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Zou, Yali, & Trueba, Enrique. (2002). *Ethnography and schools: Qualitative approaches to the study of education.* Rowman and Littlefield: Lanham, Maryland.

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This book offers a broad and in-depth exploration and examination into the suitability of ethnographic research methods to the study of education and schools. In it, Zou and Trueba bring together a wide range of articles to surface some of the strengths, limitations, tensions, and contradictions in the study and use of ethnography.

In the book's introduction, Zou and Trueba position ethnography in a post-September 11, 2001 context, stating that the events of this day "have forced us to restructure our concept of modern America in a global struggle for a democratic way of life, a tolerant coexistence with interracial, interethnic, and multilingual societies around the world" (p.1). Reinforcing this claim at the opening of the book, the authors suggest that there is a renewed realization that life is precious and that even superpowers are now vulnerable. As a result, they posit that educators and schools are cognizant of the greater significance of racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity. Educational ethnography, they assert, provides tools with the requisite sharpness to conduct examinations into the issues of justice, fairness, equity, and multiculturalism. To support their position, Zou and Trueba draw upon the perspectives of a number of scholars whose ethnographic work extends from the 1950's to the present.

Setting the stage for readers in Chapter 1, George Spindler describes his involvement in a 1950 study of professional competence in schools. Reflecting this chapter upon my own experience as a teacher and administrator while reading it, I felt that Spindler's portrayal of "Washington School" and a particular 5th grade classroom could easily be describing a familiar, post-2000 context. In it, he clearly shows how using ethnographic methods reveals the favouring and reinforcement of idealized projections of teachers and students by others in the educational system which may not produce realistic mirrors. This leads to a "collusion of illusion" which ethnographic methods expose, reaffirming that nothing at face value is ever as it seems. Once again projecting Spindler's

observations on to my own experience, I reflected that for me, learning the lesson he shares here required nearly a decade of professional practice as a school administrator.

In the following chapter Harry Wolcott takes what James Scheurich refers to in Chapter 3 as a dangerous approach to ethnography. Qualifying his assertion, Scheurich states that his earlier perception of Wolcott was that of someone who was personable, helpful, and friendly. As a result, Scheurich viewed Wolcott's approach to ethnography as minimally political and not one that Wolcott appeared to take seriously. Upon reflection, he came to see Wolcott's asides as highly political and representative of white researchers, given that Wolcott never addressed the nature of ethnography and addressed "…the politics of epistemology and methodology, of research and the university" (p.50). Despite Scheurich's concerns, I personally found Wolcott's contribution titled "Ethnography? Or Educational Travel Writing?" an amusing and engaging read in that he presented his experience and views on ethnography in a manner which makes them highly accessible and relevant. This observation is in no way meant to diminish the value of Wolcott's work. Rather, his chapter, beginning with an outline of his doctoral studies (under George Spindler's supervision) will likely resonate with the experiences of many doctoral students in that he recalls his early days as a newly-minted researcher who needed to bolster his list of published works. Wolcott fully admits that he is prone to employing analogies. He utilizes one early in the book in regards to the conduct of ethnographic studies which may serve to put readers new to the method at ease. Offering what I believe to be a useful and appropriate analogy to underscore the flexibility and adaptability of ethnography he states:

> …the making of an ethnography is rather like making a loaf of bread. Both demand a skillful combining of customary, everyday ingredients, none of which is absolutely critical. The end product takes form and shape in the hands of the ethnographer-or baker- familiar with local expectations as to how it should look and who therefore selects, combines, and shapes the ingredients accordingly. (p. 38)

With this bread analogy, Wolcott makes a vitally important point for researchers to make note of: Ethnographers add culture as the defining ingredient that makes an ethnography more than just a collection of methods. As a result, no two ethnographies are exactly alike, nor should they be. Each ethnographic work is therefore distinctive in both process and what is produced.

Scheurich's concern in Chapter 3 with Wolcott's contributions is evident in the form of his asides and digressions which Scheurich believes takes away from Wolcott's portrayals of reality. One such example may be captured in Wolcott's assertion that "Between cultural transmission and differential psychology my parents wondered if my courses at Stanford were preparing me to be an auto mechanic" (p.31). While this brought a grin to my face, Scheurich takes issue with Wolcott's, at times, seemingly irreverent musings, and challenges Wolcott's politics. Ultimately, what we are left with are differences of approach, style, and beliefs on ethnography which are addressed respectfully in this chapter. It is perhaps best left up to the individual reader to glean insights and perspective from both Wolcott's impious approach and Scheurich's critique of it.

The following three chapters bring critical ethnography under the lens of examination. Phil Carspecken's Chapter 4 offering delves into the "paradigm proliferation" discourse of the mid-1980s, reflecting upon the differences and similarities of Patti Lather's and Bob Donmoyer's conceptions of the term. This frames Carspecken's assertion that critical ethnography implicates a distinct paradigm. Whether one agrees with Lather's or Donmoyer's views on paradigm proliferation is ultimately secondary to the following point Carspecken makes: "…it is therefore wise to keep multiple paradigms or discourse communities going. All too often people of colour have been studied by whites, women have been studied by men, gay and lesbian people have been studied by heterosexuals, and non-Western cultures have been studied by Europeans and Americans. Such "studies" have served the purposes of subjugation" (p. 58). In contrast to this

history, critical ethnography is proffered as one approach which can overcome inequities and the biases of social research by discovering, acknowledging, and presenting them openly and clearly.

Kincheloe and McLaren introduce Chapter 5 by briefly outlining the roots of critical research with an overview of the works of Max Horkheimer, Theodore Adorno, and Herbert Marcuse of the Frankfurt School. I found this chapter particularly enlightening from the point of view that it expanded my understanding of the term "critical" through discussion of the terms critical enlightenment, critical emancipation, and a reconceptualized theory of power expanded to include hegemony, ideology, linguistic and discursive power, and the relationship between culture, power, and domination. The lesson for me at this point was the crucial importance given to interpretation: How we perceive is itself an act of interpretation- a vitally important lesson for researchers employing critical ethnographic methods.

Reflections on the mid-60s and the work of early educational ethnographers set the stage for Chapter 6: "Critical Ethnography in the Postcritical Moment" by Douglas Foley. In the 60's, Foley describes how few anthropologists saw themselves as cultural ethnographers or the producers of cultural critiques of larger society, given, at that time, the dominance of positivist and functionalist perspectives. It was in the 70's that critical sociological perspectives emerged. While Foley states that critical ethnography still relies on the methods of traditional ethnography (i.e. prolonged and systematic fieldwork) a shift in focus has occurred from the generation of universalizing portraits to the following: "Put succinctly, critical ethnography is a well-theorized empirical study with the serious political intent to change people's consciousness, if not their daily lives." (p. 140)

This assertion leads into the main focus of the chapter: an examination of the nature and role of reflexivity in ethnographic research. In the post-modern era, Foley describes how feminist and native ethnographers began incorporating their reflections into their work, stating that "The author as tape recorder and grand interpreter is replaced by the author as a living, contradictory, vulnerable, evolving multiple self who speaks in a partial, subjective, culture-bound voice" (p.145). From this point, Foley then proceeds to offer two subsections containing brief overviews of five ethnographies, concluding with a subsection titled "Making critical ethnography more reflexive". I urge researchers employing a narrative style in the writing-up of their research to read this article, with particular attention on this final subsection, given that Foley couples a strong case for doing so with the benefits of employing such an approach.

In Chapter 7, David Smith identifies five challenges specific to the conduct of urban ethnographies. He identifies these as: locating the problem; finding the room to pursue the real issues; giving voice to narratives of resistance and resilience; how to engage in meaningful participant observation, and; holism: finding the relevant whole. Founded upon both his field experiences and classroom experiences teaching ethnography, Smith gives an informative description of each. These are further supported by his crafting of ten "essential characteristics of ethnography into a set of working principles". While these challenges and principles may indeed be pertinent to urban ethnographies, when reading this chapter I felt that they could also pertain to ethnographic work in other settings. As a result, readers should not, as I initially was, be led by the title to believe that Smith's chapter is not applicable to their work if it is located outside of urban contexts.

The following chapter by Perry Gilmore reinforces the observation above, given that he makes reference to his work with David Smith in rural Alaskan contexts. Gilmore draws upon his 15 years of experience working with Indigenous Alaskans to surface methodological challenges to critical ethnography. In this chapter, he describes his and Smith's awareness of the suspicion and anger which Indigenous Alaskans feel towards research and researchers as a result of their historical experiences with them. As a result, in this brief chapter, Gilmore outlines the support he and Smith have given students as they attempt to develop "localized research approaches and methods" in order to produce counter-narratives aimed at more appropriately presenting

Aboriginal knowledge, epistemologies and world views. This is in response to the nature of texts originating from the "Lower 48" which present to Alaskan students research and theory in a decontextualized manner. The chapter concludes with an overview of both the benefits and challenges to the development of culturally safe, participatory research projects by students situated in Alaskan communities. The promise of doing so is perhaps best framed by Gilmour, who states:

> These research collaborations with our students, the "new" ethnographers, are sites for decolonizing and deconstructing past, often destructive research practices and theoretical frameworks. As mentoring professors and as researchers we have much to learn from our students in these spaces in order to use research in the service of equity and justice. (p. 192)

I was absolutely gripped by Yali Zou's vivid, poignant account of her life experiences in China during the 'Cultural Revolution' and the subsequent challenges of being the 'immigrant' upon arrival in the United States. Chapter 9 includes her close personal reflections of life while foundering in the interstitial space between Chinese and American cultures. Despite being ambitious and feeling bright about her future, she confesses to having felt "confused, anxious, even stupid" (p.205) in her American classes, yet when teaching Chinese in class, these sentiments were countered with a greater sense of self and control. The dissonance experienced in this space resurfaces later in the chapter where Zou describes returning home to conduct research with Chinese cultural minorities. Considered an "insider" by her American colleagues, when returning to China, her understanding of American culture (combined with matching dress, speech, and credentials) qualified her as American in the eyes of Chinese research participants. This duality, the effects of the ensuing asymmetrical power relationships, and Zou's dealing with them provide many thoughtful lessons for ethnographers. Anyone returning to their own culture to conduct research would be well-served by reviewing this chapter closely and reflecting upon it.

Zou's chapter leads nicely into the work of Peter Kiang in Chapter 10. In it, Kiang describes the inadequacies of attempting to understand racial minorities and the subsequent design of policies of improve educational attainment. He offers an illustrative example showing how the use of disaggregated quantitative data triggers flawed decisions which negatively impact specific Southeast Asian minorities. This leads into a study of ethnographic participant observation and teacher research, illuminating how their use generates new theory. Once again, Harry Wolcott appears in this chapter. When looking back on the research described in this section of the book, Kiang reflects upon Wolcott's question: "Is it ethnography?" In the final analysis, Kiang states that the question ultimately does not concern him in relation to his research efforts. He offers this view in light of the fact that the elements of intimate experience over a period of time, flexibility, a holistic approach, and comparison are identifiable in his work.

A radical departure occurs in Judy Radigan's "The Class Clown: A School Liminar". The chapter offers a highly descriptive and accurate portrait of the frenetic, at times bizarre world of the high school classroom. It presents an educational ethnography as much as it does engage in an academic discussion about this type of research. Reflecting upon my own experience, the vivid description of (third year teacher) Pete's students once again cast me back to my earlier days as a high school English teacher. As a result of Radigan's illuminating chapter, I believe that I more readily got a sense of ethnography as it may play out "on the ground" in schools.

The book concludes with an examination of critical ethnography employed not solely as a research technique but instead as a tool for community development and change. Guajardo and Guajardo describe an asset-based model ("what does this town have", in contrast to "what this town needs"). They engage in a case study of Llano Grande Centre for Research and Development. In it, these researchers highlight the dominant view of critical ethnography as privileged by academics and highly trained people. In order to disrupt this belief, they provide compelling stories where

participants are not only given a voice but can also develop skills through their engagement in an asset-based approach. This therefore transforms traditional ethnography into a process that is pedagogical and counter hegemonic in nature. Upon completing this section, I believe the authors were true to their opening statement that this chapter "will paint a picture of young people and old people alike practicing the art of ethnography" (p. 282).

This is an important book for a number of reasons. It provides the reader with relevant historical examples of ethnography in schools, and engages early on with the tensions related to them. Most chapters begin with a reflection to earlier times by each author. This provides context and gives an historical sense of the progression of ethnography from its traditional origins to its more modern, critical stance. This is then followed by a more theoretical study of critical ethnography. The chapters comprising Zou and Trueba's "Ethnography and Schools" are recommended as a resource for those either wishing to conduct ethnographic research or study its history, foundations, and theoretical nuances. I recommend this book to scholars and practitioners wishing to learn more about the suitability and applicability of ethnographic research methods to the examination of students and schools, or the professional preparation of educators.

About the Reviewer

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