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CHAPTER 2

□ Cultural Process and Ethnography: An Anthropological Perspective

George and Louise Spindler

PART 1 Changes Exemplified in Six Collections, 1955–1987

This essay is divided into three parts: (1) a brief analysis of the changes over time in the ethnography of education as exemplified by six collections edited by George Spindler or by George and Louise Spindler from 1955 to 1987; (2) a discussion of the ingredients for a good ethnography of schooling; and (3) an exposition of relevant approaches developed by the authors in a long-term research project in Schoenhausen, Germany, and Roseville, Wisconsin, from 1968 to the present.

The mandate by the editors has allowed us the freedom to draw from our own work as an example of “classic” (editors’ term) educational ethnography. We are not so sure about the “classic” properties of our studies, nor are we convinced that our approach is “traditional” (editors’ term). What we are sure of is that what we are going to write about is what we have done over the past 40 years as anthropologists deeply interested in the educational process. We have changed and developed over time, and we are doing some of the same things now that we were doing in the 1950s, but a lot that we weren’t. Though we will avoid an autobiographical stance, there is unavoidably a personal element in all of this that we hope will be useful and not merely evidence of egotism.

Six Collections

George Spindler began working in the schools as an anthropologist on a research project directed by Dr. Robert Bush, School of Education, Stanford University, in 1950. This project included case studies of teachers, children, and administrators and was responsible for bringing him (G.S.) into a life-long relationship with education. *Education and Anthropology* appeared in 1955. His next edited collection, *Education and Culture: Anthropological Approaches*, appeared in 1963 and combined a mix of reprints from the 1955 volume and new ones. The third volume appeared in 1974, *Education and Cultural Process: Toward an Anthropology of Education. Doing the Ethnography of Schooling: Educational Anthropology in Action* appeared in 1982, and *Interpretive Ethnography of Education at Home and Abroad*, edited by both Spindlers, appeared in 1987. *Education and Cultural Process* appeared in the second edition in 1987, and *Doing the Ethnography of*

Schooling was reprinted with a new Foreword in 1988. Together, these volumes constitute a record of the development of the field of educational anthropology and of educational ethnography as construed by cultural anthropologists. Because most of the articles are not written by the Spindlers, they afford a reasonably good cross-section of changes in the field.

Education and Anthropology

The conference that resulted in *Education and Anthropology* (G. Spindler, 1955a) was held from June 9 to 14, 1954, with Carnegie Foundation support, in a Carmel Valley hideaway and brought twelve cultural anthropologists and as many professional educators into a face-to-face situation for 4 days. They discussed papers prepared by George Spindler, Bernard Siegel, John Gillin, Solon Kimball, Cora DuBois, C. W. M. Hart, Dorothy Lee, Jules Henry, and Theodore Brameld. Margaret Mead prepared a summary entitled “The Anthropologist and the School as a Field” and Alfred Kroeber commented on the conference as a whole. This conference and the volume issuing from it have often been cited as the beginning of educational anthropology and the ethnography of education. This is not entirely accurate because various workers such as Solon Kimball, Jules Henry, and Margaret Mead were in the field before the conference and, in fact, the “anthropology of education” can be said to have started with Edgar Hewett in 1904 in an article in *American Anthropologist*. The appearance of this volume did, however, provide a substantial platform for the launching of serious anthropological research in the schools and credited the anthropology of education as a legitimate subdiscipline. Though the book was published 35 years ago, this legitimation both in education and in departments of anthropology has been slow to develop. It is probably correct to say that most professionals working as educational anthropologists feel themselves to be quite marginal in both disciplinary contexts even today.

Ethnography is listed only once in the index for *Education and Anthropology*, and that was in the context of the overview by George Spindler of the use of cross-cultural materials furnished by ethnography, not from the ethnography of education as such. In many cases throughout the volume, ethnography was clearly taken for granted as a source of information, both on other cultures and on our own. However, no one thought of “educational ethnography” or “the ethnography of schooling” as *special fields*. The emphasis throughout the book was on concepts and problems: models for the analysis of the

educative process in American communities, the school in the context of the community, learning intercultural understanding, contrasting prepubertal and postpubertal education, discrepancies in the teaching of American culture, education and communications theory, the meeting of educational and anthropological theory, roles for anthropologists and educators, the school as a field of study for the anthropologist, and the educational consequences of the Supreme Court 1954 decision on segregation—*Brown v. the Board of Education*.

It all seemed so clear then. Anthropologists learned about culture by studying the cultures of others. They could put the insights thus gained in interpretations of education and schooling to use in their own (and other) societies. In this way, anthropology furnished the materials for a cultural critique. Education was seen as cultural transmission and as a major instrument in cultural survival, but the learning of culture, the school and the social structure, the exercise of power, the effect of culturally based values on teacher perceptions, the informal transmission of values, the roles of the school administrator and teacher, and American culture as a specific context for schooling were all considered relevant. There was a frank and unselfconscious eclecticism in both concept and method. There was also a clear, implicit understanding of what anthropology was and, thus, what it might do for, with, and in education. The volume is worth reading for the information it provides about the platform from which we have launched ourselves as well as for the feeling of both security and excitement that was in the air at the time.

Education and Culture

The term “ethnography” is not listed in the index of *Education and Culture: Anthropological Approaches* (1963). In the overview article by George Spindler, the anthropologist is not described as an ethnographer but, rather, as a consultant, as a researcher in education whose “greatest contribution” is the holistic approach to research and analysis, and as a teacher—making explicit the cultural assumptions of educators. Ethnography, however, serves as the implicit data base for studies carried out and written about by the authors. Jules Henry writes on attitude organization in elementary school classrooms and spontaneity and creativity in suburban classrooms. Dorothy Eggan writes on instruction and affect in Hopi cultural continuity. George Spindler analyzes personality, the sociocultural system, and education among the Menomini. Melford Spiro describes education in a communal village in Israel. Jack Fischer considers Japanese schools for the natives of Truk (Caroline Islands). And Bernard Siegel writes about

social structures, social change, and education in rural Japan. But no one talked about “ethnography” as such. It was taken for granted. The *problem* was the focus. All of the articles in this volume make for good reading. They are neither tedious, hung up on methodology, nor bound to single cases, except where appropriate. They are intellectually freewheeling and methodologically true to form. These studies employ structured and unstructured interview techniques, questionnaires, psychological tests, socioeconomic inventories, census reports, sociometric techniques, value-projective techniques—the whole range of procedures used in the social and behavioral sciences. Our field has always been methodologically eclectic. But underlying all of these usages is the constant attention to the flow of life around the participant-observer, the anthropologist, that gives meaning to the results of the specialized techniques. This basic approach to research in the field is very apparent in most of the chapters in *Education and Culture*. Jules Henry’s two chapters are models for what needs to be done in the application of anthropology to the analysis of educational processes in our own society. The fact that the commitment to direct observation is more apparent in the papers that deal with educational process in non-Western societies than with those at home is an indication that anthropologists had only begun their work in our own society.

A quotation from the introductory chapter in *Education and Culture* by George Spindler indicated what, apparently, needed to be done in the future. “Probably the most substantial contribution that anthropology could make to education would be the building of a body of case materials based on direct observation in a variety of educational situations, but most of this work remains to be done.” In the future volumes edited by the Spindlers, this development becomes clear.

Education and Cultural Process

Education and Cultural Process: Toward an Anthropology of Education (1974) is a departure from the first two books, both of which were essentially essay collections taking ethnography for granted but with some exceptions not presenting much direct ethnographic observation. In the 1974 collection, on ethnographic case studies are clearly the focus. John Singleton, in his paper on education as cultural transmission, distinguishes participant observation from other observational procedures and applies “these research perspectives to what I like to call ‘educational ethnography’.” He describes Harry Wolcott’s (1973) study of an elementary school principal, Richard King’s (1968) study of an Indian residential school in the Yukon, and Gary Rosenfeld’s (1971) study of a slum school in Harlem as outstanding examples

of this application. He might well have added his own *Nichu*, a case study of a Japanese elementary school (Singleton, 1967), as another good example as well as Richard Warren's (1971) study of education in Rebhausen, a German village. (Wolcott, King, Singleton, and Warren were all Spindler Ph.D.s in the emerging education and anthropology program at Stanford University.) Of 27 papers in this volume, 12 are explicitly ethnographic and focus on single cases. Of these 12, only McDermott, on achieving school failure, Spindler, on a case study of culturally defined adjustment and teacher perceptions, Schwartz and Merten, on the meaning of a sorority initiation ritual, and Wolcott, on the elementary school principal, report on schools in our own society.

The 1974 volume is clearly cross-cultural in character and pays more attention to other cultures than to our own. This may be one of the reasons why educators have been slow to accept the work by anthropologists of education as relevant to their concerns. Why worry about some other culture when you have so many problems in your own? Therein lies a dilemma. Anthropology without its cross-cultural perspective becomes a kind of poor sociology. Whatever insights anthropologists have been able to bring to the analysis of educational process have been derived in significant degree from a cross-cultural perspective. Much of the current work in educational anthropology lacks this explicit reference to a cross-cultural perspective and, in our opinion, is the poorer for it.

Education and Cultural Process contains the first explicitly "ethnographic" section ("Approaches to the Study of Schools and Classrooms [Part IV]") on ethnographic method. The four papers in this section diverge in various ways but have in common a concern for the role of the researcher-ethnographer. Richard King characterizes his role as that of "significant friend," and Harry Wolcott his role as "enemy." Both characterizations must be seen in the context of their articles to make full sense. But the concern with the role of the researcher indicates a growing awareness of the effect of researcher and situation on the results of any study involving human beings. This interaction is critical in the study of schooling for the anthropologist-ethnographer and is particularly conspicuous in the small community of the school and the classroom.

Doing the Ethnography of Schooling

Our next edited volume, *Doing the Ethnography of Schooling; Educational Anthropology in Action* (1982), is explicitly ethnographic throughout. Of the 15 papers in the book, 12 are based on ethnographic

research in school sites. Heath describes the problems of white teachers with black children in Trackton. Erickson and Mohatt describe participant structure in two classrooms of American Indian students. Varenne describes the symbolic expression of social interaction among American senior high school students. Gearing and Epstein do an ethnographic probe into the hidden curriculum in a working-class school. Hanna describes public social policy and the children's world in a desegregated magnet school. Finnan describes children's spontaneous play in an American school. Warren analyzes ethnic identity in two schools, one of them in the United States, the other in Mexico. Hart analyzes the social organization of reading in an elementary school.

This collection was developed in part as a response to a condition that had developed as educational ethnography became a fad. The book begins with a quote from a California State Department of Education official: "Anything anyone wants to do that has no clear problem, no methodology, and no theory, is likely to be called 'ethnography, around here.'" One of the major purposes of the volume was to show that anthropological educational ethnography did have clear problems and that it had both methodology and theory. The papers speak for themselves and, on the whole, successfully counter this negative perception.

One of the significant themes that emerges in the papers in this volume is the attention to the "hidden" curriculum, to the covert, tacit, or implicit cultural patterns that affect behavior and communication, particularly in face-to-face social interaction, and that are largely outside the consciousness of the actor. This focus is clear in most of the papers, although not a primary preoccupation in all. Some analysts refer this orientation to the influence of a paralinguistic model. The editorial commentary draws attention to the fact that covert culture, hidden postulates, dynamic themes, and the like were a primary preoccupation on the part of many anthropologists of the 1940s and that they did not draw from a paralinguistic model.

Interpretive Ethnography of Education

The next collection, *Interpretive Ethnography of Education at Home and Abroad* (1987) includes 19 papers, 14 of which are based on direct ethnographic evidence from single cases. Another three are about ethnographic methods, one of which, by Solon Kimball, is reprinted from the 1955 conference volume. The other two are by George and Louise Spindler on teaching and learning how to do the

ethnography of education and by Harry Wolcott on ethnographic intent, in which he tells us both what ethnography is and what it is not.

The editors take a strong position on education as cultural transmission. To quote from their first chapter:

We see education as cultural transmission, and of course cultural transmission requires cultural learning, so learning and transmission are separated only by convention. Further, we see that aspect of cultural transmission in which we are most interested—education in the broad sense, schooling in the narrower sense (including initiations, rites of passage, apprenticeships, as well as schools) as *calculated interventions* in the learning process. We are not interested in all learning that takes place as children grow into adults, get older, and finally die. We are interested in the learning that takes place, whether intended or unanticipated, as a result of calculated intervention. It is our unique subject matter as educational anthropologists and without a unique subject matter as well as a methodology, there is no discipline.

In retrospect, this statement seems to eliminate learning that is not a result of calculated intervention from the purview of anthropologist-ethnographers. It could reduce the anthroethnographers' attention to learning in peer groups or to the concomitant learning that is tangential to calculated intervention. This would be an unfortunate effect.

The rationale for the emphasis on cultural transmission is that this focus exploits anthropological expertise on sociocultural structure and process and a focus on learning puts the focus on the individual. It is all too easy to slip into a "blame the victim" interpretation if one emphasizes the individual learner and not the context and circumstances of learning. We have not yet found the proper position between these two possible polar positions—cultural transmission as calculated intervention and learning as individualized process. Theory in educational anthropology is still in a fairly raw state, although there is quite a bit of it. We will undoubtedly eventually work out this problem.

Interpretive Ethnography of Education continues to recognize the importance of comparative and cross-cultural work in the ethnography of education with papers by the Spindlers on Schoenhausen (Germany), a first-grade class in a French school by Katherine Anderson-Levitt, interethnic images in multicultural England by Paul Yates, and a paper by Norman Chance on Chinese education in a village setting.

In 1955, and even in 1963, we could take for granted that the cross-cultural perspective was basic to the whole structure of the discipline. Today we have to make a self-conscious, purposeful attempt to get such material included in a collection or any other publications

directed largely at educational ethnography. The contents of the quarterly *Anthropology and Education* indicate this to be the case as well. Few articles have been published in it over the past 5 years with an explicit cross-cultural frame of reference. The implications of this for the future of the anthropology of education and educational ethnography are significant. If anthropology does not contribute a cross-cultural perspective, then what does it contribute? Because ethnography has become a household word in most of the social science disciplines, it needs a distinguishing criterion for its anthropological subtype to avoid the possibility that we may simply disappear as a recognizable subdiscipline. Some feel this is happening to cultural anthropology as a whole. If so, it is not surprising that this may happen to educational anthropology. It will be one of the developments to watch over the next several years.

Other notable developments in the ethnography of education appearing in *Interpretive Ethnography of Education* include explicit attention, by David Fetterman, to evaluation done ethnographically; the appearance of the cultural knowledge framework, drawn initially from ethnoscience and cognitive anthropology, in a paper by Katherine Anderson-Levitt; the distinctions between voluntary and involuntary minorities and their responses to schooling in articles by John Ogbu and Margaret Gibson; the emphasis on transitions between home and school and the participation structures encountered in each in a paper by Concha Delgado-Gaitan; a focus on gender differences in the emergence of sexist behavior in four children's groups by Ruth Goode-nough; the combination of attention to participation structures and hidden curriculum in an article by Reba Page on lower track classes at a college preparatory high school; and the problems attendant to computer literacy as related to curricula by Susan Jungck. One has a clear sense that educational ethnography is reaching out into new areas and beginning to formulate some fairly clear theoretical paradigms.

Education and Cultural Process: Anthropological Approaches

The last volume to be included in this review is the second edition of *Education and Cultural Process: Anthropological Approaches*. There is a 13-year separation between the first edition of this volume (1974) and the new one (1987). It adds 14 new papers on a wide range of topics, including the anthropology of learning and the relevance of learning theory to an anthropology of education; the historical roots of

the subdiscipline; the relationships between anthropologists and educational institutions; primate behavior and the transition to human status; ethnography within a systematic methodological framework; the new immigrants and their patterns of academic success; controlled cross-cultural comparisons of schooling; comparative cognitive development in two countries; a comparative analysis of social bias in schooling; and the teaching of anthropology. The difference between *Education and Cultural Process* in both of its editions and the other collections is consistent in that both editions are about the relationships of anthropology to education and do not focus primarily on ethnography as a research tool. There seems to be a constant struggle between these two orientations. The "ethnography of education" framework has tended to supplant as well as supplement the broader concerns of an anthropology of education. The discipline has tended to become more case-centered and more exclusively ethnographic, in contrast to other methods such as surveys, questionnaires, archival research, and psychological tests, than anthropology itself has ever been.

The most important tension in theory represented in the 1987 edition of *Education and Cultural Process* is that between the cultural transmission focus and the learning of culture or cultural acquisition position referred to above. The dialogue is fairly well represented in a paper by Harry Wolcott on the anthropology of learning and a paper by George Spindler on cultural transmission in this volume; however, much remains to be said. A further contribution to the emerging debate is furnished by George and Louise Spindler in "Do Anthropologists Need Learning Theory?" (included in *Education and Cultural Process*). The article makes some move toward a combination of cultural transmission and cultural acquisition. In our course titled "Cultural Transmission," offered at Stanford since 1954, we have dealt with such concepts as concomitant learning, incidental learning, unintended learning, and latent learning. These concepts all take as a basic assumption that cultural transmission as intentional intervention is the starting point for analysis.

We acknowledge the credibility of the position taken by Wolcott and others who would start from the other end of the continuum between cultural transmission and the acquisition of culture, but we are concerned that starting thus will result in loss of the unique perspective that anthropology has furnished on the ways in which societies, using their cultural resources, organize the conditions and purposes of learning so that some things are learned and others are not. The situation is complicated by the fact that what is *not* to be learned

through intentional interference may be precisely that content which is included in the list of processes just provided above, such as concomitant learning, and that these kinds of learning provide much of the impetus for sociocultural change, because they are "subversive" in their relationship to explicit, mandated learning. The relationships between the purposeful organization of educational resources, as in cultural transmission, and the forms and processes of learning, including forms of "resistance to learning" will constitute, we believe, an important arena for significant theoretical debate in our subdiscipline. A careful, sensitive ethnography of teaching and learning will be of the greatest significance in the development of systematic theory in the arena defined by cultural transmission and in the acquisition of culture by the individual.

Conclusion to Part I

The conclusion we draw from this review of these collections is that educational ethnography is alive and well, moving energetically, but without a great deal of consistent theoretical guidance, in many directions. It has moved from a position of being taken for granted to a position where it tends to dominate the discipline for which it is a research tool. The emphasis on method will probably subside as stronger problem orientations and theoretical concerns reemerge in the field.

With this, we conclude the first part of this paper and proceed now to the second, which is intended as a somewhat informal and rather personal statement of what we think we do as ethnographers in schools and in other educational institutions or communities.

PART 2 Toward a Good Ethnography of Schooling

In Part 2, we are concerned with ethnography as a distinctive approach to the study of education-related phenomena.

Direct Observation

The requirement for direct, prolonged, on-the-spot observation cannot be avoided or reduced. It is the guts of the ethnographic approach. This does not always mean *participant* observation. While

participant observation is frequently possible in traditional anthropological fieldwork, it is particularly difficult, for most adults, in classrooms, playgroups, and other characteristic settings in the ethnography of schooling. One can participate in the teacher role, but it is difficult to participate as a child. Nevertheless, it is often desirable to go as far as one can to assume the role of the child. For example, in George Spindler's first study, in 1968, of the elementary school in Schoenhausen (reported in *Education and Cultural Process*; see Spindler, 1974b), he tried to do the work assignments the third- and fourth-graders were doing in class while also doing ethnography. This effort did help him to gain rapport with the children. They did their best to help him succeed as a pupil. He found it impossible at times to do ethnography and finish his lessons, so usually opted for doing the former. But he continued to go on hikes, climb towers, and eat lunch with the children. It was all useful—not so much because it made him empathic or gave him special insights into how it was to be a German child in the third grade but, rather, because it made him less threatening and more familiar. In our (G. & L. Spindler) recent restudies in 1977, 1981, and 1985 of the Schoenhausen school, we participated less and observed more. We don't know the children as well, but we know more about their behavior; we have more *data*. Of course the presence of two observers (of both sexes) helped. This in itself is important. We now have much more data on girls, which George Spindler did not obtain the first time around, and know much more about teachers, because they were all female (except for the Rektor) and the women related better to us as a couple than to G. S. as a lone man.

It is clear that the *role* of the ethnographer must vary from site to site. Kinds and intensity of participation that are appropriate, sex roles, obtrusiveness (participants may be more obtrusive than passive observers), and multiplicity of demands on the ethnographer all vary greatly. There are no hard and fast rules. A *sense* of what is appropriate and of what will probably work can be conveyed by training if the individual being trained already has well-developed sensitivities about social interaction, self–other relations, and obtrusiveness. Some people, who may be good people in numerous ways, do not possess these sensitivities and should not be ethnographers.

Above all else is the requirement that the ethnographer observe *directly*. No matter what instruments, coding devices, recording devices or techniques are used, the primary obligation is for the ethnographer to be there when the action takes place and to change that action as little as possible by his or her presence.

Sufficient Time on the Site

There is no hard and fast rule regarding what constitutes sufficient time on the site. Significant discoveries can be made in 2 weeks or less of ethnographic observation, but the *validity* of ethnographic observation is based on observation *in situ* that lasts long enough to permit the ethnographer to see things happen not once but repeatedly. Of course some things such as an earthquake, murder, fire, or mass hysteria are likely to occur only once during one's fieldwork, if at all, in which case we must do the best we can. But most of the things we are interested in happen again and again. We must observe these happenings often enough so that finally we learn nothing significant by their recurrence. A researcher knows when that point has been reached. Then one should observe still longer, to be sure that one's sense of that point in time is not premature nor the result of fatigue.

In the traditional anthropological fieldwork situation, we usually think of a year as being a reasonable, though a trifle truncated, period of time to execute the study of a complex community or phenomenon. Most well-received studies have taken longer than that. When George Spindler published his first ethnography on Menomoni acculturation in 1955 (G. Spindler, 1955b), he had worked for a total of 19 months with the Menomoni over a 6-year period. His German case study, *Burgbach: Urbanization and Identity in a German Village* (1973), is based on intermittent work over a 12-year period and the field studies of many students attending Stanford in Germany. Louise Spindler's (1962) *Menomoni Woman and Culture Change*, is based on intermittent fieldwork from 1948 to 1954. George Spindler's first case study of a single teacher in a fifth-grade classroom in a California school took 6 months, with two afternoon-long visits, on the average, each week. The first Schoenhausen publication (Spindler, 1974b) was based directly on 6 weeks of very intensive fieldwork in 1968, but we had researched the area (Remstal, Germany) previously in 1960 and 1967.

In contrast to the time required for a community study, if we had to state a desirable time for an adequate study of a single classroom, or even a significant segment of a single classroom, such as a reading group, we would say 3 months, with observation continuing for a significant portion of every school day. It would be better if this 3-month period were spread over an entire school year, because some things just do not happen during a 3-month period. Every one of the papers submitted for *Doing the Ethnography of Schooling* and *Interpretive Ethnography of Education* is based on at least 9 months of

direct observation. Some of them are based on observation over a 5- or 10-year period.

It must be emphasized that the relatively long periods of fieldwork mentioned here are for in-depth studies of significant and complex relationships where time is not limited by external conditions. Validity in ethnographic studies largely depends on an adequate period of study. At the same time, it is useless to deny that much of significance can be learned in short periods of time. Policy decisions usually have to be made on the basis of inadequate knowledge. A short-term ethnography may be better than no ethnography at all. But again, *validity* is not to be expected of short-term ethnography. This apparently is not generally understood. There are serious, or apparently to-be-taken as serious, ethnographic reports that are based on as little as 2 weeks of "ethnographic" study. Two weeks of reconnaissance can tell us a lot about the topography we would need to explore in-depth for a "real" ethnographic study, but 2 weeks is not sufficient time in which to do a serious cultural ethnography.

Volume of Recorded Data

Once upon a time, a prominent anthropologist stated at a national-level meeting of social scientists convened to discuss methodology and field equipment, "Just give us a pad of paper and a pencil and enough time . . ." We have gone well beyond this and now use video cameras, tape recorders, film cameras, time-lapse photography, and various eliciting instruments and coding devices. However, we cannot let technical devices do our work for us. What such devices collect are data that can be analyzed (and reanalyzed) later.

There is no technological substitute for the alert individual observer, with all senses unstoppered and sensitivities working at top efficiency. Of course this "turned on" observer is not simply collecting data impartially. A model of possible relationships exists in the mind of the ethnographer. And yet, there is no substitute for this observer, because only the human observer can be alert to divergences and subtleties that may prove to be more important than the data produced by any predetermined categories of observation or any instrument. True, the observer can keep on observing what is collected with tapes and visual devices long after the action is over, but these devices are so selective, so focused, that the *observer-in-situ* will often pick up what the camera or recorder leaves out. We have found it essential in our work with the Blood, Menomini, and Cree and in schools in Germany and America to collect as much visual and auditory material as possible

but to always have a human observer turned on. A worthwhile field trip is usually marked by a high volume of collected data—both extensive field notes and extensive recorded material. Each of the ethnographically based papers for our edited volumes represents only a fraction of the data collected for each project.

The good ethnographer is also a good collector of artifacts, products, documents—anything that can conceivably be related to the object of study. We tried to scoop up anything and everything we could from teachers and students in the German classroom and in Roseville, and if we couldn't take it with us, we'd take a picture of it. One collects documents, such as lesson plans, books, directives from higher echelons, newspaper articles, letters to the principal, texts of speeches, and student products such as artwork and essays. More of this kind of material probably exists than any reasonable researcher will ever get around to analyzing, because things one sees no use for within a year after the field study is finished often suddenly appear important 10 or 20 years later. In ethnography, one is always dogged with the realization that what is happening will never happen again. The categories of happenings repeat themselves endlessly in human affairs, yet each event is unique.

The Evolving Character of Ethnographic Study

At least in the initial stages of a project, the ethnographer should not work out specific hypotheses, coded instruments, or even highly specific categories of observation. The reason for this is to avoid predetermining what is observed and what is elicited from informants. The problem that one thinks one is going to study is usually not the one actually studied. This does not mean that the ethnographer enters the field *in vacuo*. It is precisely our point, as anthropological ethnographers, that ethnography is not merely a technique; it is a style of inquiry to which certain techniques (direct passive observation, participant observation, ethnographic interview, etc.) are germane, but, more importantly, it is a research process that starts with certain models of significant relationships. This model, for anthropological inquiry, is sociocultural and usually addresses cultural knowledge and social interaction in which cultural knowledge is used by actors (who may become informants but are often simply observed acting) to, as Ray McDermott has said, "make sense and feel good."

However, having stated that the ethnographer usually will not have the research problem and hypotheses all worked out beforehand, one is immediately assailed by doubts. Sometimes this is not true, and

no hard and fast rule can be applied indiscriminately. The situation is usually something like this: The anthropologist gets interested in a problem *area*, such as reading competence and social context, school experience as mediating traditional versus modernization requirements, sex role differentiation in textbook content and its interpretation in classroom behavior, styles of verbal interaction between white teachers and black children, play behavior as related to social class, ethnicity, and gender, and so forth. As a rule, the specific problem, with related hypotheses, is developed as the fieldwork proceeds. The ethnographer knows something interesting is going on out there and tries to relate to it. Eventually, the observations begin to fall into categories and be governed by models. Of course, this creates a predisposition to certain foci and sensitivities, but not as concretely or as narrowly as when everything possible is worked out beforehand. The model or frame of reference in anthropological ethnography is usually broad enough to encompass a wide range of phenomena. The important criterion is that the ethnographer should proceed in the initial stages of investigation with as open a mind as possible, attending to a wide variety of possible relationships. Soon one begins to formulate hypotheses, more often resembling serious hunches than formal hypotheses, that are explored and tested by continued, repetitive observation and data elicitation.

Instrumentation

Recorded observations and recorded elicited data (such as interviews) are the base grist for the ethnographic mill. Although there is nothing wrong with using instruments such as questionnaires, they are rarely used in the first stages of work. When instruments are employed, they should usually only be used in the following circumstances. (1) When the investigator already knows what is important to find out. In such a case, a "survey" procedure can be used in which responses are collected efficiently from a relatively large sample of respondents. (2) When they are developed specifically for the field site and the focus of inquiry is judged significant in that site. This means that if instruments are used in an ethnographic study they will usually be generated during the specific research study by the ethnographer. This has been the case for our instrumental activities inventory (Spindler and Spindler, 1965, 1989), values projection technique (G. Spindler, 1977; Spindler, Spindler, Trueba, and Williams, 1990), the expressive autobiographical interview (1970), and the various interpersonal rating scales used in the Roger Harker case study (Spindler *et al.*, 1990). Their form will be determined by the information collected to date.

Nevertheless, their results will be viewed with a certain suspicion and must continually be checked against one's direct observations and directly elicited information.

Quantification

By nature, ethnographic data are qualitative, but this does not mean they are inexact, ambiguous, or intuitive (although intuition is important in fieldwork and in data analysis—one must just know when one is being intuitive). The observations collected by Shirley Heath on white teachers questioning black children are very precise, as are the data collected by Susan Phillips on teaching procedures in law school classes and by Fred Gearing and Joseph Epstein on "learning to wait" to learn to read (all in *Doing the Ethnography of Schooling*). Concepts such as "climate," "atmosphere," and "ethos" seem to be often judged proper subjects for ethnographic inquiry, whereas "hardware" questions must be turned over to quantifiers. This is a profound misconception. No research procedure is more rigorous than ethnography.

There is nothing wrong with quantification, when it is necessary, and many ethnographers find it essential once they attempt to make statements about the distribution of phenomena beyond the relatively small group or single institution or social segment in which they are working. We (G. S. and L. S.) almost always report our research in published form with fairly substantial quantification and some form of inferential nonparametric statistics. Most of our colleagues who publish on the ethnography of schooling do not report quantified data nor describe them statistically. Quantification is not the beginning point, nor is it the ultimate goal. There are many phenomena that are better tested out in relation to a hypothesis by doing another, or several, ethnographic probes in different sites than by using instruments that will permit surveys of larger samples and produce data appropriate for quantification and statistical analysis. Instrumentation and quantification are simply procedures employed to extend and to reinforce certain kinds of data, interpretations, and test hypotheses across samples. Both must be kept in their place. One must avoid their premature or overly extensive use as a security mechanism (see Devereux, 1967).

Object of Study

Our reading of ethnographic work in the schools suggests to us that some people doing ethnography do not know what they are doing it for except that it is "qualitative" and "descriptive" and that these are suddenly deemed desirable methodological attributes. Our aims in

compiling the collection of work by anthropological ethnographers in *Doing the Ethnography of Schooling* and *Interpretive Ethnography of Education* were to define not only methods and techniques of research, but also the shape of intellectual goals.

A reasonable statement of intellectual purpose for ethnographic research will go something like this: The object of ethnographic research by anthropologists is to discover the cultural knowledge that people hold in their minds, how it is employed in social interaction, and the consequences of its employment. We assume that, although elements and patterns of cultural knowledge are shared in some degree by persons of the same age, sex, social status, etc., within the framework of a given cultural tradition, no two individuals have exactly the same cultural knowledge. When persons interacting in a given social setting are of different age, sex, etc. (i.e., white adult female middle-class teacher and black lower-class male and female children), their cultural knowledge will be disparate in many interactive scenes. This disparateness produces unanticipated consequences in social interaction that stabilize as tacit rules and expectations. These rules and expectations are held differently by different actors in any given setting but, to some extent, are shared (e.g., white teachers ask dumb questions; black children are slow to respond verbally) and ramify into other sectors of behavior (e.g., vandalism, impertinence, negativism).

For each social setting (i.e., classroom) in which various scenes (e.g., reading, "meddling," going to the bathroom) are studied, there is the prior (native) cultural knowledge held by each of the various actors, the action itself, and the emerging, stabilizing rules, expectations, and some understandings that are tacit. Together these constitute a "classroom" or "school" culture.

The complexity of the relationships described earlier define as insufficient the position taken by some anthroethnographers—that the object of study is simply to elicit and report the emic knowledge of the native. It is imperative to discover what the native does not know explicitly (the tacit or implicit culture) and to examine the interaction of persons as actors in social settings. Knowing what natives know is not enough. We start with the emic position, the view of and the knowledge of the native, and work our way out to the etic, interpretive position. It is the interpretive product, however, that usually gets us into trouble with the natives when they read it. An interpretation is a cultural translation influenced, at least, and transformed, at worst, by our theories and models. These theories and models are always extraneous to the cultural knowledge of the native and, right or wrong, will be regarded with suspicion if not outright rejected.

Selective Holism and Contextualization

One often reads that ethnography is "holistic." This ascribed quality derives from the time when one ethnographer alone in a remote village or with a small band would try to record and report on everything from kinship to canoes. Of course, no one ever succeeded in reporting "everything," but there is no denying that traditional ethnographies often include an amazing range of notes and queries on a multitude of things (to borrow from the title of the first known manual for anthropological fieldworkers). Holism is still a desirable ideal if we can reduce its operational meaning to the pursuit of relationships beyond the immediate focus of our research to other relevant contexts. If we study social relationships in a reading group in a fourth-grade classroom, we may also need to study social relationships in the classroom, school, home, and community. We may also find ourselves studying the physical environment of reading, the value contexts of reading in American culture, and the use of information dissemination techniques that can serve as substitutes for reading. We allow ourselves to go wherever our expanding attention takes us as we try to describe and interpret a complex of relationships at the core of our attention.

One form of contextualization that is frequently neglected in ethnographic study is historical time. Most ethnography is synchronic, expressive of the here and now. Studies conducted intermittently over a period of years help correct this. We have worked in the Schoenhausen Grundschule intermittently since 1968, and we find that our understanding of the school expands each time we study it. Time produces new data that put the previously collected information in a different perspective.

Whose Ethnography Is It Anyway?

It should be clear that we are trying to define the criteria for a good *anthropological* ethnography of schooling. In doing so, we do not mean to deny doing ethnography to others. Psychologists, sociologists, historians, and various nondenominational inquirers are doing and will continue to do ethnography. Nevertheless, ethnography originated, and persists, as the field arm of cultural anthropology. Its emerging character definition will be greatly influenced by this origin and continuing status within anthropology. Ethnography is presently suffering from overuse, without specification, as a household word in the social sciences and, particularly, in education. This will eventually

damage the reputation of this kind of research and erode its potential utility to social scientists, teachers, and policymakers. We are attempting to define the criteria of good anthropological ethnography and clarify its limitations as well as its assets. We must know what it can and cannot do if we want ethnography to assume a place as one of the credible methodologies in the study of the educative process.

Criteria for a Good Ethnography

Given the preceding observations, we posit the following as reasonable criteria for a good ethnography of education.

Criterion I

Observations are contextualized, both in the immediate setting in which behavior is observed and in further contexts beyond that setting, as relevant.

Criterion II

Hypotheses emerge *in situ* as the study continues in the setting selected for observation. Judgment on what may be significant to study in-depth is deferred until the orienting phase of the field study has been completed.

Criterion III

Observation is prolonged and repetitive. Chains of events are observed more than once to establish the reliability of observations.

Criterion IV

The native view of reality is attended through inferences from observation and through the various forms of ethnographic inquiry (including interviews and other eliciting procedures); however, in the ethnography itself, places are made from which native voices may be "heard." Cultural translations are reduced to the minimum, commensurate with effective communication.

Criterion V

Sociocultural knowledge held by social participants makes social behavior and communication sensible. Therefore, a major part of the ethnographic task is to elicit that knowledge from informant participants.

Criterion VI

Instruments, codes, schedules, questionnaires, agenda for interviews, and so forth should be generated *in situ*, as a result of observation and ethnographic inquiry.

Criterion VII

A transcultural, comparative perspective is present, although frequently as an unstated assumption. That is, cultural variation over time and space is considered a natural human condition. All cultures are seen as adaptations to the exigencies of human life and exhibit common as well as distinguishing features.

Criterion VIII

Some of the sociocultural knowledge affecting behavior and communication in any particular setting being studied is implicit or tacit, not known to some participants and known only ambiguously to others. Therefore, a significant task of ethnography is to make what is implicit and tacit to informants explicit to readers. In the modern world, this often means explicit to informants as well. Under controlled conditions, this may cause the ethnographer considerable trouble, for the *implicit* is often implicit to the native because it is unacceptable at the explicit level. We tread a thorny path here.

Criterion IX

Because the informant (any person being interviewed) is one who has the emic, native cultural knowledge, the ethnographic interviewer must not predetermine responses by the kinds of questions asked. The management of the interview must be carried out so as to promote the unfolding of emic cultural knowledge in its most heuristic, "natural" form. This will require the interviewer to "flow" with the informant's

style of talk and organization of knowledge without imposing preconceived agendas in the interview interaction.

Criterion X

Any form of technical device that will enable the ethnographer to collect more live data—immediate, natural, detailed behavior—will be used, such as cameras, audio and video tapes, and field-based instruments (with the *caveats* mentioned earlier).

Criterion XI

The presence of the ethnographer should be acknowledged and his or her social, personal, interactional position in the situation described. This may result in a more narrative, personalized style of reporting than has been the case in the past in ethnographic reporting.

PART 3 A Case Study Example

Objectives

In this part of our chapter, our objective is to demonstrate at least some of the criteria for a good ethnography of schooling by reviewing, albeit in truncated form, some of the research methods developed and applied in a research project we began in Germany in 1968 and that has evolved into a comparative study of two schools (and their communities) in Germany and Wisconsin, United States. We will be forced to condense interview material and observations to summaries rather than supply the full text. Interested readers may pursue a further exposition by examining our other publications (Spindler, 1974a; Spindler and Spindler, 1987a,c, 1991; Spindler *et al.*, 1990a).

Our overall objective for this long-range study (1968–present) has been to establish the role of the school in the preparation of children for an urbanizing Germany and a changing world. We have pursued the same general objectives in our study of the Roseville school, which began in 1983. We are particularly interested in the influence of culture on the role of the school and, for this reason, have exploited the differences as well as the similarities exhibited by the two communities. The project has taken many turns over time, and we have pursued a number of themes including gender differences, teacher styles,

and changing perceptions of relationships between activities instrumental to goals variously linked to traditional and modern cultural contexts, curriculum adaptations to changing purposes, resistance to change, the use of film as evocative stimuli, and the effect of position in the situation (e.g., friend, informal leader, formal power position, age, gender, reputation, etc.) on the interpretations of perceived behaviors in classrooms. These goals, and the research methods attendant upon them, have produced a plethora of texts with which we are currently still struggling; so the project is far from finished and is undergoing continual change. We have experimented with a variety of research techniques, all generated by the field experience. The latest development is the comparative, reflective, cross-cultural interview, and we will devote more space to this technique than to other methods or techniques in the brief summary to follow (G. and L. Spindler, 1992). But first, permit us to describe the two research sites.

The Research Sites

Schoenhausen is a village of about 2000 in a semirural but urbanizing area in the *Land, Baden Württemberg*, in southern Germany. Schoenhausen was known, and still is to some extent, as an *ausgesprochener Weinort* (emphatically a wine-making place). The native-born are *Swaebisch* and Protestant. Most of the “newcomers” originally migrated from the former east zone, Sudetenland, or other areas from which Germans were expelled or from which they fled after World War II. These newcomers are somewhat more urbanized as a rule and more often than not Catholic (G. Spindler, 1973). The *Grundschule* (elementary school) is charged with the responsibility for educating all of the children and preparing them for a changing Germany and world. Its 127 children are distributed in four grades staffed by six teachers and a *Rektor* (principal) and various other special services personnel. The Schoenhausen Grundschule has enjoyed a good relationship with the community and with the parents whose children attend it. Partly, at least, this relationship is due to the benign influence of the *Rektor* who has been in that position since the beginning of our study in 1968.

The Roseville Elementary School, located in central Wisconsin, includes kindergarten through eighth grade and is somewhat larger than the Schoenhausen school, but it is comparable in every other respect. The school district is rural but has many commuters who work in nearby towns, some of them as many as 40 or 50 miles distant. The majority of children attending the school come from small dairy farms.

This school also enjoys good relationships with its community and with the parents who eagerly attend school functions whenever possible. The principal is himself a farmer as well as an educator and is well liked. The predominant ethnicity of the Roseville School District is German (G. and L. Spindler, 1987a and 1987b, G. and L. Spindler *et al.* 1990a).

Research Techniques Used

The Instrumental Activities Inventory

One of our first research projects in Schoenhausen was to elicit responses to a technique that we had developed in our studies of culture change—the instrumental activities inventory (I.A.I.). We had used the I.A.I. in two other field studies in Canada with native American populations (G. and L. Spindler, 1965, L. Spindler, 1978). The technique itself consists of line drawings of significant activities that are related to a traditional, as against a modernized, way of life in the specific research site. In the I.A.I. prepared for the research in Germany, “activities” may be living in a traditional versus a modern type of house, working in a factory or working in a vineyard, going out to a restaurant to eat supper or having a quiet meal at home, going to school, living in a *Bauernhaus* (a large dwelling sheltering both humans and animals), or an apartment house, and so forth. We administered the I.A.I. to all of the school children, all of the teachers, and a significant sample of parents in 1968 and 1977. Respondents produce choices of activities and the rationale for these choices. Comparisons of the 1968 and 1977 samples raised questions about the degree to which a wide-ranging modernization program implemented during this period had actually been accepted. The analysis of the texts thus produced was in part statistical—comparing the distribution of choices as related to various antecedent factors such as occupation, educational level, area of origin, degree of urbanization, sex, and age. We found that sex and age were by far the most determinant variables in the differentiation of choices (G. and L. Spindler, 1990). Another analytic procedure was to isolate clusters of supporting values for a traditional versus a modern, urbanized way of life from the rationales for choices provided by our respondents. This was easily done since there tend to be certain elements that are consistently present when one or the other choice of an instrumental activity is made (G. Spindler, 1974b; G. and L. Spindler, 1987b).

One of the surprises that analysis of the 1968 sample as against the

1977 sample revealed (which included all of the children, teachers, and most parents) was that there had been a decided swing back to traditional instrumentalities during this 10-year period. This was contrary to our expectations, since there had been a massive reform directed at education during that period. The curricula, the instructional materials, and even many of the teachers had been changed during this time (G. and L. Spindler, 1987a). Also surprising was the fact that females had turned more traditional than males (G. and L. Spindler, 1990b). In contrast, in the 1968 sample females more frequently than males had opted for instrumental choices that were oriented toward modernization and mechanization.

The I.A.I. responses were the least ambiguous and the most easily analyzed type of text that our research produced. The I.A.I. was very useful as a way of determining some parameters within which other research questions could be pursued, as well as being significant in its own right. It is important that although the I.A.I. is a fairly complex “instrument,” it evolved out of the research experience *in situ*. Although the initial development was with the Blood Indians of Alberta, Canada (G. and L. Spindler, 1965), the specific activities, their representation, and their relationship to the traditional versus the modern poles of the adaptive continuum must always be specifically site-oriented.

Field Notes

Of course we took extensive notes on activity in the classrooms and on interviews with teachers, administrators, children, parents, and others in the community. These notes are indispensable in that they provide in relatively short compass a holistic grasp of not only what is happening and what people have said but one’s reactions to things said and done. Much of the rest of the data that we collected is cast against the notes that we have taken because the notes provide temporal ordering and sequence as well as content. However, notes by themselves would be grossly inadequate. No one can sit in a classroom and take notes on more than a very few of the things that come to one’s attention simultaneously, and questions always arise as to why one’s attention was focused in a given direction and not others. But the problem with much of what one collects using film, video, or audio recording is that these data are so complex and inclusive that one has, in effect, to do the fieldwork over again in order to analyze the materials thus collected. One’s field notes alone will support or fail to support each one of the criteria for a good ethnography. They are the product of

observation whether passive or participant. They are also the product of interviews both casual and formal, even if usually backed up by a tape recorder. Examining the taped interview in the light of field notes increases the efficiency of that examination. We have also found it very useful to include whatever interpretations occur to us as we are observing or interviewing, but we are careful to keep those interpretations separated by brackets or, in some cases, by different-colored inks. These interpretations or "hunches" are frequently the starting point for significant analysis later.

Films

We filmed activity in classrooms, playgrounds, and on excursions away from the school. Our initial purpose was to provide ourselves with a more complete record of those activities. Later, we used the films as evocative stimuli in interviews, following the lead of Collier and Collier (1986). Films are the most difficult kind of "text" to analyze, and we are still working on them. For us, the greatest utility of films as "records" is that we can "return" to the classroom years later. Unlike action in real life, the action recorded on film (or video) can be rerun again and again so that one can look at particulars with close attention.

In preparing this chapter, we reran nearly all of the films that we had taken from Schoenhausen in 1977, 1981, and 1985 and those that we had taken in Roseville in 1983, 1984, and intermittently since. This rerun made all of our other data come to life for us, but it also further informed us of things we already knew or of things we did not know at all.

One phenomenon, for example, that came to our attention through repeated viewings of the films was that despite great variations in the explicit aspects of teacher style in the management of classroom activity, all of the teachers in the Schoenhausen school were in constant charge of their classrooms. They never relinquished responsibility to the students. Although they might take a position in the back or along the side of the room and seemingly be quite relaxed about what was going on, we saw that teachers were giving signals, sometimes as subtle as pursed lips or raised eyebrows, to reinforce or intervene in student behavior—as in, for example, role playing or other group activities that did not require direct supervision by a teacher. At the same time, certain dramatic differences among teacher styles became even more apparent with film viewing. Some teachers spend all of their time in the front of the room in explicit control of the class. Others set up a task of some kind and then *appear* to relinquish control (but, as we

have said, do not). Other teachers are always in the middle of their student groups engaging in a great deal of bodily activity as well as talk as the action proceeds. Some teachers are formal and keep distance, whereas others are seemingly quite relaxed and keep little distance, and so on (see Spindler and Spindler, 1987c).

Films are a part of the "collectors" orientation of the ethnographer, but they soon become essential as sources of data that can be re-examined with new hypotheses and new theoretical orientations. Films are also great correctors of conceptual and interpretive "drift." One tends to pay attention to the same phenomena revealed by one's other data banks time and time again. Over a period of years, a kind of mythology develops that, like all mythologies, is self-sustaining. Films are a great corrective for this tendency. Once one starts filming, a research project seems grossly inadequate without them.

Photographs

We also took hundreds of still photographs with a 35 mm camera and have found them very useful, not only for research but also for teaching (Collier and Collier, 1986). When one shows a film that has not been "cinematized," the flow of the action is usually either too fast and complex for the audience to understand it or so slow that it is boring. An image that stays on the screen in good detail for as long as one wants it to can be talked about and discussed. The pictures are also important as documentation and are easy to examine as one is either doing an analysis of other data or actually writing it up. It is important, of course, to have records of when and where photographs were taken. This applies to both film and still photographs. Again, taking photographs is a part of the collector's orientation of the ethnographer, and once taking pictures becomes habitual and accepted by the "natives," one does it without thinking much about it. In general, we have found that taking photographs and making films in our field situations did not seem overly intrusive. But by the time we started taking them, people knew us pretty well, with the exception of the Roseville school, where we entered the school with the explicit purpose of making films on the first day of the study. The purpose of doing this, however, had been discussed thoroughly with all the school personnel, including the children, before the first day.

Exchange

Another form of text was produced by the teachers and children themselves. After the 1985 revisit to Schoenhausen (we had already

started fieldwork in Roseville), we implemented an exchange between students and teachers in the two locations. Each of the teachers wrote letters to their counterparts explaining their activities, where they lived, and their thoughts about the teaching profession. Children wrote to each other after they had seen films of the classrooms in their counterpart school and made comments about the action. These kinds of solicited documents are useful as an expression of the native point of view. An exchange of this sort must be regarded as a research device—that is, a situation is created by the ethnographers. A complex reflective process is instigated, while the teachers and children are explaining themselves in light of what they think the “others” might see or understand and, at the same time, asking questions that reflect their understanding of the others’ situations.

Other Data

It goes without saying that ethnographers always explore available archival data and pay particular attention to demographic characteristics. The composition of the population was very important as a backdrop for the Schoenhausen school, in view of the fact that about half of the children were from *Einheimischen* (native) families and the other half were from migrant (German) families. This was particularly important in the earlier phases of our research, because we were working with a migrant adaptation and conflict model.

Other kinds of data collected include newspaper clippings, memos from the superintendent’s office, changes in land ownership patterns in the community area, and changes in the residential composition of the community. In all of our research projects, we have paid a great deal of attention to the community context of whatever phenomena we were researching and have found this to be invaluable. Contexts expand in concentric circles from the target phenomenon. The only limits in pursuing context that we have discovered are those imposed by time, energy, and funding.

The Reflective Cross-Cultural Interview

The basic procedure in reflective cross-cultural interviewing is simple: We filmed in Schoenhausen and in Roseville, and we showed the teachers, children, and administrators the films from both places. We conducted interviews about what they saw in their own classrooms and in those of the “other” and how they interpreted what they saw.¹ We cannot replicate any substantial amount of this material in this

paper and refer the reader to Spindler and Spindler (1991), where some text is provided. These interviews are of a different quality than anything that we had collected previously. They are *reflective* in depth and with a subtlety that had heretofore been lacking. The observed differences in the action in the two settings, Schoenhausen and Roseville, caused teachers and children to reflect back on their own behavior at the same time that they were pronouncing perceptions of the behavior of the other. In a sense, they were experiencing what we experienced as ethnographers. After working in the Schoenhausen school in 1968, 1977, and 1981, our visits to the Roseville school, beginning in 1983, allowed us to perceive differently and to re-examine what we were observing in Schoenhausen. This reorientation was fully implemented in our 1985 visit. We had come to accept the Schoenhausen school and community as “normal” and familiar, and it was increasingly difficult to see what it was we were observing. The Roseville experience sharpened our perceptions and caused us to think about them in a different way. To observe anything anywhere, it seems necessary to make it a little “strange” (Spindler and Spindler, 1982).

Diverse Reflections

Group Interviews with Children

We showed the films of the Roseville classrooms to the first and second grades combined and to the third and fourth grades during separate screenings in the Schoenhausen Grundschule. We showed the Schoenhausen films to the same grade groups in the Roseville Elementary School. We tape-recorded the responses by the children, which were in both cases very enthusiastic and “dynamic.” But the Schoenhausen children far outdid the Roseville children in sheer animal enthusiasm. “What did you notice?” asked a Schoenhausen teacher of the children. “Some of them could work at a table with a teacher and some could sit alone.” “They could work with another person if they wanted to.” “They could go to the closet and get things to use if they wanted to and there were some of them listening to tape recorders.” “Some of them are black-haired!” “The children are not fighting with each other!” “There’s nobody tripping anybody else when they move around.” “There’s no fighting.” And so on and so on.

The teacher in charge of the screening in Roseville asked the children the same question, and they responded with similar comments, but of different content. “I’d rather live away from the school.”

"I like riding on the bus." "We have more recesses and they are a lot of fun and we have a gym—did they have a gym?" "I like having desks like ours where there's a special place to keep things." "I wouldn't like to get a table with other kids." "I like being in school a long time each day." "We like staying in school for lunch, it's fun." "It's too noisy in those classrooms." "How could you learn anything if it was so noisy?" "I couldn't work by myself if there was so much noise all the time." "I like being able to choose the things I want to do." "The teacher isn't always telling us what we have to do." "None of them wore hats." "The tops of their desks were messy." "The moving chalkboard is really neat." And so on and so on.

The Roseville children perceived the noise and activity of the Schoenhausen children as greater than that in their own classrooms, and most placed a negative value on it. They appreciated the long school day, the lunch period, and living out in the country, not "packed in" with other families and houses. They also recognized a facility such as the gymnasium and the modern school building as positive attributes. They were not particularly attracted by the apparent freedom to talk out loud or to engage in vigorous physical activity at times, as was frequently the case in the Schoenhausen school, and felt that this could actually be injurious to learning.

The "position" of the children is reflected in their comments, just as the position of the teachers and the administrator is reflected in their comments (in the following sections). These are the real conditions of the children's lives in the schools. These conditions are perceived through cultural screens provided by life in Roseville and life in Schoenhausen. We do not have to pursue this into "German" culture and "American" culture, writ large, for our purposes, although it is tempting to do so.

Schulamtdirektor

We showed the same films to the Schulamtdirektor, his staff, and the Schoenhausen teachers. We can excerpt only a few translated statements from the much longer reaction of the Schulamtdirektor.

I must say that there is between the school in Roseville and that in Schoenhausen a clear difference. A decisive difference. Our teachers, our understanding about school, are situated in a specific system. This system is influenced directly from above, from the school system viewpoint. One always understands that there is a curriculum plan prepared beforehand that is binding and it gives a clear statement of what the instruction means. A very clear statement. Instruction is, as

we understand it, as a rule joined with a certain theme. Instruction is joined with a certain class. Instruction is linked to a certain preparation, a certain goal and a certain realization of these goals. The teacher is always at the front. The children sit before him. The teacher brings everything together under the same label, tries to reach the same goal, so that every hour a little piece of the mosaic (of learning) is laid down. And so goes the work in a given hour and in the next hour, week for week until finally the teacher, with the children, reaches a specific goal. This is characteristic for German instruction and for our understanding of instruction. If the pictures from Roseville are typical, it is very difficult for me to understand how instruction and progress can move together. There are many questions, many.

The Schulamtdirektor was very clear in his statement of what German instruction was and how the situation as he perceived it in Roseville would violate the assumptions behind this statement. His statement projects a clear cultural orientation. His interpretation is shared to some extent by the teachers, but much less vigorously. It is apparent that his position as a chief administrator at the apex of the local district system affects his interpretation of the "other" school situation. It is also apparent that he shares certain perceptions of the situation with the Schoenhausen teachers (following) and even with the children.

Two Teachers

All of the teachers in both the Schoenhausen and the Roseville schools were interviewed in the cross-cultural comparative reflective style that we are demonstrating. That is, each teacher was shown the same films from each school and interviewed both while they were being shown and after they had all been shown. The teachers, in effect, provided their own cultural interpretations, which are ordinarily supplied by the anthropologist ethnographers. This was part of our attempt to move the elicitation of data as far as possible into the cultural knowledge of the informant rather than impose our own on the observations or the elicited interview material. This does not absolve us from responsibility for interpretive analysis, but it provided us with a very different kind of data than any other technique that we have utilized.

We can select only a very few items from all of the interviews for the two teachers—both female, in their late 30s, and teaching in schools of comparable size. The complete interviews for these two teachers can be found in Spindler and Spindler (1992).

Mrs. Schiller Mrs. Schiller, a third-generation American of German descent, has taught in the Roseville elementary school for 5 years and is considered to be one of the best teachers on the faculty. We had observed her classroom many times before this interview was held and before she had seen the films. We were impressed with how freely the children moved about in the classroom to pursue their own goals. She usually worked up front with a small group around the table while the children worked on lessons, listened to tapes, or pasted colored paper together to make turkeys (it was near Thanksgiving). We asked Mrs. Schiller how the children could work so well on their own and what she did to prepare them for that. She responded that the most important thing was that she and the children developed a trusting relationship, so she could rely on them to work without supervision. She was aghast at the idea that she could not carry on in this manner at the Schoenhausen Grundschule. She said "I have a lot of faith in kids. I think kids are neat! If you have high expectations, 98% of the time they will fulfill your expectations."

We asked her what she would feel like if she went out in the hall or someone called her to the phone and she came back in a few minutes and found things in disorder. She responded, "Well, I would tell them right off, I am very disappointed! I have this important phone call and you couldn't sit for five minutes while I answered it. I would let them know it hurt me personally. It's a kind of personal thing. Oh, yes! You start building that up the first day of school. Then they feel 'We can't hurt our teacher.' Oh, yes, that happened today! I had to take a workbook to a parent who was taking her little girl to the dentist so she could work on it if she had to wait and the class has the same assignment. When I came back to my room they had all finished that page that was assigned and they went right on to the next one. I praised them. 'It was really nice that I could count on you, and I could come back to a nice, quiet class.' And of course they all beamed. They just love praise!"

At other points in the interview, she was concerned with the development of individual responsibility and made it clear that with her praise for good behavior and her sorrow and personal hurt at bad behavior, she instilled a sense of guilt in the children. This and the emphasis on individual development were points of particular difference between Mrs. Schiller and Frau Wanzer, the Schoenhausen teacher. We now turn to Frau Wanzer.

Frau Wanzer For the first few minutes, we talked with Frau Wanzer about what we wanted to do in her classroom in the next observation period. We indicated that we would like to present a

systematic view of her classroom on film to the Roseville teachers in our exchange activity. We suggested that she spend some time before the class that we were to film explaining her procedure and her goals for the day and that we, in turn, could explain this to the Roseville teachers. She had seen the Roseville films at the same time as the Schulamtdirektor. She responded "Yeah! It would perhaps have been good if for the films you showed us (of the Roseville classrooms) they had this introduction. *Für mich in Jeden Fall* (for me in any case) it was really difficult to see what was intended. Perhaps that was also the ground for the feeling that many of us had, "*Was lernen sie eigentlich?*" (what are they learning, really?)."

The film shows Mrs. Schiller working at the front of the room with a small group of children and the rest of them, as usual, pursuing their own ends, although many of them were catching up on lessons. Frau Wanzer was very taken by this and asked, "How did she know what the children were doing in the rest of the room? How did the children working alone know what they are supposed to do?" She went on to say that if she were to do this in the Schoenhausen Grundschule, disturbances would occur.

We explained that Mrs. Schiller was very proud that her classroom was productive and that she had explained to us that the children seek out the materials to use for their work or whatever on their own, although they usually ask permission to use them, and that she told us that of course the children "have specific lessons, but when they are finished—they can do what they will."

Frau Wanzer was impressed with this also, and she responded simply, "*Sie können tuen was sie wollen!*" (They can do what they want!). We responded, "they have various opportunities—such as tapes, computers, the library, flash cards, charts and posters, and so forth. Frau Wanzer replied, "*Da ist natürlich ein grossen Unterschied* (There is naturally a great difference) to our school. They (Roseville) have much more time to work, much more. With us one hour equals 45 minutes and one must in this time reach a goal. In America they have so much time and so when they are finished with their lessons they can do what they want, but with us there is no time. The more gifted children finish, but many do not and then they must be helped to reach the goal for the lesson." She goes on to talk about how much more time Roseville teachers have (the Schoenhausen academic school day is 8:30–11:30 A.M.) and about helping all of the children to reach at least the minimum goals defined in the curriculum plan. We then turned the discussion to the curriculum plan itself, and she pointed out that she has in her *Lehrerplan* (curriculum plan) the goals that "I must reach.

Every hour has a part goal. I must find out as the hour progresses if I am to have enough time to reach that goal. It depends on whether the hour goes well or badly—how much time I'll spend." The *Lehrerplan* for Frau Wanzer comes from the *Land, Baden Württemberg*—equivalent to province or state. She and the other teachers as well as the Schulamtdirektor were very surprised that the Roseville teachers actually had considerable control over their own curriculum plan.

The interview turned to what she would do if she did have the opportunity to have some free time that was not scheduled, and she explained that she would have tables arranged, each of them furnished with appropriate books and materials before the children arrived and that they could choose which one of these tables they would like to work at, and, at the end of the period, they would report, each group, to another group. But she was not enthusiastic about the notion of a "*volligfrei*" (totally free) classroom period. "*Dass macht nichts!*" (That makes nothing—that's of no use!) We then went on to talk about what would happen if she left the room and left the children in the room with no supervision: What would she do if she came back to find the children in boisterous or generally unruly activity? She said, "I would talk to the class. I would attempt to reach an understanding. Scolding does no good. Sometimes I have said that I am *traurig* (sad). We asked, "Would you say that you are *beleidigt* (hurt)? Frau Wanzer replied that she would "No, never hurt. Only sad." And so we asked her if she tried to make the children feel guilty, and she said that children of that age did not understand guilt: "How can they understand who is guilty? The one who started the trouble or the one who responded to the trouble and carried it on further?"

Interpretation

The differences run deep. Mrs. Schiller assumes that her goal is to help each individual develop to his or her fullest degree—to the limit of their individual capabilities. Frau Wanzer assumes, as does the Schulamtdirektor, that her purpose is to help each child attain the standards set forth in the *Lehrerplan*—that some will meet them fully and others only minimally. Frau Wanzer takes for granted the existence of a *Lehrerplan* that is furnished to the school by the State school system and that will directly guide her management of her instruction. Mrs. Schiller takes for granted the fact that teachers from the school district develop their own curriculum and that it is only an approximate guide. Frau Wanzer assumes that the children eventually learn to continue working when she leaves the classroom, but that one cannot

expect too much of the younger first- and second-graders. Mrs. Schiller expects her first- and second-graders to be responsible for keeping a quiet, on-task classroom when she is gone for a few minutes. Frau Wanzer would "talk" to her class if there were a disruption, but she would not act "hurt," only "sad," and she would not try to make her children feel "guilty." Mrs. Schiller would develop personal liking and trust with her children, would be "hurt" if they misbehaved, and would leave them all feeling guilty if they did. Furthermore, the two teachers have quite different conceptions of guilt. Mrs. Schiller was trying to encourage the children to internalize feelings of guilt about misbehavior, whereas Frau Wanzer was looking at guilt as a juridical process. For Frau Wanzer, guilt has to be established; there is a perpetrator, a reinforcer, and perhaps a victim; for Mrs. Schiller, there is a feeling state—guilt is internalized. The children feel guilty about their irresponsible behavior and hurting their teacher.

These are the assumptions, as we see them, that lie behind both the behaviors of the two teachers in their classrooms and their perceptions of each other's behaviors *in situ*. These are cultural differences, we believe, that are expressed in and derived from the German and American historical experience, respectively. The case for this extension is substantially beyond the scope of this chapter: therefore, we confine ourselves to the observation that in Schoenhausen and Roseville, respectively, these are assumptions that we regard as cultural, in the sense that they are pervasive within the dialogue of the school and school system and antecedent to the operations of the specific teachers and children we have observed.

The cross-cultural comparative reflective interview procedure furnishes clear evidence that the various audiences viewing the action all saw the same things in the films of classrooms. The children and teachers in Roseville saw the children in the Schoenhausen classrooms as noisy and enthusiastic. The children and teachers in Schoenhausen saw the Roseville classrooms as quiet and orderly. Each acknowledged that their own classrooms were more "noisy" or more "quiet" as well as seeing the other in those terms.

The cross-cultural comparative reflective interviews also gave us clear evidence of the ways in which position affects perceptions. The Schulamtdirektor, the children, and the teachers "saw" the same features of behavior in the "others'" setting but emphasized these features differently, and the children actually "saw" some things the adults did not. The Schulamtdirektor viewed the action from the top down, from the perspective of a system. The children interpreted the classroom action and setting from their perspective—desks, lunch,

clothes, popcorn day, teacher's position in the classroom, blackboards, and so forth, but they still "saw" the quiet and order in the Roseville classroom and the noise level and boisterous activity in the Schoenhausen classrooms. The teachers, represented by Mrs. Schiller and Frau Wanzer, interpreted behavior in their own and the other's classroom with clearly different assumptions about what each expected of children and what their purposes as teachers were. These assumptions, we believe, are cultural.

All of the principals cited above are "natives," and they tell their "story" in their own way. The foreign observers—ourselves, the ethnographers—also "saw" and "interpreted." We "saw" the same features of classroom activity and our interpretations are not wildly different from those of the natives at any point, but they are influenced by our anthropological goals, our persistent search for "culture," in its various expressions. The interested reader may find confirmation of this elsewhere (Spindler and Spindler, 1987a,c).

Conclusion to the Comparative Reflective Cross-Cultural Interview Technique: A "Postmodern" Comment

The reflective cross-cultural interview technique has been discussed only briefly in our own publications (G. S. and L. S.) but was applied in a study by Fujita and Sano (1988) in which a Japanese and an American preschool furnished the cultural "brackets" for the interviews.² For us, the first tentative application of the technique in our 1981 research visit to Schoenhausen came to full bloom only in the 1985 research visit. It was an experiment growing out of the field experience and not out of the literature by fellow academicians. We find, however, that it is in line with modernist conceptions of ethnography characterized by the collaborative interaction between the ethnographer and the natives, the emphasis on discourse and dialogue, and the critical dimension of the reflection in which all parties to the discourse are engaged. This mode of ethnography is less definitive, more processual, and less structural than traditional ethnography and asks the reader to do some work in striving to understand what is going on (Marcus and Fischer, 1980; Clifford and Marcus, 1986). Some features of the modernist approach to ethnography seem to grow naturally out of the kinds of criteria for a good ethnography that we developed in Part 3 of this chapter. None of our innovative research techniques will satisfy the radical postmodernist ethnographers such as Stephen Tyler

(in Clifford and Marcus, 1986), who would most likely see the construction of a kind of experimental setting—such as the showing of films from two cultures, one of which is the native's own, and using films as brackets for interviews—as too manipulative.

Ethnography as a research tool (or procedure or orientation) is changing, and it is incumbent upon ethnographers of schooling and education to keep abreast of this change. However, it is worth pointing out that observing, filming, tape-recording, note-taking, and so forth in a classroom with 30 or so children and a teacher is quite different than trying to write a "realist" ethnography of a whole community, even though the classroom as a closed encounter has much in common with other events within communities such as rituals, councils, or even family situations. We need to explore further the difference between writing an ethnography of a community and writing an ethnography of a bounded encounter. The approach, in any event, must surely be interdisciplinary, and we must pay close attention to the hazards of cultural translation, letting the natives speak for themselves as much as possible.

We have found all of the techniques and methods that we use in the field to be indispensable. Our methods tend to have a dominant theme of creating situations, for some purposes, to which natives respond. This is true, for example, of the instrumental activities inventory and the cross-cultural reflective interview. This is also true of the "expressive autobiographical interview" technique that Louise Spindler (1962, 1978) developed in her studies of women and their adaptations to culture change and that we have applied in studies of teachers. However, we do spend a great deal of time interacting with people in our studied communities informally, becoming friends and participants in daily affairs and special occasions, and we do a great deal of observing where our presence is as passive and as unnoticeable as we can make it.

Whatever techniques of the more manipulative kind (such as those first mentioned) that we do develop and apply emerge, as indicated, from the more casual field experience.

Conclusion

In Part 3, we have tried to practice what we preached in Part 2. As we reflect on the criteria for a good ethnography, we think we have demonstrated, albeit sketchily, criteria I–XI—in short, all of them, but some more than others. We leave to the reader the specific relevances,

as appropriate to modernist ethnography, which asks the reader to do some work. The anthropology of education and its field arm, ethnography, are in a dynamic and rather sensitive situation. Because our data are so complex, we need to become more interdisciplinary, while retaining the considerable virtues of our anthropological disciplinary base. We need to keep close to the natives' point of view, to the natives' meanings, while we provide cultural translations that make sense to our readers, most of whom are not anthropologists. We need to avoid entrapment by the call from applied researchers to provide advice, recommendations, and problem solutions. Our aim is to generate research and interpretations that can be used by professional educators to find their own solutions to serious problems and to contribute to the broad understanding of human life to which anthropology has always contributed. The life of the educational anthro-ethnographer is a hard one, full of frustration, vexation, and marginality, but it is exciting.

Notes

¹ Some parts of this discussion are paralleled in Spindler and Spindler (1992). The complete text of the teacher interviews is given in that paper as well.

² The first presentation of the reflective cross-cultural interview technique and some of its results was made by G. and L. Spindler at the American Anthropological Association meetings in 1986. Fujita and Sano (1988), both Stanford Ph.D.'s in anthropology, subsequently applied it in their field research in Riverfront City, Wisconsin, and in Japan.

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