Ethnographic observation

- Requires trained observers, extended videotaping, sophisticated coding & editing

- Especially helpful in:
  - Tracing complex consumer activities and processes (using equipment, software, purchase process)
  - Understanding ‘low involvement’ activities, where consumers’ awareness is limited (routine shopping)
  - Detecting new fashions or trends
What to look for…

- Nonstandard uses
  (Cheerios = snack)

- Interactions with environment
  (shaking the blender)

- Customization
  (no desktop)

- Intangible attributes
  (Pull-on diapers = ‘growing’)

- Unarticulated needs
  (Gillette Lady Sensor)
Learning by observing: 3 examples

• “The Deep Dive” Nightline show on IDEO

    “Innovation begins with an ‘eye’”

• “Why We Buy,” ABC video about Paco Underhill

• “Growing a Business” - Stew Leonard’s supermarket success story.
Further readings

- Article on Diesel Store from NYT

- Spark innovation through empathic design (course packet)

- “Why we buy” by Paco Underhill