1. Collector: Jon Payne
Informants: Family
Handle: Sunday Dinner

Text:  
Nick: “Mom are you taking me to school tomorrow?”
Mom: “I could take you but you should try to find a ride because I'll be busy and Dad’s traveling.”
Nick: “Oh yeah, I’ll have Kenny take me, forgot he was home til Tuesday.”
Grandma: “Speaking of Tuesday, what are your all school’s doing for Veteran’s Day?”
Mom: “Universities don’t observe it as a day off so Jon and Elizabeth will still be in session. Nick has it off though.”
Grandma: “What a shame.”

Scott (Elizabeth’s new boyfriend): -Changes subject- “So Mr. Payne, how do you accommodate yourself when you travel?”

(Awkward Silence and lots of chewing)

Dad: “Like any other frequent flyer I suppose (sarcastic). In a hotel room and parking garage.”

Discussion: Sunday dinner is a ritual in my family where either my mother or grandmother cooks a huge family style meal and extended family members come over to enjoy and discuss family matters. Particular to this Sunday dinner was the presence of my younger sister’s new boyfriend who she was introducing to the family. Since my father is a stickler to conservative social values, he tends to be obstinate in granting respect to anyone new until it is earned. Within the context of this conversation, my sister’s boyfriend attempts to partake in casual conversation with my father. What ends up happening, however, is an awkward moment that can be categorized as “putting one into his place”. Since this arose spontaneously in conversation around the family table, it can be seen as a moment of folklore where the new boyfriend is in the liminal state of trying to garner respect in the household.

2. Collector: Jon Payne
Informants: Anonymous Individuals
Handle: Pre Test Ritual

Text: “Are you ready for this exam?”

“I’d rather not talk about this right now.”

“Okay, so how did you feel about what’s going on with the basketball team recently?”
“It’s a bit disheartening, I wish we could still have the old guys. How was your weekend?”

“Not bad, a little boring studying for this exam. Did you understand lecture 24? (shuffles paper)”

“Probably, but it’s too late now to talk about.” (Professor declares the test is about to begin)

“Good luck”

“You too”

Discussion: Prior to my most recent exam in molecular biology, I asked the individuals in the row behind me if it was okay if I transcribed their conversation prior to the exam. What happened next was the revealing of how these individuals try to monitor their stress levels prior to taking an exam. Of particular interest is the non-relevant stream of consciousness discussion that takes place, indicating that one of the participants is not wanting to discuss exam material in the minutes leading up to it. This can be viewed as a moment of folklore in which ignorance is bliss, such that even if a topic were to be brought up that one of the students didn’t quite understand, they would be better off not discussing it in order to keep stress levels down.

3. Collector: Jon Payne

Informants: Members of Kappa Sigma

Handle: Wednesday Night Poker

Text: Danny: “Are you a history guy?”

Ryan: “Not really, I just have a really good education in history”

Danny: “I was always interested in history, but I never paid attention in class and didn’t retain anything.”

Alex: “(Sarcastically) Yeah it already happened why do I need to know about it? Tell me about the future, that’s what I really need to know.”

Ryan: “But yeah I really enjoyed learning it but what can you do with knowing about history?”

Alex: “(Jokingly) You can be a history professor!”

Ryan: “But if you think about it, all you can really do with a history degree is to go to law school. Speaking of law school, why is it that philosophy majors tend to do really well on the LSAT?”

Me: “Because all the metaphysical mumbo-jumbo they have to read trains their brains to pick out the most important material, since the LSAT is pretty much the critical reading section of the SAT plus logic games. Also, the logic games are easily picked apart by philosophy majors because all philosophy is logical interpretations of life.”
Context: Sitting in the formal room of the chapter house, playing our ritualized game of Texas Hold 'Em on Wednesdays.

Discussion: While dealing and playing a hand, the topic of history gets brought up. While on the surface this conversation seems like a normal progression into how a group may explain why a certain subject is important or not important, the real meaning lies within the initiator’s intentions in getting a read during the hand. Since Ryan is a newcomer to our weekly game of poker, Danny took it upon himself to initiate a conversation that he knew Ryan might be interested in. If Ryan takes the bait and begins a long, drawn out conversation, Danny knows that Ryan’s hand is garbage and in keeping the conversation going, the bets on the table get higher and higher. Then it comes to the point when myself and Alex interrupt the conversation because we’ve gotten our reads as well. Thus, this moment of folklore can be interpreted as a “snipe hunt” of sorts in which Danny opens the floor to conversation he need not care about, and leads Ryan into betting more and more based on the longevity of the discussion. Since Danny did not offer any counter arguments and just led Ryan on, the purpose was obvious to Alex and I, yet Ryan continued on with the “snipe hunt” and Danny ends up winning the hand.