Ethnographic Approaches to Research in Education: A Bibliography on Method.

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*Ethnography

Over 100 entries are compiled in this bibliography which identify sources helpful in contemplating or carrying out a fieldwork approach to research in formal educational settings. The bibliography emphasizes, but is not restricted to, contributions by anthropologists. Thus, there is a preference for using the terminology of that discipline, such as ethnography vs. field study. The bibliography deals with problems of educational research and how to overcome those problems. One problem is the effectiveness of the participant-observer technique in the schools. The bibliography presents a diversity of alternative research techniques that could be applied. Books and journal articles dating from the late 1960s through the 1970s comprise the bulk of citations. Entries are listed alphabetically by the author, and include the date of publication and name of the publisher. (Author/JR)

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TO RESEARCH IN EDUCATION

A Bibliography on Method

by

Harry F. Wolcott

Professor of Education and Anthropology
Center for Educational Policy and Management
University of Oregon

Anthropology Curriculum Project
Publication No. 75-1
University of Georgia
Athens, Georgia 30602

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FOREWORD

In cooperation with Professor Harry F. Wolcott, the Anthropology Curriculum Project is glad to have the opportunity to make this revised specialized bibliography, Ethnographic Approaches to Research in Education, available to researchers interested in applying ethnographic methods to educational research.

Other specialized bibliographies in related areas are also needed, such as in cross cultural, comparative and regional studies of education. The Anthropology Curriculum Project will be happy to join with bibliographers in the duplication and distribution of other annotated specialized bibliographies related to the broad field of anthropology and education.

M. J. Rice
Wilfrid C. Bailey
INTRODUCTION

This bibliography represents a continuing effort to identify sources helpful in contemplating or carrying out a field work approach to research in formal educational settings. The bibliography emphasizes (but is not restricted to) contributions by anthropologists, and thus there is a preference for using a terminology from that discipline, viewing ethnographic techniques as the basic tools of research, ethnography as the completed product, and ethnographic method as the process. Sociologically-oriented researchers pursuing similar techniques and sometimes producing rather similar accounts are more inclined to speak of gathering data in the preparation of a field study. My experience has been that anyone confused about distinctions between ethnography and field study would be well advised to select the latter, more commonly used term.

A thoughtful perusal of this bibliography and an examination of some of the sources may do much to dispel the fieldwork "mystique." However, the process of transforming the observations and information contained in one's field notes and journals (the customary repository of the field anthropologist) or of transforming one's data (the term more widely employed in sociological and educational research) into a completed account remains elusive, at least to the extent that
those who have produced successful studies have been able to provide (or reveal) guidelines to assist others.

Precisely because it is time and energy consuming, fieldwork has an inherent problem in the ever present danger of becoming an end in itself, resulting in volumes of notes that are never translated and organized into a form where they are available and useful to others. Perhaps the distinction between the successful fieldworker and the successful fieldworker-scholar is that the latter grapples constantly, agonizingly, and at least partially effectively with the problem of relating the information he is gathering to the information he will himself generate and convey. Malinowski's useful concept of the "foreshadowed problem" in fieldwork might be expanded to include every fieldworker's own critical problem: How am I going to use the information I am acquiring?

The problem of being able to organize and synthesize is especially acute with the kind of unfocused note-taking sometimes associated with "doing" participant-observation. Employed as the single technique for studying formal educational settings, participant-observation has some severe limitations. It is virtually impossible not to be a participant-observer to some extent in a geographically distant cross-cultural setting, because one not only conducts research but
must also conduct his life there. Conversely, it is very difficult to be an effective participant-observer in a school unless the researcher elects to occupy one of the limited number of statuses available for active participation. Furthermore, people do not usually "live" in schools. Indeed, one of the perennial criticisms of formalized education is that it so easily becomes divorced from real life. Thus the participant-observer in a school has limited opportunity to participate even tokenly in what is going on, and his own experience with the institution may preclude his being a keen observer in a setting where most everything is already familiar. Therefore, one may be well-advised to draw widely from the diversity of research techniques suggested here and to de-emphasize reliance on participant-observation, a method developed for settings where there is opportunity for genuine involvement and the likelihood of finding patterns of behavior sufficiently different from one's own to enhance the possibility of recognizing them. Anthropologist Clyde Kluckhohn summed up the problem succinctly when he observed in *Mirror for Man* that it would hardly be fish who discovered the existence of water.

Acknowledgement is owed a number of former graduate students and present colleagues who have contri-
buted sources and annotations to the bibliography in its present form or who helped identify sources for prior editions. In mimeographed form earlier versions of the bibliography have been made available by the Center for Educational Policy and Management at the University of Oregon and by its predecessor, the Center for the Advanced Study of Educational Administration. It was also distributed as Exchange Bibliography #300 by the Council of Planning Librarians (P. O. Box 229, Monticello, Illinois 61856) in 1972. For the present opportunity to revise it once again and to make it available to an even wider group of potential users I am grateful for the help and encouragement of Professor Marion Rice and the Anthropology Curriculum Project.

Eugene, Oregon
May, 1975

Harry F. Wolcott
Adams, R. N., and J. J. Preiss

This excellent collection of readings is organized into two main sections. Part I is concerned with research relations (within the research group itself, between researcher and client, between researcher and informant) and with the behavior of researchers and informants. Part II deals with categories of data analysis and field research techniques. An extensive bibliography is included.

Agar, Michael

Both this brief paper and the larger study of urban America heroin addicts on which it draws provide a model and illustration of the detailed and careful work in frame elicitation and sorting techniques included in the "new ethnography" or "ethnosciencer approach.

Aresnberg, C.

Armstrong, Robert G.

In resolving his own problem of how simultaneously to provide description and analysis of a social event Armstrong also provided a useful and somewhat different model for organizing an account by dividing each page into two vertical columns, one containing the descriptive narrative, the other his explanation and analysis of what was occurring.

Babchuk, Nicholas

Barnes, J. A.
1963 Some Ethical Problems in Modern Fieldwork. British Journal of Sociology 14:118-134.
The author is concerned with the scope of a field study from preparation to write-up. Drawing on his own experience he relates the methods for making contact with the area and with particular individuals. The focus is on the day-to-day activities of a fieldworker and the degree of involvement permissible to gain necessary acceptance and still maintain an objective stance. Modern fieldwork is "an attempt to understand, by close and direct contact, how a living community works, and what are the beliefs, norms, and values by which it lives" (p. 56).

Becker, Howard S.

Becker, Howard S. and Blanche Geer

The initial statement in this article, that data gathered by participant observation "gives us more information about the event under study than data gathered by any other sociological method," became highly controversial and began a series of rejoinders and affirmations between Becker and Geer and sociologist Martin Trow. Becker and Geer note the shortcoming of the interview approach when used as the only source of information about events which have occurred elsewhere and are described by informants. Because the respondent in an interview may report information through "distorting lenses," the interviewer has no way of knowing whether that information is true or not (see Dean and Whyte in this bibliography). Participant observation makes it possible to check description against fact and make note of systematic distortions which interviews might not uncover.

In a subsequent rejoinder Martin Trow pointed out that the problem under investigation should dictate the method of investigation; participant-observation
is not necessarily superior to interviewing. Reviewing how ordinary social life may inhibit the expression of sentiments, Trow points out the usefulness of the interview to obtain information which respondents might not volunteer while under group pressure. (See also Becker and Geer’s answer to Trow in Human Organization 17, 1958.)


This book is widely known not only in the field which it studied (medicine) but also in the study of occupations and careers, reference group theory, and the purposes for which it is selected here, field methodology. The research problem was to determine what effects medical school had upon medical students other than to give them a technical education. Fieldwork was initiated upon a social-psychological theoretical framework. The authors note: "field notes depended in part upon the hypotheses we were attempting to explore, but our field notes also contain material not bearing on any hypothesis at the time, on the premise that we might later wish to construct hypotheses on points which we were not yet aware." Since the effect which the medical school had on its students was viewed as occurring within a social system, participant observation was a highly useful tool in discerning the systematic relationships between many kinds of phenomena. In an attempt to overcome such frequently noted methodological limitations of participant-observation as the lack of quantifiability and the lack of data to support generalizations, the authors develop a tabular form for summarizing information on perspectives. This format contrasts the ratio of directed to volunteered statements, on the assumption that the higher the ratio of volunteered to directed statements and the higher the number of statements volunteered in the presence of others rather than to the observer alone, the greater the confidence that can be placed in the inferences drawn. Formal interviews were used in order to check some of the major conclusions against a new body of data gathered in different ways, and to gather certain types of data which could be readily quantified.
Specific techniques and devices used for the collection of field data in intensive cultural studies are: (1) participant observation, (2) use of the local language, (3) the interview, (4) personal documents, (5) direct observation of behavior, (6) statistics, and (7) psychological tests. Each technique is briefly discussed in terms of its appropriateness for gathering specific information.

Three questions are explored with regard to methodology: (1) What problems are to be solved in the study? (2) Should the problems be formulated in advance of the actual study, or should they be developed as the study proceeds? (3) What kinds of logical principles, theories, and general concepts shall be used? The questions are discussed in terms of the interests of the investigator, the location of the community, and the particular scientific field in which the study is done. Included is a discussion of the nature of the conceptual tools used in describing and analyzing culture and a diagram of a descriptive cultural study.

A review of literature is presented under the topical headings community studies, urbanization studies, applied anthropology, national character, multi-ethnic field research, and socialization. Attention is also given to analytic comparison and systematic ethnography.

The choice of field methods is not an either/or proposition. An adequate field study is not conducted on the basis of a single technique gathering a single kind of information; survey methods enable the investigator to define the nature and extent of the various cultural traits and permit an analysis of social differentiation, while intensive methods (observation, open-ended interviewing, etc.) permit the deepening of knowledge of the "social facts."

Berreman, Gerald D.

Bogdan, Robert

If there is a need for a beginner's guide to participant observation, surely this little (71 page) monograph meets it, especially for sociologically oriented observers planning a foray into some almost-familiar institutional setting. The book also subtly reinforces the fact that the mystique surrounding participant observation is due much more to problems of analysis and writing than to simply being on the scene and taking notes. Yet Bogdan provides helpful hints for these steps as well as for planning and doing the observing. A ten-page bibliography and excellent footnotes review most of the sociological classics of this genre.

Brandt, Richard

This detailed analysis of observational techniques is addressed essentially to educators interested in "naturalistic research."

Braroe, N. W. and G. L. Hicks
1967 Observations on the Mystique of Anthropology. Sociological Quarterly 8:173-186 (Spring). (See also a rejoinder by A. S. Wilke, 9:400-405, Summer 1968.)

Brookover, Linda and Kurt W. Back

Bruyn, Severyn T.

Burling, Robbins
Drawing an analogy between the work of the ethnographer and of the linguist, Burling provides a check against the tendency to become too self-conscious about research techniques per se by reminding that the "rules" of a grammar and, by extension, of a culture, "are justified by their predictive utility, not by the procedure used in working them out." As a linguist he also questions what he feels to be the unnecessary polarization of the emic vs. etic approach.

Burnett, Jacquetta H.


Complete annotations make this comprehensive bibliography an invaluable guide for locating what has been accomplished to date in the anthropology of education.

Chagnon, Napoleon A.

Chagnon's widely-read account of the "fierce" Yanomamo of South America now has this detailed and forthright companion in the Holt, Rinehart and Winston series, Studies in Anthropological Method.

Collier, John, Jr.

Cusick, Philip A.

At no time does author Cusick claim to have provided an anthropological account of the relatively small number of students of one high school's senior class where he spent six months conducting this participant-observation study. Yet his account is straightforward, honest and informative. It is also an excellent study for examining the realities of the school setting as a place for genuine involvement in fieldwork.

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Davidson, R. Theodore
1974 Chicano Prisoners, The Key to San Quentin.

The author of this study seems to lack faith in the power of his own descriptive account and in the ability of his reader to remember what he has already been told. Nevertheless, the work itself, a description of prisoner culture in California's San Quentin, provides a fascinating model of an ethnographic account based on fieldwork in an institutional setting and an example of what anthropologists attend to in their research that sets it clearly apart from other approaches.

Dean, John P.

Dean, John P. and William F. Whyte

The authors note the susceptibility of the interview technique to a variety of distortions. Informants' reports on subjective data must be viewed within the framework of ulterior motives, bias to spontaneity, and a desire to please the interviewer. Responses to objective data must consider implausibility, the unreliability of the informant as an accurate reporter, and knowledge of the informant's mental set. Taken in this context, it is the responsibility of the interviewer not only to ask questions but to recognize possible distortion and to account for its consequences.

Dollard, John
1935 Criteria for the Life History. Yale University Press.

Eggan, Fred

Filstead, William H., ed.
1970 Qualitative Methodology. Chicago: Markham Publishing Company.
A collection of readings that includes several of the articles reported separately in this bibliography.

Foster, George M.  

Frake, Charles O.  

Freilich, Morris, ed.  

Furnea, Elizabeth Warnock  
An autobiographical account of fieldwork in contemporary Iraq from the perspective of the anthropologist’s wife and co-researcher.

Glaser, Barney G. and Anselm Strauss  
The authors feel that sociologists have been pre-occupied with the verification of theory rather than the generation of theory, and that this process has tended to stultify research. They argue the case for an inductive approach whereby theory is derived from data. The heart of grounded theory revolves around two basic concepts: comparative analysis and theoretical sampling. Although they stress the importance of qualitative research, quantitative research is not ignored. Once the theory is generated, the nature of the problem should dictate whether qualifying or quantifying procedures should be used to further test that theory.
Gold, Raymond L.  
1958 Roles in Sociological Field Observations.  

Gold offers a four-fold typology of field observations and notes the advantages and disadvantages of each. In essence, Gold has proposed a research design for observation in which the threats to each design can be anticipated beforehand. Gold's typology describes a continuum from complete participant to complete observer, with the participant-as-observer lying between the extremes.

Gussow, Zachary  
1964 The Observer-Observed Relationship as Information about Structure in Small-Group Research.  

Neither the title of this article nor the journal in which it appears provides an adequate clue that this is a very useful methodological discussion based on research involving an anthropologist in studying the effects of different school environments on fourth-grade children.

Gutkind, Peter C. W.  

Hall, E. T.  
1963 A System for the Notation of Proxemic Behavior.  

Hammond, Phillip E., ed.  

Hanna, W. J.  

Henry, Jules  
1960 A Cross-cultural Outline of Education. Current

Henry's outline suffers occasionally for not developing major points in sufficient depth and more often for suggesting attention to details that seem tangential to the educational process. However, no one has yet published a better outline. Henry's elaboration of the major points makes this contribution especially valuable to the literature on cross-cultural studies of education, as well as a gallant effort at identifying critical aspects for consideration by anthropological field workers interested in education as a formal and social process.

Herskovits, Melville J.

A succinct statement on methodology. Herskovits makes explicit the difference between utilizing field methods within a societal context and a cultural context. He points out that since there is no single problem there can be no single method. Acknowledging the trend toward increased quantification in ethnography, he notes the vagaries of cultural differences which sometimes mitigate against quantification.

Hilger, Sister M. Inez

Fifty-five pages of questions cover every subject from talcum to taboos that a fieldworker might want to investigate in studying child life from the prenatal period to puberty rites.

Homans, George C.

This book is based on an examination of earlier field studies made by different researchers. Homans analyzes both the methodologies and the results of the studies, although the emphasis is on analysis and much of the methodological critique is implicit.


Because the articles here all deal with research in urban settings, including some institutionalized ones, the book may be helpful to researchers in education. It may be of interest to point out that anthropologist T. R. Williams, reviewing the book in the American Anthropologist (Vol. 73, No. 6, December 1971, pp. 1444-1445) noted that only one article (Liebow's) actually discusses participant observation as a research method. Williams states, "The work suffers from the editor's misperception of the differences between participant observation as a formal method of gathering data and contextual analysis as a method of analyzing and presenting data."


Many printings later, Junker's little monograph remains a classic.


These authors examine ethnographic work from the perspective of the conceptual framework that the
fieldworker takes to the research site and discuss how theoretical orientations influence what one looks at and how the analysis proceeds.

Khleif, Bud B.  

Kimball, Solon T.  


Kimball, Solon T. and James B. Watson, eds.  

This book contains a variety of accounts by and about senior anthropologists concerning their fieldwork and their professional careers.

Kinsey, Alfred C., Wardell B. Pomeroy, and Clyde E. Martin  

Particular attention is given here to methodological problems of making contacts, establishing rapport, and keeping confidences. Numerous technical devices are discussed to provide validity and reliability to information gathered in an interview. The authors observe: "Learning how to meet people of all ranks and levels, establishing rapport, sympathetically, comprehending the significance of things as others view them, learning to accept their attitudes and activities without moral, social or esthetic evaluation, being interested in people as they are and not as someone else would have them, learning to see the reasonable bases of what at first glance may appear to be most unreasonable behavior, developing a capacity to like all kinds of people and thus to win their esteem—these are the elements to be mastered by one who would gather human statistics."
Kluckhohn, Clyde

"The most general question but one of crucial importance is: what sort of Hopi or Navaho or Kwakiutl will tell his life story to a white man?" (p. 99). Emphasis is directed to the need for a description of the informant's moods, mannerisms, and the context in which the interview is taking place. A general outline for presenting materials is provided to systematize the format for life histories in general. "The life history is, after all, the best available method of describing the continuity of human personality within a particular culture, and of making vivid the fact that different personalities, even in the same society, have different continuities." (p. 162).

Kluckhohn, Florence R.

In this frequently cited (but now rather dated) article, the author states that the purpose of participant observation is to reduce an outsider's distortion of community behavior to a minimum. She notes some disadvantages in participant observation: (1) the role assumed may limit the range of observation, (2) one must sacrifice a certain type of uniformity in data, and (3) it may be difficult to maintain objectivity. She concludes that, "the investigator, forced to analyze his own roles, is, on the one hand, less misled by the myth of complete objectivity in social research and, on the other, more consciously aware of his own biases" (p. 343).

Kroeber, A. L.

In a section on methodology, Kroeber presents a series of articles concerned with the applicability of differing techniques with field methodology. One of these articles, "Psychological Techniques:
Projective Tests in Field Work," by Henry and Spiro, is concerned with the use of such devices as Rorschach, Thematic Apperception, and free drawings in conjunction with field work. These projective tests have been used, according to the authors, because they generally measure the personality as a whole, are not "culture bound," enable the investigator to gain data from larger numbers of persons, and are short and easy to administer.

A second relevant statement is found in Oscar Lewis' "Controls and Experiments in Field Work." Controls in field work fall under a variety of categories, one of which is the training of the observer to be cognizant of biases and values. Additional controls can be instituted through sampling procedures, photography, relevant economic scales, and survey techniques. Lewis notes that one of the most useful procedures to increase the reliability of anthropological field research is the restudy procedure, somewhat similar to the "test-retest" method in experimental studies.


The life history is a valuable tool for gaining psychological insight into individuals when more than a descriptive account is desired. It is important to keep a detailed record of the context of an interview. The reliability of sampled data may be checked by (1) observation, (2) checking the account of one informant against another, and (3) asking the same questions of the same informant repeatedly over a long period of time. The personality of the investigator can play an important role in the kinds of material that will be gathered and in what subsequently happens to them. "A common pool of comparable life history data from several disciplines as well as from all cultures would provide a staggering amount of valuable data in a relatively short time, data of the most basic kind, from which could easily be extracted information pertaining to common as well as specialized interests."

Lewis, Oscar

Lutz, Frank W. and Lawrence Iannaccone

The introduction states that this is a "highly theoretical, but also a how-to-do-it book." The book has sections on power relationships within the school organization and on field study methodology within the school as a formal organization. The authors make a strong case for the use of a theoretical base in field methodology, relying heavily upon Malinowski's now classic statement that "pre-conceived ideas are pernicious in any scientific work but fore-shadowed problems are first revealed to the observer by his theoretical studies." The authors draw heavily from the works of many others who have practiced field methodology; thus the book provides a succinct review of many studies and incorporates them into the methodology required for the study of educational organizations.

Malinowski, Bronislaw
1922 Argonauts of the Western Pacific. New York: George Routledge and Sons, Ltd.

Although Malinowski probably was never able to practice what he preached (see the article by M. Wax, 1972), his discussion of fieldwork remains a classic in anthropology. He states, "The first and basic ideal of ethnographic fieldwork is to give a clear and firm outline of the social constitution, and disentangle the laws and regularities of all cultural phenomena from the irrelevances." Each phenomenon ought to be studied through the broadest range possible of its concrete manifestations by an exhaustive survey of detailed examples. The goal of the ethnographer is "to grasp the natives' point of view, his relation to life, to realize his vision of his world."

Mandelbaum, David G.
In this comprehensive and useful article Mandelbaum presents a review of life history studies in the social sciences, provides three procedural suggestions for the collection and analysis of life history data (dimensions of a person's life, turning points in his life, and his characteristic means of adaptation), and illustrates the applicability of his scheme in an examination of the life history of Gandhi. The article reminds the fieldworker not only of the usefulness of life history in ethnography but of the alternative of organizing his account by making some particular individual the focus of it.


The 32 selections reprinted in this paperback include many of the early articles referred to separately in this bibliography, especially those more sociologically-oriented. An excellent collection.


See especially Chapter II, "How an Anthropologist Writes." The chapter is more broadly methodological than its title suggests, but it outlines some issues of central relevance to the cultural anthropologist both in the field and back at his desk.


The editor of this issue (Eliot Chapple) felt compelled to comment (p. 4) on both the style and the
problem of "obviousness" in social research in a factory. He notes, "Readers of this journal will surely recognize that Dr. Miller thoroughly enjoyed writing his account of the perils that lie in wait for unwary scientific observers, and if his tongue occasionally ventures in the direction of his cheek, so much the better." Essentially Miller addresses the question of whether one holds tightly to his research techniques and hypotheses until he finds the right organization in which to apply them or holds tightly to his commitment to learn about organizations and draws out his techniques and hypotheses accordingly.


Chapters discuss and illustrate network analysis. See also Barnes, 1968.


The Outline consists of categories of elements of culture, each broken into its major facets, with a brief description of accompanying conditions. Though not designed as a field manual, the Outline may be a useful aid in the field. It calls attention to a wide range of cultural, social, and environmental phenomena that provide leads for inquiry that might otherwise be overlooked. It may also provide a useful system for classification of field notes.


The chapters selected for this compendium (1017 pages) on methodology reflect the intent of the editors to press toward theory-testing and theory-construction rather than the analysis and presentation of ethnographic facts. Their concern is with problems that tend to promote explanation applicable across cultures. A long and useful section devoted to aspects of the field work process emphasizes contributions reflective of the trend toward a more rigorous methodology—research and experimental design, sampling and survey research in fieldwork—as well as the emphasis throughout the entire book on comparative and cross-cultural method.

Nash, Dennison

Nash, Dennison and Ronald Wintrob

The authors examine the trend in which fieldworkers have come to recognize and report on their own feelings and personal relationships during fieldwork. The article is accompanied by comments from 15 anthropologists and a useful fieldwork bibliography.

Pelto, Pertti J.

Powdermaker, Hortense

Powdermaker provides an excellent and highly readable account of the methods of the cultural anthropologist by reviewing her own professional career in terms of her four major fieldwork experiences.

Read, Kenneth E.

Anthropologist Read's highly personal account of fieldwork in the New Guinea Highlands hardly provides a model for participant-observation in schools.
The purpose of including the book here is to illustrate what anthropologists mean by participant-observation and thus to suggest, by implicit contrast, how unlikely one is to achieve a comparable level of involvement studying in formal educational settings.

Roethlisberger, F. J. and William J. Dickson  
1940 Management and the Worker. Harvard University Press.

This field study is the prototype of systematic management studies in the United States. The authors explain in detail their approach and problems of observation in the study. Although somewhat "dated," few studies of this kind have been so detailed in their observation and explanation of methodology. Some scattered annotated footnotes, but no formal bibliography.

Royal Anthropological Institute  

This volume continues to serve as the ethnographer's Bible. The reference is too important to ignore but probably more useful to fieldwork of broad scope in traditional settings than for field studies in formal education.

Schusky, Ernest L.  

Ethnographers have customarily attended to collecting genealogical data in the course of their fieldwork, and their procedures for doing so are rather unique to anthropology. Inclusion of this little manual in the bibliography may also help to dramatize the difference between traditional fieldwork and a field study conducted in schools. At the same time, the few researchers who have included questions about kin ties in schools have usually been surprised with the extent and importance of personal networks operating within formal institutions.

Schwartz, Morris S. and Charlotte G. Schwartz  
Participant observation is described as the process of registering, interpreting, and recording. The authors see two primary sources of distortion of information. One is the anxiety in the observer which occurs while he is collecting data. The second may be seen as bias which operates to shape what the observer sees as well as how he sees it. The greatest defense against the intrusion of bias is recognition of the bias, exploration into its ramifications, and a recognition that such a search is a never-ending process.

Scott, W. Richard

Scott identifies many of the problems confronting an observer in formal organizations. He emphasizes that it is important for the observer studying a group to remain as impartial as possible in relation to the members of the group, although he also notes that complete neutrality on all issues is unnecessary and in fact undesirable. Scott also discusses the "bias-correcting actions of workers" (similar to Becker's tabulation procedure): if a respondent makes a statement in the presence of other members of the group, they will tend to correct him if that statement is in error.


Scott's review is divided into three sections: Special Characteristics of Field Studies in Organizations; Varieties of Field Research; and Types of Data and Techniques of Data Collection. The use of sampling procedures within the field method context has always posed sticky problems for researchers. Scott reviews the use of saturation and dense samples, but also notes that rigid sampling procedures may violate the very nature of the field approach, namely to "organize social data so as to preserve the unitary character of the social object being studied." Scott's article presents a succinct and comprehensive overview of the application of field methodology to the study of any organization. While it presents no answers, it does offer a wide variety of possibilities which may help to strengthen the conclusions reached.
Sherif, Muzafer and Carolyn Sherif, eds.
1964 Relationship in the Social Sciences. Chicago
Aldine. (See particularly the chapter by Raymond
W. Mack.)

Sindell, Peter S.
1969 Anthropological Approaches to the Study of
Education. Review of Educational Research 39:
593-605.

Sjoberg, Gideon, ed.
1967Ethics, Politics, and Social Research.
Cambridge, Massachusetts: Schenkman Publishing
Company. (Reviewed in American Anthropologist
71:796-798, August 1969.)

Smith, Louis M.
1967 The Micro-ethnography of the Classroom.
Psychology in the Schools 4:216-221.

Spencer, R. F., ed.
1954 Method and Perspective in Anthropology.
Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Spindler, George D., ed.
1970 Being an Anthropologist: Fieldwork in Eleven

1974 Education and Cultural Process: Toward an
Anthropology of Education. New York: Holt,
Rinehart and Winston. (See especially Part IV,
"Approaches to the Study of Schools and Class-
rooms.")

Spiro, Melford E.
1965 Context and Meaning in Cultural Anthropology.

Spradley, James P. and David W. McCurdy
1972 The Cultural Experience: Ethnography in
Complex Society. Chicago: Science Research
Associates.

The authors describe the "new ethnography" (ethno-
sience) and illustrate the approach with 12 student
papers, three of which deal specifically with school settings in urban America.

Vidich, Arthur J.

Vidich, Arthur J. and Joseph Bensman

Vidich and Bensman note that sources of error in informant response occur because of: (1) purposeful intent, (2) temporary role of the respondent, (3) psychology of the respondent, and (4) involuntary error. They note that the fieldworker must not be deceived by surface meanings nor be too anxious to confirm his theories. The value of the field interview is its potential ability to discover the myriad of situational factors which enter into any one response, thus allowing the observer the opportunity to note the validity of some responses over others. Combined with survey techniques, the distortions due to impressionism can (hopefully) be avoided.

Vidich, Arthur J., Joseph Bensman, and Maurice R. Stein

Vidich, Arthur J. and Gilbert Shapiro

In this comparative study the field worker provided eleven descriptive groupings of prestige, ranging from "non-entities" to those highest in money, prestige, and political control. The survey consisted of five sociometric-type queries which yielded a significant numerical correspondence of results to those obtained by the field worker. The authors conclude that what the survey method gains in representative coverage of a population is probably of no greater methodological significance than the increased depth of understanding and interpretation possible with participant observation techniques. The two techniques are not competitive, but in the well-conducted community study will be complementary. The survey provides representative data which are given meaning by the anthropological observer.
Wax, Murray

Wax suggests that although Malinowski's experiences "led to the discovery of intensive participant-observer fieldwork," his own research techniques were largely confined to observation and interrogation and in fact led him to acquire "a poor understanding of the Trobrianders."

Wax, Rosalie H.

n.d. Fieldwork as Education. Unpublished mss, Washington University, St. Louis, 74 pp. mimeographed.

Drawing upon data from 43 interviews, Wax documents the importance of fieldwork as "an extraordinary and even a unique learning experience" in the professional and personal life of the fieldworker himself.

Webb, Eugene J., Donald T. Campbell, Richard D. Schwartz and Lee Sechrest

Weick, Karl E.

Whiting, J. W. M.


The problems of devising a theory and method prior to going into the field are revealed here through
Numerous points are made regarding the modifications necessary to fit particulars into the framework of the culture under study. Of special interest are the problems of selection and interviewing of informants.

Whyte, William Foote

See the author's discussion of the fieldwork for this study in the "methodological appendix" written especially for this second edition.

Williams, Thomas Rhys

Wolcott, Harry F.

See especially Chapter I. "A Principal Investigator in Search of a Principal," a discussion of fieldwork considerations in making the study.


The article discusses the influence that one's contacts in the course of fieldwork can have on the research itself, with the ever-present chance that,
consciously or not, his interests may be directed away from the people he intended to study. (Few researchers in schools have acknowledged how the adults who have assisted or allowed their studies may have guided them ever so subtly away from opportunities to inquire into student "culture.")


Some of the issues encountered in considering or actually using an ethnographic approach to research in formal education settings are explored under four criterion headings concerning the appropriateness of the research problem, of the researcher himself, of the research "climate," and of expectations for the completed study. The remainder of this special issue of Human Organization consists entirely of articles contributing to the ethnography of schooling.

Zelditch, Morris, Jr.

Three strategies are fundamental to a field study according to the criteria established here: enumeration to document frequency data; participant observation to describe incidents; and informant interviewing to learn institutionalized norms and statuses. Criteria according to which the "goodness" of a procedure may be defined are: (1) informational adequacy, including accuracy, precision, and completeness of data, and (2) efficiency, the cost per added input of information.

This article emphasizes the multi-faceted but nonetheless structured approach of a field study and the unique contribution made possible by utilizing each of the three strategies described. The perspective is distinctly a sociological one, providing a useful contrast with many of the anthropological accounts of fieldwork cited throughout this bibliography and an extremely relevant guide for embarking upon research in a formal institution like a school.