ABSTRACT
        Meta-analysis, as a quantitative approach, requires a
determination of a basic comparability between phenomena so that the
data can be aggregated for the analysis. This is the crux of the
problem with the meta-analysis analogy for a meta-ethnography. It
implies an aggregate theory of social explanation, and thus may
violate the qualitative, enthnographic approach. Awareness of this
problem occurs only when researchers fail to attain a synthesis of
ethnographic studies of desegregation. The synthesis attempt as used
with two different approaches reveals the problem of the aggregate
theory of social explanation. Both synthesis attempts for the five
desegregation ethnographies essentially used an aggregate theory of
social explanation researching for "general conclusions," and as such
both lost the essential values of the ethnographic approach. The
search for general conclusions was context-stripping, and reverted to
a different standard for theoretical significance: commonalities
across-site as compared to the patterns explaining the results for
each site. The problem of the aggregate theory of social explanation
is thus revealed. Meta-analysis assumes an aggregate theory of
combining results and interpreting the magnitude of the combination.
A meta-ethnography must have a theory of social explanation that both
preserves uniqueness and entails comparison. (PN)

Meta-Ethnography: Issues in the Synthesis
and Replication of Qualitative Research

by

George W. Noblit

R. Dwight Hare

Organizational Development
and Institutional Studies

School of Education

University of North Carolina

Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27514

Paper prepared for the AERA annual meetings, Montreal, Canada, April 11–15,
1983.

Meta-Ethnography: Issues in the Synthesis

and Replication of Qualitative Research

There has been much flurry in educational research over meta-analysis as a

technique to synthesize studies, and especially evaluations, of limited scope.

Seemingly, meta-analysis has great promise and deserves the attention it is

currently receiving. Yet meta-analysis has been touted largely as a statistical

synthesis approach, leaving qualitative research uninformed. This is

unfortunate given the increasing use of qualitative methodology in education

research, and the elaboration of the methodology from the intensive, single case

ethnographies so common to anthropology and the Chicago school of sociology to

comparative case study designs. Similarly, the classic intensive studies are

being replicated raising serious questions about the veracity of findings as the

Freeman-Meade debate attests. Seemingly, a meta-ethnography will be required if

the challenges of cross-site synthesis and replication are to be successfully

resolved.

The Meaning of Meta

"Meta" is a prefix of increasing popularity in social science. We hear of

meta-history, meta-system and meta-theory. Seemingly they all refer to a

grander scheme. Yet the notion that a meta-analysis is grander than an analysis

masks another meaning. Meta also refers to the assumptions and beliefs that

undergrid an approach, and thus is both grand and basic. A dialectic, if you

will, that allows the escaping of boundaries of an approach by understanding its

assumptions.

In applied research, meta-analysis and meta-evaluation are closely linked to improving research practice. Posavac and Carey (1980) elaborate:

> Formative meta-evaluation is conducted before an evaluation takes place and is intended, as a guide to help evaluations effectively carry out their project by improving the evaluation plan (p. 315).

> Summative meta-evaluations are studies of the merits of a completed evaluation. Both formative and summative metaevaluations assess the extent to which an evaluation is technically adequate, useful in guiding decisions, ethical in dealing with people in organizations, and practical in the use of resources (p. 316).

Thus meta-evaluation can refer to a close assessment of the process of evaluation research. However, this approach is of little assistance in research synthesis that was the concern of Glass et. al., (1981) and our concern here. Glass et. al., (1981: 21) write:

> The approach to research integration referred to as "meta-analysis" is nothing more than the attitude of data analysis applied to quantitative summaries of individual experiments. By recording the properties of studies and their findings in quantitative terms, the meta-analysis of research invites one who would integrate numerous and diverse findings to apply the full power of statistical methods to the task. Thus it is not a technique, rather it is a perspective that uses many techniques of measurement and statistical analysis. (p. 21)

Glass et. al., thus are more expansive in their concept than are Posavac and Cary. They move beyond assessing the properties of studies to consider how the data, given the properties, can be integrated. They are helpful in other ways also. First, they denote meta-analysis as an "attitude" and "perspective" giving us heart that the concept is not fully limited to statistical applications. Second, they promote some humility. It is "nothing more than the attitude", suggesting that the concept, while important, is not a paradigm shift but rather an elaboration of existing understandings about data analysis

Yet, as ethnographers, the limits of the Glass approach is disheartening.
The attitude and perspective are esentially statistical and thus imply an
aggregate theory of social explanation. The problems this presents to the
synthesis and replication of qualitative studies will become evident as we
proceed. Other approaches to the "attitude" will be necessary if a
meta-ethnography is to develop. Calfie (1981:42) in exploring cognitive
psychology provides a starting point when he defines meta-cognition as "knowing
what you know and how you know it". While he is referring to an individuals
synthesis of educational experiences, it seems also applicable to the synthesis
of qualitative studies which must somehow integrate dissimilar situations and
phenomena while not resorting to a positivistic aggregate theory of social
explanation.

The meaning of a meta-ethnography then has been informed. It is to be
grander and more basic than simple studies because it can explore assumptions
and approaches as well as findings. It can guide technique by helping assess
the merits of qualitative studies. As a perspective or attitude, it is also
more than a technique. It in some ways is a methodology born of the sociology
of knowledge. Finally, however, it is a humble step that only elaborates
current understandings and renders them more interpretable. Thus it is better
that we talk of developing a meta-ethnography as we continue, and eschew
pronouncements of "new" discoveries and insights.

The Problem of Meta-Analysis

As we have discussed above, the attitude of meta-analysis is what we wish
to build upon in this paper. However, this is not to imply that
meta-ethnography is directly analogous to meta-analysis. It is not. In fact,

only the "attitude" is a fully appropriate analog, for the theory of social

explanation that undergirds meta-analysis violates the basic approach of

qualitative, resarch. Spicer (1976:341) writes:

> In the study there should be use of the emic approach, that is, the
> gathering of data on attitudes and values orientations and social
> relations directly from people engaged in the making of a given policy and
> those on whom the policy impinges. It should be holistic, that is,
> include placement of the policy decision the context of the competing or
> cooperating interests, with their value orientations, out of which the
> policy formuation emerged; this requires relating it to the economic,
> political, and other contexts identifiable as relevant in the
> sociocultural system. It should include historical study, that is, some
> diachronic acquaintance with the policy and policies giving rise to it.
> Finally, it should include consideration of conceivable alternatives and
> of how other varieties of this class of policy have been applied with what
> results, in short, comparative understanding.

Qualitative research focuses on "meaning in context" (Mishler, 1979), and thus

captures a uniqueness that more deductive approaches cannot. Meta-analysis, as

a quantitative approach, requires a determination of a basic comparability

between phenomena so that the data can be aggregated for the analysis. This is

the crux of the problem with the meta-analysis analogy for a meta-ethnography.

It implies an aggregate theory of social explanation, and thus may violate the

qualitative, ethnographic approach.

Of course, many researchers would find little objection to an aggregate

theory of social explanation, especially given the task of synthesizing the

results of many studies. On the face of it, the theory seems reasonable to the

task even to many ethnographers. In fact, we became aware of the problem only

through a failure to attain a synthesis of ethnographic studies of desegration

(Noblit, 1982). Let us discuss this synthesis attempt in way of revealing the

problem of the aggregate theory of social explanation.

Upon completion of drafts of final reports for five ethnographies of desegregating schools, it seemed reasonable to seek some conclusions that could be succinctly shared with policy makers. In the end, two rather different approaches were attempted. One approach was to summarize the similar lessons from all sites (Wax, 1971a) by condensing the five final reports. The other approach was to have the research teams agree on a set of salient issues and to conduct cross-site analyses based on data from all five sites. Our own conclusion is that both attempts to attain a synthesis failed (Noblit, 1982). LeCompte (1979:118), although referring only to the first attempt (Wax, 1979a), concluded:

> The Wax summary of five ethnographic studies of desegregated schools promised a great deal but does not deliver as much as it promises. Both Practitioners and Academics reading such a document will be looking for answers--though of different kind. Teachers, administrators, and politicians will be looking for guidelines and techniques that they can utilize toward the immediate solutions of a pressing problem; Academics will be hopeful of an explanation of the complex phenomena under examination, or at least a conceptual framework, consistently applied, which might explain variation in the phenomena. Neither are provided, although some useful insights can be teased out of the material presented. While it is difficult to quarrel with the well-stated initial premise--that ethnography is a particularly useful tool for studying processes such as those involved in desegregation of schools, and is a technique which provides insights garnered by no other means--the brevity of the report has obviated the richness of data and explanatory detail which is the hallmark of good ethnography and permits it conclusions to be well-grounded. What remains are some trite and atheoretical explanations for the failure of schools really to desegregate--such as the absence of effective leadership from the principles--and an idiosyncratic view of the whole process of desegregation which ignores some of the more important structural aspects of the conflict inherent in such a situation. In short, the article under review earns plaudits for what it attempts to do and some serious criticisms for what it fails to do.

The failure of synthesis, however, is also quite instructive. It seems that the failure can be attributed to two overly simplistic understandings:

Essentially, the failure is attributable to our lack of understanding on
two fronts. First, we simply lacked a theory of social explanation
appropriate to an interpretive social science. Without this theory, we
reverted to summations rather than explanations. Second we lacked an
understanding of the relationship of research to practice, and how social
explanation and practice are related (Noblit, 1982:3).

The synthesis attempts for the desegregation ethnographies essentially used an
aggregate theory of social explanation researching for "general conclusions"
(Wax, 1979b:1), and as such lost the essential values of the ethnographic
approach. The search for general conclusions was context-stripping, and
reverted to a different standard for theoretical significance: commonalities
across-site as compared to the patterns explaining the results for each site.

The problem of the aggregate theory of social explanation is thus revealed.
Meta-analysis assumes an aggregate theory of combining results and interpreting
the magnitude of the conbination. A meta-ethnography must have a theory of
social explanation that both preserves uniqueness and entails comparison. It
employs a substantially different logic and involves viewing explanations as
"translations" (Turner, 1980).

An Alternative Theory of Social Explanation

A lot of the methodological discussions of ethnography in educational
research has argued it is an "alternative" approach (Patton, 1975; Noblit,
1981). A meta-ethnography certainly seems to imply an alternative theory of
social explanation. Yet it is often difficult to imagine what a reasonable
alternative could be. Luckily, Turner, (1980) has been exploring the issue of
social explanation and can suggest some directions. His work is of interest
here because, as we will show, Turner's analysis establishes a theory of social
explanation that can be simply be extended to undergird a meta-ethnography.

Three points from Turner's analysis are expecially significant. First, he
establishes the place of the aggregate theories of explanation:

> Analysis of aggregate patterns can help set up puzzles, and differences in
> aggregate patterns may require explanations that cite differences in
> practices. But the question "why the different practice?" is not touched
> by the analysis (Turner, 1980:97).

Aggregate patterns essentially establish an empirical puzzle that can be solved
by the interpretion applied to it. In some ways, the aggregate approach can set
some benchmarks for explanations but the interpretive analysis must account for
their theoretical significance and/or non-significance. Certainly, the unique
contribution of a meta-ethnography would be to provide for the interpretive
analysis.

A second point of interest in Turner's argument helps us understand what is
required of an adequate interpretive analysis. Extending and critiquing Winch's
thesis (1967), he argues that social explanation is comparative:

> we proceed as though we hypothesized that where we would follow such and
> such a rule, the members of another social group or persons in another
> social context would do the same.... The different practice in a social
> group or social context that raises the puzzle is explained in the way
> that a different rule of a game is explained (p. 97).

The problem of a meta-ethnography then is to extend the comparisons to many
social contexts. Further, Turner helps us see that the perspective of analyst
essentially serves as a template for each comparison. In this way, comparability
across the comparisons is essentially insured. Note, however, the significance
of this point for qualitative research. Since qualitative research achieves
objectively via value-explicitness, a meta-ethnography seemingly must be based

in a theory of social explanation that preserves that criteria. This does.
Nevertheless, value-explicitness involves issues of audience and imagery as well
as conscious efforts to seek data to refute your analyses.

The third point of interest to us from Turner's thesis concerns how to
understand explanation. Explanation, in Turner's formulation, is similar to
translation. Since explanation is essentially in the form of a translation, a
meta-ethnography only needs to extend the principle and conduct value-explicit
translations of every site and translate each of these translations into the
other.

Turner's theory of social explanation gives guidance as to the form and
substance of a meta-ethnography. It is interpretive, value-explicit,
comparative on a couple of levels and in the form of translations. The
aggregate theory of social explanation also has its place in establishing
candidate puzzles, suggesting that meta-analysis has definable limits as a
synthesis methodology. Finally, it is essentially compatible with established
analysis guidelines in qualitative research (cf. Yin (1981)).

Two important issues still remain, however, Turner's argument raised issues
about the nature of the value-explicit explanation. The first concerned
audience. In the same way that the perspective of analyst shapes the
explanation the analyst's perspective of the audience is implicated. Turner
stops short of establishing the requisites of communicating one's findings. Yet
it is still true that this is another issue of translation. The obvious
requisites are completeness and explicitness (in revealing the analyst's
perspective) and revealing the analyst's presumptions abut the audience's key
interests. Explanation as translation may be best achieved through lucid
narratives that reveal the audience assumptions and perspectives of the analyst

relative to the specific components of the explanation. By implication, then, a meta-ethnography should eshew the formality of many summaries presenting translations in a more narrative format, varying concepts and language choice by audience. (Thus allowing research to inform practice in the terms of practice!) Secondly, value-explicitness requires a more holistic usage of language. Certainly clear expression of findings is essential but it is also true that understanding and translation also use images as well as analogies. Brown (1978) argues that explanation relies on interpretive devices such as metaphor and irony. It is through these devices that we attain the "empathic understanding" that Weber (1968) sought. Thus a meta-ethnography must seek to translate the images as well as the phenomena.

A meta-ethnography uses a quite different theory of social explanation than does meta-analysis. It seeks to preserve the essentials of the ethnographic approach while allowing for synthesis. Replications need not be methodologically consistent, but only interpretable as translations of one into the other. Of course, these are only starting blocks for a meta-ethnography. Yet they seem to enable sufficient direction for efforts to be initiated and critiqued.

Two Studies for Synthesis

The true test of a meta-ethnography is, of course, in its application. If the translations that are required are not sufficient to enable the synthesis of studies, then there is little reason not to embrace the aggregate theories of social explanation employed in meta-analysis. However, early attempts obvious must be exploratory and experimental, leading to a better understanding of the technical and substantive issues involved. For the purposes of this paper we must take a tentative step and hope that it can be instructive even if later

judged inadequate.

The two ethnographies which we will attempt to synthesize are Metz (1978) and Noblit and Collins (1980). Both are studies of desegregating schools, but the similarity essentially ends there. Noblit and Collins were not aware of the Metz study when they first wrote the paper for the 1979 AERA meeting. Metz studied two junior high schools and Noblit and Collins studies one high school. Metz employed organizational theory while Noblit and Collina largely based their work on revisionist educational history. In short, the studies are dissimilar on many counts, which seemingly would make synthesis difficult to attain. Since this is to be presented at AERA, we will attempt a synthesis directed at a researcher audience. This simplies our synthesis task since both studies were also directly primarily to a researcher audience, presumably with interests in sufficiency of analyses, conceptual frameworks and with less concern with practical issues of what could be done with this knowledge.

Metz (1978) analyses her data by describing the teachers' perspectives on classrooms, the students' perspectives on classrooms, and how teachers' and students' perspectives interact in classrooms. She then analyzes "corridors", the problem of order, and how the two schools organize differentially to resolve the problem of order. Metz argues that the parallel pursuit of education and of order in schools with heterogeneous student cultures resulting from desegregation that lead to the "crisis of authority" her book documents.

Metz draws on organizational theory in arguing that technology has a dramatic effect on other elements of organization. As a result, her analysis of teaching technologies become the vehicle (the metaphor) for analyzing the organization of classrooms. She distinguishes between incorporative and developmental approaches to instruction. The incorporative approach has the

goal of "teaching subjects" thus filling the "empty vessel" of a student with the body of knowledge. The developmental approach has the goal of "teaching children" thus allowing students to learn attitudes, interests and highly generalized skills. Her data also reveal that the goals of either approach may or may not be shared by the students, which would result in different authority relations. The incorporative approach, becomes "proto-authority" when both do not share the goals, while the developmental approach becomes "non-directive guidance" under the same condition.

The junior high schools which Metz studies had students "tracked". While the official basis of the tracking was academic performance, Metz describes the resulting "rough" homogeniety of each track on issues of "social compliance, race and social class (p. 70)". The tracks higher on academic performance tended to be white, of higher social class, and relatively more compliant while the lower tracks were more black, of lower social class, and more variable in compliance. The high track students seemed to have a "normative definition of the way schools should be run (p. 81)." These students saw education as "the answering of their questions about the world and themselves (p. 73)", and thus would challenge teachers who would not justify a given command "with at least a generalized explanation of the way it served education (p. 76)". They expected the teacher to assume the role of an "expert professional or facilitating leader (p. 76)". Further, these student saw themselves as "junior partners (p. 78)" to the enterprise,and while admitting they could be at fault seemed to require that the teachers respond to causes of behaviors rather than the behaviors themselves.

The low track students did not seem to have a normative definition of the way schools should be ran. Rather they accepted the school's right to define

their situation. However, "they did not embrace (p. 81)" these definitions, and as a result were more concerned with issues of "human decency and sense of fairness (p. 81)" the teachers displayed.

Minority students were in a somewhat different situation. The few in the high tracks saw the curriculum as culturally biased but also "recognized the usefulness to themselves of success (p. 83)" in such a curriculum. The minority students in the lower tracks seemed to believe that given their race they were destined to menial labor and success in school could do little to alter that condition.

The teachers accommodated to the student's challenges and to the different situations in the various tracks. As Metz explains: "In general, the better matched the students and the faculty member, the less conflict they had (p. 123)". The students had "principled conflict" with incorporative teachers who were strongly concerned with teaching conventional behavior, academic content, believed in "automatic deference and obedience", and who were "shaky in their academic competence (p. 125)".

In the school at large, Metz found two patterns of obtaining order: "the institutionalization of innocence" and "the myth of coercive control." The former refers to the school's reliance "upon the students' unreflective acceptance of procedure, their awe of adults and their fear of disapproval (p. 154)". The latter refers to "the creation of a state of mind in most of the children in which they believe the cost of disobedience to be too high to be worth paying, and thus they voluntarily conform (p. 156 emphasis in the original). Desegregation and a vocal rights of students movement both challenged institutionalized innocence and coercive controls which led to "rising levels of disorder (p. 160)", and to racial conflicts. The two schools

studied varied in their patterns of order. One school had two opposed faculty

cultures: developmental (new to the school since desegregation) and

incorporative which contributed to visible student disorder; the other was more

unitary and incorporative in part since few staff were added as a result of

desegration, resulting in a more orderly student body. Similarly, the

principals of each school contributed to the situation. In the school with

opposing faculty cultures, the principal believed admitted a contradiction

between academic and order goals while supporting the academic goal more

strongly. He also believed in delegating responsibility for them to teachers.

He became a mediator between the factions, but since he could not "delegate his

accountability (p. 189)" the resulting student disorder led to his resignation

under pressure.

The school with the more unitary faculty culture had a principal who choose

to satisfy order goal over the academic goal. "He put his own responsibility

for the school first, and he ran it as he thought it should be run, accepting

opposition or serious alterations from no one (p. 189)." The school was orderly

but also a "nearly universal tension in teachers' relations with the principal

(p. 198)" existed. Since the school had a more stable history than the other

school, the tension did not escalate into serious problems of disorder.

The school with the divisive faculty culture and delegating principal "over

came some of the students' alienation, and won higher levels of commitment, but

left itself open to significant disorder (p. 240)." The school with a more

unitary culture and more centralist principal "kept a reasonably orderly, safe

school, but one which failed to engage the skeptical students (p. 240)." Thus

Metz's study reveals that technology and the relative agreement/disagreement

over its appropriate form has dramatic consequences for the schools she studied.

Also, note her study used irony as the predominate form of imagery, in that either organization suffered from their best efforts.

Noblit and Collins (1980) conducted a two and a half year ethnographic study of a desegregated high school. Their analysis was dissimilar from Metz on many counts, yet begins with a familiar contradiction of goals. Noblit and Collins, however, are not concerned with the same goal conflict of Metz, and use goal incompatibility directly as the metaphor that orients the study. They are concerned with the goal incompatability of "education" and "desegregation". Historically, schools have employed an "assimilative logic (p. 42)" whereby the immigrant masses were integrated into the emerging industrial order in the United States. Yet,

> "Desegregation is a challenge to the assimilative logic of public education
> because it serves the interests of those who have been denied a quality
> education because of their lack of assimilation.... As a result then,
> desegregation when imposed as a goal for public schooling challenges the
> major social control mechanism of the public schools (denial of access) (p.
> 43)".

Noblit and Collins analyzed the effects of this incompatability on a high school by exploring three subsystems of the school: administrative, academic, and student.

An analyzing the goal conflict presented by desegregation to the administrative subsystem, they found the goal of desegregation to be both "a threat and a promise to school principals (p. 45)" and as a result also use irony as the preferred imagery. In fact, they witnessed a natural experiment in which one principal was forcibly transferred and replaced by another. The first

principal faced a coalition between the "old guard" teachers (who had been at the school prior to desegregation) and the white students who happened to be from rather elite families. He allowed these groups to have disproportionate influence in the school. Further, he emphasized the desegregation goal, allowing issues of race to be discussed in an attempt to sort out when race was at issue and when it was an issue between people of different races. When this principal, through replacement of a faculty member, threatened the control of honors classes by the "old guard" and the protected status of the white students in those classes, a confrontation developed. Parents were mobilized by the students and a bill of particulars including eroding standards (a favorite of the "old guard") and disorder was formulated. In the end, the principal was transferred.

The succeeding principal treated the bill of particulars as real and entered with the notion of tightening up the school and returning it to its educational mission. Issues of race were no longer allowed to be discussed and since the principal centralized all decisionmaking the coalition lost its influence. The new principal was defined as coercive and the "school became uneasily quiet and closed (p. 49)". As a result, the coalition came to define the situation as futile and both parties, faculty and students, sought to leave the school.

The academic subsystem was characterized by essentially a bifurcation of the faculty. The "old guard" wished to protect "standards" and saw the school's attempt to manage the influx of minority students to be an erosion of standards. The "black teachers" had transferred into the high school with desegregation and were concerned with making desegregation work. The school system responded to the desegregation court order by mandating levels of instruction. The old guard

assumed control over the honors courses under the first principal and the black teachers were relegated to the lower "levels of instruction." Thus the curricula and the faculty were specialized and stratified according to the goal they embraced. In other writings, Noblit and Collins came to characterize this as "two schools under one roof."

The student subsystem had four networks: honor students (essentially all white), the freaks, the active Blacks, the Red Oaks Blacks. The dual goals affected each network differently. The honor students expressed support for both goals but said desegregation was making them more "racist". In part, this was because the second principal's policies threatened their protected status. "The freaks experienced desegregation (p. 51)". They were essentially disaffected from the education goal and received status from extra-school activities. Desegregation was "fine". The active Blacks were caught in a double-bind. To achieve a "quality education" they had to submit themselves to the honor students, the old guard and a traditional curriculum and the Red Oaks blacks would chide them for "acting white" if they were academically successful. They came close to achieving true integration with the freaks. The Red Oaks blacks were from the housing projects nearby and were also disaffected. Yet their disaffection was felt to be more imposed than was the case with the freaks who, in part at least, chose to be alienated. The Red Oaks blacks saw racism as relegating them to menial labor and second-class citizenship.

For Noblit and Collins, the goal incompatability of desegregation and education led to a resegregation within the school. Education's historical logic, they argue, was sufficient to countermand the required goal of desegregation.

A Translation Attempt

We think the two studies summarized above can be synthesized by translating one into the other. Metz analyzed the conflict between technologies and the implied goals therein while Noblit and Collins analyzed a goal incompatibility. The basis for a translation seemingly is here.

The incorporative/developmental teaching approaches for Metz were analogous to the old guard and black teacher networks of Noblit and Collins. The old guard were essentially incorporative and the black teachers were developmental. Intriguingly, both studies found that teachers who were brought in after desegregation embraced the goal of reaching the child. Somehow desegregation policy and this teaching ideology were perceived to be compatible.

Metz's teachers accommodated to the students and schools, as was the case with Noblit and Collins' study. The sharing of goals between teachers and students about instruction for Metz was a major influence on the nature of the accommodation. For Noblit and Collins, goal sharing was seemingly more political in that shared goals led to coalitions that protected the status of the old guard and honor students, as well as the Black teachers and the Red Oaks blacks. For Metz and Noblit and Collins, sharing goals resulted in a positive classroom experience. Yet for Noblit and Collins it also had a more insidious feature in that the power that the coalitions created permeated the political life of the school.

While Metz focused more on classroom interactions than did Noblit and Collins, the coalitions and their political value in the latter school led to few "challenges" of teachers and teacher requests, even though that student misbehavior was common. Certainly, the disaffected students and minorities were

in similar phenomenological situations in both studies, and this was played out in similar ways. The second principal in Noblit and Collins study certainly constructed order on the "myth of coercive control" as did one of Metz's principals, and "institutionalized innocence" was lost in the bifurcation of faculty in Metz's other school and in Noblit and Collins' school. The studies both reveal the ccst of divisive faculty cultures in schools and also the cost of coercive control for academically able students. Seemingly both studies reveal that neither delegation or centralization are automatic guarantees for principals. Both studies reveal similar trade-offs, similar ironies.

Metz's and Noblit and Collins' studies then are easily translatable into each other and thus can be synthesized with some ease. Of course, both saw a goal incompatability, albeit different ones. Metz saw one relating to order and academics, Noblit and Collins relating to academics and desegregation. Nevertheless, the holism of each study enables a reasonable synthesis.

Conclusion

We have argued that qualitative research needs to be careful to avoid the common approaches to research synthesis. Further, we have argued that by simply being clear about our usual methods of cross-case analysis, an adequate theoretical basis for the appropriate synthesis approach can be established. Finally, we have attempted a meta-ethnography and even in the limited space here believe it proved adequate.

The implications of all this are not profound. Rather they are straight-forward. Ethnographic research can continue to seek holism and to interpret uniqueness with no detriment to the approach. We can also replicate and synthesize highly disparate studies in a reasonable fashion. We can be policy-relevant on our own terms.

However, much work remains. While we believe the synthesis attempt here was adequate to demonstrate the reasonableness of this approach, it also raises issues about the adequacy of our summarizations of ethnographic studies. We found it necessary to summarized each prior to translating and synthesizing them. Some consideration of what is an adequate summary seems in order. Further, synthesis attempts for other audiences, such as practitioners, would require understanding the interests of that audience and careful translations of the interests of researchers into practitioner interests. This promises to be both difficult and provocative. A meta-ethnography has much left to be accomplished.

References

Calfee, Robert
 1981 Cognitive Psychology and Educational Practice. In David C. Berliner
 (ed.) Review of Research in Education. AERA.

Glass, Gene V., McGaw, Barry, and Smith, Mary Lee.
 1981 Meta-Analyxis in Social Research. Sage Publications, Beverly Hills,
 CA.

LeCompte, M.
 1979 Less Than Meets the Eye. In M. Wax (ed.), Desegregated Schools: An
 Intimate Portrait Based on Five Ethnographic Studies. Washington, D. C.:
 National Institute of Education.

Metz, Mary Haywood.
 1978 Classrooms and Corridors. Berkeley: University of California
 Press.

Mishler, Elliot.
 1979 Meaning in Context: Is There Any Other Kind? Harvard Educational
 Review, 49:1, pp. 1-19.

Noblit, George W.
 1982 Not Seeing the Forest for the Trees: The Failure of Synthesis for
 the Desegregation Ethnographies. Paper presented at the American
 Educational Research Association Meetings, New York.

Noblit, George W.
 1981 The Holistic Alternative in Policy Research. The High School
 Journal. November.

Noblit, G. and Collins, T.
 1980 Goals, Race and Roles: Staff and Student Patterns in the
 Desegregation Process, in B. S. Fogleman (ed.) Urban Anthropology in
 Tennessee. Memphis: Tennessee Anthropological Association.

Patton, Michael Quinn.
 1975 Alternative Evaluation Research Paradigm. Grand Forks, N. D.:
 University of North Dakota Press.

Pasavac, Emil J. and Carey, Raymond G.
 1980 Program Evaluation: Methods and Case Studies. Englewood Cliffs, N.
 J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Spicer, Edward H.
 1976 Beyond Analysis and Explanation? Notes on The Life and Times of the
 Society for Applied Anthroplogy. Human Organization, 35:4: 335-343.

Turner, Stephen P.
    1980 Sociological Explanation as Translation. New York: Cambridge
    University Press.

Wax, Murry.
    1979a Desegregated Schools: An Intimate Portrait Based on Five
    Ethnographic Studies, Washington, D. C.: National Institute of Education.

    1979b When Schools Are desegregated. Washington, D. C.: National
    Institute of Education.

Weber, Max.
    1968 Economy and Society, Latowa, New Jersey: Bedminster.

Winch, Peter.
    1967 The Idea of a Social Science. New York: Humanities Press.

Yin, Robert K.
    1981 The Case Study as a Serious Research Strategy. Knowledge, creation,
    diffusion, utilization. Vol. 3, No. 1: 97-114.