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Book review

Mundane Methods: Innovative Ways to Research the Everyday, Helen Holmes, Sarah Marie Hall (Eds.), Manchester University Press, Manchester (2020), v and 287 pp., £24.99 paperback, ISBN: 978-1-5261-3971-9

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As more contemporary social sciences researchers turn to the everyday, this edited volume provides a comprehensive and go-to guide to readers offering multiple interdisciplinary methodological and empirical resources. *Mundane Methods* opens with an introduction to the myriad definitions of the everyday and presents an extensive review of how research inquiry on the mundane is evolving. The various sections in this volume offer an engaging account of the potentials and the interdisciplinarity the mundane provides – diverse opportunities, methodological alternatives, technological advancements and, the intricacies of researching the everyday in its grounded, multi-layered, and complex forms.

The book highlights the need to develop alternative, situated methodologies while pointing out the lack of existing resources that guide potential researchers to study the everyday and the mundane. Well referenced and rich in resources, the volume provides hands-on approaches, dos and don'ts, and practical lessons for readers in the form of toolkits for using suggested methods, and further readings at the end of each empirical chapter – a combination that makes the book an essential must have. These features make the *Mundane Methods* volume stand out from comparable books, articles, chapters on methods that despite being conceptually and empirically rich might not be about the method itself accompanied by a 'how to' guide. Whilst a robust resource, it might not be exhaustive, and that is the key message. The book provides the reader with the inspiration to think outside the traditional methodological and epistemic box, and presents

unconventional possibilities and approaches that are intriguing, innovative, and well-suited to address contemporary everyday challenges while using appropriate techniques and evolving technologies.

The author contributors in this edited volume are from a wide range of disciplinary backgrounds such as Sociology, Human Geography, Arts and Design, with experience in researching a range of everyday and mundane issues related to health and wellbeing, collective memories, children and youth geographies, material culture, mobilities and many more. The authors, at different stages of their career with fitting empirical and methodological expertise, contribute to this resource-rich volume that interests scholars from various disciplines whilst empathetically considering the ethical implications, embodied experience of research participants and the positionality of the researcher. The editors, with their experience of researching and publishing on a variety of aspects of the everyday, with themes situated at intersections of gender and other social inequalities or material relations with objects, are very well equipped to combine this volume as a collective that appeals to readers interested in investigating materialities, meanings, sensory and emotional entanglements in space and much more. The volume is divided into three thematic sections including, *materials and memories*, *senses and emotions*, and *mobilities and motion*. Each section revolves around interwoven subthemes and topics including everyday relations, practices, spatiality, materiality, temporalities, encounters, and entanglements.

In the first section, *material, and memories*, through the five chapters drawing on how embodied and sensory capacities of objects and materials are reflected in memories, identities and means of place-making among subjects are in the forefront. Chapters in this section start with Woodward investigating material collections through an object-based

method using a mix of object mapping, collection audit and visual techniques. Similarly, Slater uses the history of textiles and oral testimonies to draw on clothing practice memories of women in wartime Northwest England. Widerberg, in the subsequent chapter, shares techniques for researching memory, participants' experiences and the mundane. In the penultimate chapter in this section, Holmes uses object interviews to understand how mundane objects shape everyday lives and relationships. The final chapter in this section by Hall, Pottinger, Blake, Mills, Reynolds, and Wrieden presents methods of talking, doing, documenting, and observing in cook-along and food-for thought discussions to make such mundane tasks livelier. This section unfolds new ways of researching memory recollections and materials to present personal and collective stories whilst highlighting the ethical consideration of conducting memory research.

In the second section on *senses and emotions*, there is a call for emersion of researchers into the subjects through sensory experiences and deeper reflection. This section opens with Heath and Chapman's chapter with description of collaborative artwork, that they call observational 'sketchcrawls' to perceive and represent everyday things. Lyon, in the next chapter, uses 'rhythmanalysis' as an embodied and sensory research method to study a fish market over time. Similarly, using sensory tools, Tipper uses ethnographic eavesdropping to understand human-animal relations. The theme continues in Perkins and McLean's chapter on smell walking and mapping to perceive the everyday. Finally, this section closes with Collins using autoethnography in life-drawing classes to examine multiple relations and embodiments. This section emphasises on the researcher's positioning and exploring embodied experiences in the wider context of the research environment.

In the third section of this edited volume themed around *mobilities and motion*, mobile methodologies are key in shaping relevant enquiries. Cook uses mobile video-ethnography and run-along interviews, in what he calls 'jographies'. Rose's chapter draws on creative ways of everyday walking and exploration. Birtchnell, Harada and Waitt use the electric scooter to analyse emerging ways of contemporary mobility. Stoodley presents techniques of exploring sensory surfing practices in the sea. Finally, Wilkinson uses a go-along participant observation to study young peoples' movements and nightlives. The highlight of the chapters in this section is adapting, innovating methods, and using advanced technology that suits best to the research question.

The chapters are all accompanied by useful illustrations, toolkits with tips and tricks to adapt and adopt similar methods, essential reading lists and implications of the methods used, much like a reference textbook for a chosen method. I think, the only place this volume falls short might be in bringing together more contributors from other disciplinary perspectives and a wider geographical context. However, this limitation is overcome by not only the volume being a prescriptive textbook, but also in the fact that it offers a call for readers to experiment with innovative, adaptive, and fresh approaches using alternative tools and technology to contemporary research. This outlook provides hope for advancement, methodological reimaginations and ultimately breaking boundaries in decolonising research methods.