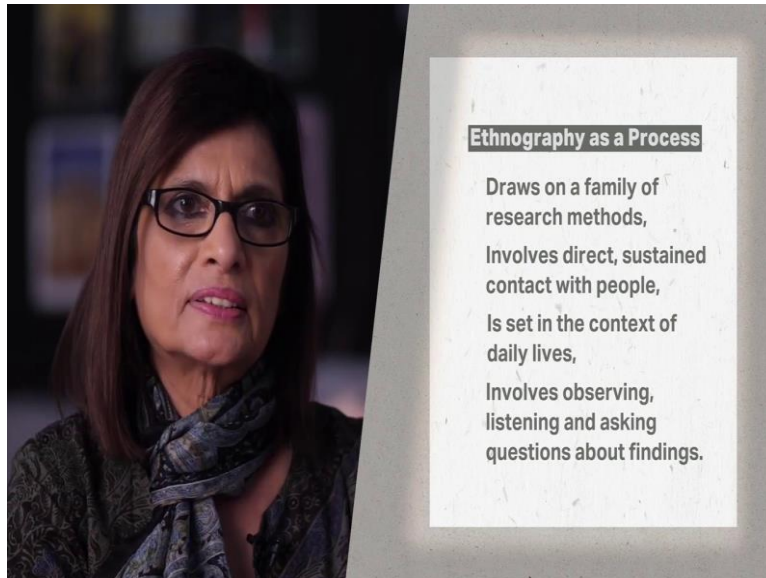
participate with some of them in their daily activities like learning or teaching. (Refer Slide Time: 3:12)





By using these methods, and maybe some others too, we would engage with our participants in a direct and sustained manner. We would learn about them and their context through different kinds of observations and interactions. And we would ask them and ourselves questions regarding our observations.

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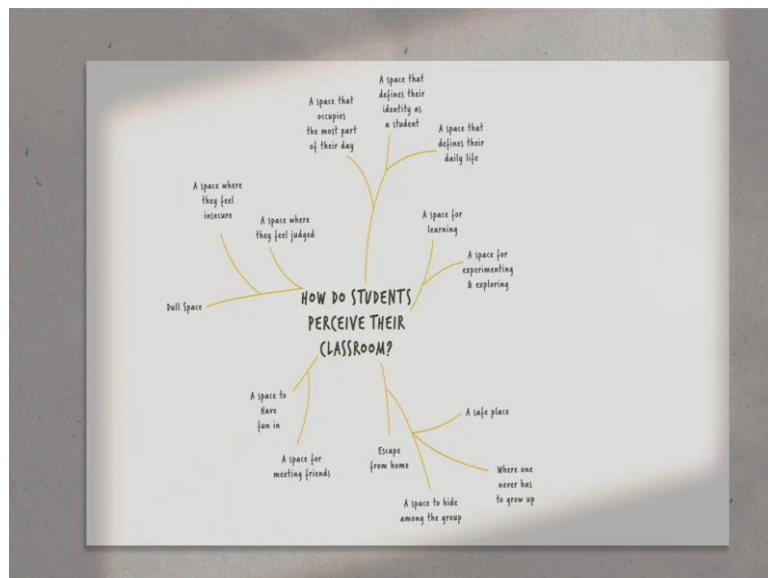
In this manner, we would be conducting a research that is ethnographic in its process. For our study to be considered ethnographic in its outcome, it would have to reflect a certain kind of understanding and knowledge.

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This would include an understanding of the relationships that the participants have with each other. The study would represent the perceptions of various participants about their classroom.

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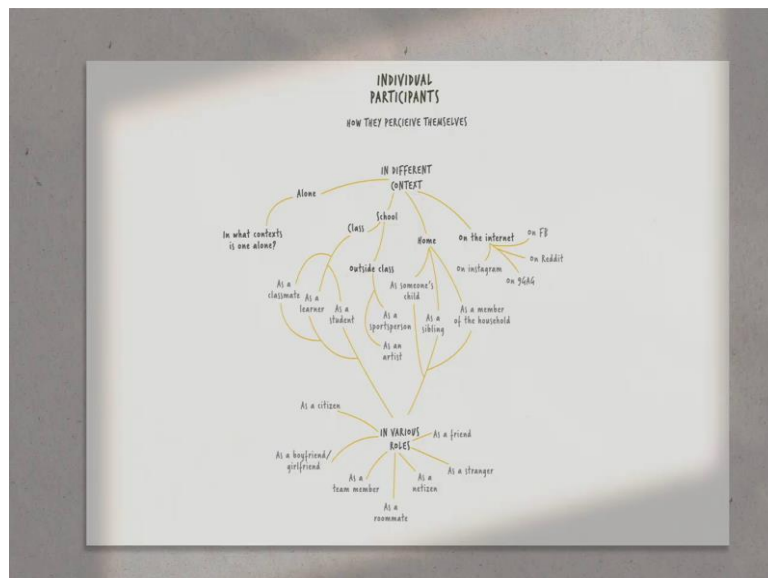
So, the study would present what the classroom means to different participants. For instance, the classroom could be seen as *a space for learning*. Or as *a space for meeting friends and mentors*. For some, it could be, *an escape from home*. For others, it could be a *restrictive, dull space*.

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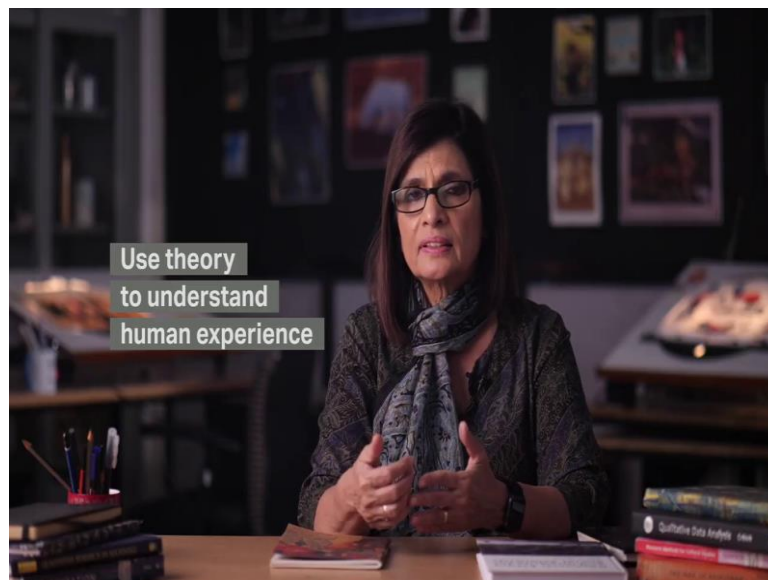
The study would include an understanding of the particular contexts, experiences and ideas of individual participants, such as the participant's understanding of themselves, their home, and their relationships.

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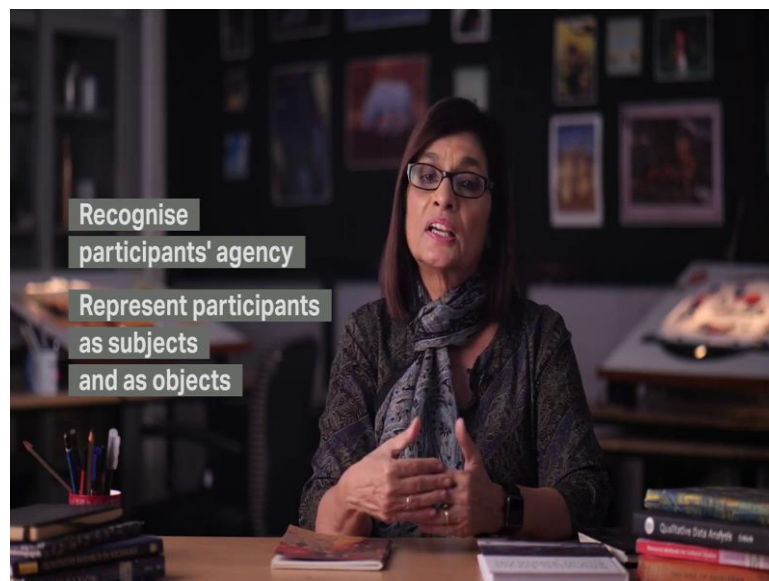
These individual perceptions would help us understand the specifics that form the shared experiences and ideas in a classroom.

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The study would draw connections between the contexts of individuals and that of the school. So, the study may look at: the *physical location of the school*, its *fee structure*, the *academic performances of its students*, and so on. These various insights would find support in existing theories of learning and teaching. And maybe theories of community bonding, and of relationships between people and spaces.

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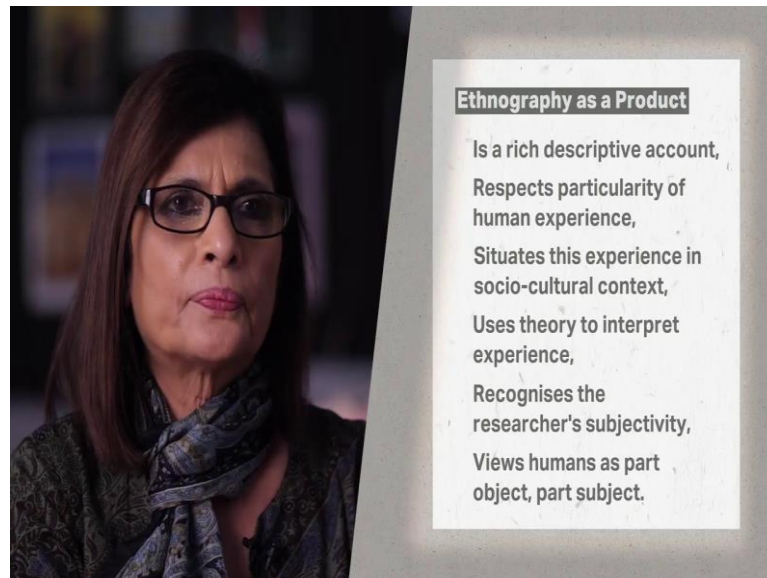
In representing all of these observations and analyses, the research would present the agency and knowledge of individual participants. Their reasoning, their perceptions and their opinions would also be presented in the outcome. At the same time, the study would describe the circumstances and events acting upon the participants.

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It would acknowledge the subjectivity of the researcher, their ways of seeing and their assumptions.

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In fulfilling all these criteria, our study would be ethnographic in its outcome. You may note, that in the listing of these attributes, it is hard to distinguish which attributes refer to the process, and which refer to the product. This is an inherent quality of ethnographic research.

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It is through following an ethnographic process that we may create an ethnographic product. For instance, we need to observe and engage with the home-contexts of individual participants. This is a process related attribute.

But it is this process that enables us to present particular experiences of individual participants. And this, as you can see, is a product-related attribute.

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So, it is the very attributes that make ethnography a process, that also make it a product. Let us take a break now. We will return to unpack some fundamental concepts that inform the processes in our next section.