

## ETHNOGRAPHIC LENSES AND POSSIBILITIES

### International Trends and Developments in the Ethnography of Education

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**Abstract.** *The history of ethnography in social science in Europe dates back to before a 1907 debate in Paris involving leading social scientists, such as Emile Durkheim and René Worms. Worms was one of the first speakers. His account of ethnography was of a descriptive, a-historical method for researching the so-called “primitive societies.” Durkheim, who spoke after Worms, disagreed. Ethnography, he suggested, can provide a basis for both analyzing and synthesizing the understandings of past cultures in relation to the present and, as all human societies have their version of civilization, ethnography can be applicable to any of them, he added. Ethnologists and historians in Germany had made this point in fact over a hundred years earlier and most ethnographers have taken this position since Durkheim’s proposition. Martyn Hammersley is amongst them. In his opening article in the inaugural number of the Journal of Ethnography and Education in 2006, he described how ethnography has been used for over 100 years in social science, as a method to investigate cultural meanings and practices influenced by both modern and postmodern epistemologies and a diverse range of theories and methodologies. This article addresses the development sketched by Hammersley and other writers in the field.\**

**Keywords:** *ethnography, history, anthropology, education research.*

One of the most used and cited books in the ethnography of education, at least in Northern and Western Europe, will probably be Hammersley and Atkinson’s book called *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*. It describes ethnography as a research method that aims at gaining a deeper insight of a certain people’s knowledge and

social culture and that tries to represent the culture of that bounded group in writing (p. 1). For them, “[e]thnography involves participating overtly or covertly in people’s lives, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions – in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research” (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983, p. 1).

Based on books like this and chapters for a forthcoming international *Handbook*

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of *Ethnography of Education* (Beach, Bagley and Marques da Silva, eds. 2018) the present article attempts to map some possibly key elements of the past, present and future of the use of ethnographic methodology in educational research, whether it be in the investigation of education policy and teaching practices, social relations in a classroom or informal learning in non-formal settings (Delamont and Atkinson 2018; Walford 2009).

Different claims have been made about the history of ethnography and it is not my intention to delve deeply into those despite recognizing their importance in establishing certain fundamental methodological precedents. In anthropology, ethnography is said to have originated in Europe and England in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century before spreading to the United States at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Early contributors were EB Tylor and Lewis H Morgan (1818–1881). However, in his thesis on the *Early History of Ethnography and Ethnology in the German Enlightenment: Anthropological Discourse in Europe and Asia, 1710–1808*, Hans Vermeulen (2008) of the University of Leiden wrote that anthropology, in its sociocultural guise, originated in the work of German-speaking scholars connected to the Russian Academy of Sciences at the University of Göttingen and the Imperial Library in Vienna during the eighteenth century. This, of course, predates the Paris debate, but it refers to developments in anthropology and ethnology in the work of German explorers in Siberia (Messerschmidt, Müller, Gmelin, Steller, Fischer) during the first half of the eighteenth century and the German-speaking historians (Schöpferlin,

Thilo, Schlözer, Gatterer, Kollár) during the second half of the eighteenth century (Vermeulen 2008). The work was focused on the early history, geography, linguistics and ethnography of Central and Northern Asia and Europe within an ethnological program (*Völker Beschreibung*), which was later combined with the historical-critical views of Johann David Michaelis and integrated into a grand historiographical vision, including both *Ethnographie* and *Völkerkunde*. According to Vermeulen (2008), Schlözer introduced the terms *Völkerkunde* (ethnology), *Ethnographie* (ethnography), *ethnographisch* (ethnographic) and *Ethnograph* (ethnographer) to a German audience between 1771 and 1772.

Taking more of a sociological and European than an anthropological and American perspective, in the present article, five principal themes are outlined for the sociocultural versions of ethnography in the ethnography of education. They are:

1. Discussions of the value and demands of ethnography of education have been diverse, contentious and voluminous;
2. Differences in perspectives have been a norm, not an exception;
3. For various reasons, some internal to the practice of ethnography and some external, some versions have been recycled as standards for research practices;
4. These standards are changing today and, in some respects, significantly;
7. The changes can offer a major challenge to critical researchers and to ethnography of education as long-term, individual case studies.

Some of these themes date back to a debate on ethnography that was held in Paris in 1907, and, from there onward, to the current issues debated in the *Handbook of Education Ethnography* and the *Ethnography and Education* journal today (see, e.g., Beach, Bagley and Marques da Silva 2018; Hammersley 2006; 2018a; 2018b; Trondman, Willis and Lund 2018; Walford 2009). The Paris debate involved social scientists, such as Emile Durkheim and René Worms. Worms was one of the first speakers. For him, ethnography was a method for describing “primitive societies.” Durkheim followed Worms. In line with the German speaking historians and ethnologists, he said that ethnography was far more useful to sociocultural analysis than this and could provide a sound basis for analyzing cultures, cultural processes and their past development for all societies, not only the so-called primitive ones. This position was, of course, later developed further by Claude Lévi-Strauss into the dialectical tradition of structural anthropology as a school of thought and ethnographic practice based on the idea that immutable, deep structures exist in all cultures, and consequently that all cultural practices have homologous counterparts in other cultures and are essentially comparable.

The two points of view on ethnography already became obvious and they have been extensively debated and discussed by supporters of the approach and its critics alike. These points of view are, firstly, of ethnography as a systematic historical documentation and scientific analysis of a culture or cultural phenomena. They are, secondly, of ethnography as an objectify-

ing method for describing a more primitive folk, but it is the first of the two perspectives that is predominant in the ethnography of education. Indeed, it has been taken up globally if we read the accounts made by, for instance, Delamont and Atkinson (2018), Hammersley (2018a), Egger and Untweiger (2018), Eisenhart (2018), Larsson (2006), Maeder (2018), Millstein and Clemente (2018) and Modiba and Stewart (2018), particularly following the example of the Chicago School of Sociology that set the precedent that possibly came to define modern sociological ethnography and social anthropology as ethnography moved from analyzing coral gardens to studying city streets. However, notwithstanding this, the second understanding still lives on as well.

This point was discussed, for example, in Nordic empirical classroom research in the 1970s and 1980s (e.g., Borgnakke 1996). This research took the first position but it also adopted a critical perspective on education and schooling and was strongly influenced by the French philosophy and sociology of education of the sociologists Pierre Bourdieu and Jean Claude Passeron and the philosophers Nicos Poulantzas and Louis Althusser. It followed the principle of ethnography as a reflexive, analytical methodology that was later developed and made famous by Hammersley and Atkinson in 1983, but it was located around developments in the sociology of education in England and the replication of the Chicago School research experiment grounded in pragmatic sociology and anthropological field methods at the University of Manchester, UK. Symbolic interactionism and grounded theory were presented as

particularly significant, as was the *New Sociology of Education*, a subsequent 1970s development in the UK.

Geoff Troman, the first chief editor of *Ethnography and Education*, expressed a similar outlook in his inaugural editorial in the journal in 2006. However, Troman also described the impetus deriving from the highly successful Ethnography and Education Conference at St. Hilda's College, University of Oxford. This conference (the OEC, as it is called today), was initially linked to the NSE but developed in new directions, all of which involved the researcher entering the everyday world of those being studied and gaining an understanding of their lives and activities through a prolonged involvement in their everyday circumstances and practices. Key elements identified by Troman were as follows.

- A focus on the cultural life of a school or classroom in a particular case in depth;
- Learning from direct involvement and long-term engagement there;
- The use of theoretical generalization and multiple methods;
- Giving high status to the accounts of participants and their perspectives;
- Research across formal and informal education settings;
- A spiral of data collection, hypothesis building and theory testing;
- The use of macro- and micro-sociological perspectives.

In reflecting on these principles, Geoffrey Walford (2018) wrote that ethnographers have to follow people in their everyday lives over a long period of time, in-

terview them, weigh the credibility of their statements against observational data, look for ties to special interests and organizations and write an account of what they have witnessed, usually as some kind of narrative about the routine patterns of everyday human life and behavior (also Jeffrey 2018). By describing the ethnography of education as deriving from anthropology and sociology and with an aim of getting inside everyday educational contexts and practices in order to access insider perspectives on everyday actions and institutional arrangements in a way that can help to correct the oversimplifications of other research approaches and add new knowledge to our collective understanding of education processes, the principles can be traced back to the debate between Worms and Durkheim and the latter's recommendations for an ethnography for social research (Troman et al. 2018). They are present in the American anthropology of education as well (Eisenhart 2018) and have been for some time (Getz and LeCompte 1984). They point again to the importance of:

- Recognizing the value of learning from participants through close-up encounters;
- Using multiple methods of data production in carefully selected case study sites;
- Giving serious consideration of what counts as evidence and what sort of knowledge it is possible to produce.

The history described by Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) and the methodological principles put into practice that their book helped to establish later became

the accepted history and methodological foundation for research in Scandinavian ethnography of education from the turn of the millennium, following the extension of ethnographic research there subsequent to a successful bid for establishing a Nordic research network (Beach 2010; Larsson 2006). This network also involved researchers from the Baltic States, though not from Lithuania. It was unusually successful in obtaining external funding, publication and the completion of PhD research. But there were also problems, not the least in that to a large extent, the earlier legacies (and, to an extent, theories and philosophies) from the critical empirical classroom studies period in the 1970s and 1980s were marginalized. The British tradition took over.

Particularly in Sweden, there was a mainstream interactionist and social constructivist tendency along with a rather localized critical one (Beach 2010; Larsson 2006). In Scandinavia more broadly, there was an interest also in post-structural feminist theory, not the least in Finland (Gordon and Lahelma 1996; Gordon, Holland, Lahelma 2000a; 2000b; 2000c; Gordon, Lahelma, Hynninen, Metso, Palmu and Tolonen 1999), and references were also made to critical journalism. In any case, as these authors pointed out, whilst the investigative journalist usually seeks an unusual and unique story, the ethnographer investigates and writes about routine daily lives and everyday patterns of human life and behavior from a scientific perspective, and unlike most forms of journalism, ethnography isn't passively descriptive (Walford 2018). It is, on the contrary, actively theoretically driven (Trondman, Willis and Lund 2018).

## **From Descriptive and Analytical to Analytical and Critical Research**

Described already above is how principles from anthropology and sociological analysis and interests have played significant parts in what has become accepted as good practice for the development of the ethnography of education. Developments in the UK, US and Scandinavian countries are referred to, but influences from these countries' traditions are also identified elsewhere (see, e.g., Egger and Untweiger 2018; Maeder 2018; Millstein and Clemente 2018; Modiba and Stewart 2018). What is described is that doing ethnography is a bit like navigating a ship out to open sea – at the same time as you are also finishing designing and building it (Beach 2010). It involves describing and analyzing different systematic and organizational perspectives and identifying shifts between the points of view of teachers and students from a particular theoretical position, in a project that is being developed at the same time as you are documenting, analyzing and representing these shifts and making comparisons between events in formal and non-formal learning as well as in scholastic, childhood, early childhood and youth culture (Eisenhart 2018). However, at the same time, the value of American anthropology of education and its categories and British sociological ethnography for guiding and analytically understanding and describing the ethnography of education outside the US and the UK can be brought into question.

Millstein and Clemente (2018), for instance, have discussed how the colonization and colonial politics operating in Latin America created particular educa-

tional power relations and consequences that required a more critical and transformationalist approach from alternative perspectives in educational ethnography, which were inspired by critical pedagogy in the popular education proposals of Paulo Freire and participative approaches to research for social transformation by Orlando Fals Borda. They brought to our attention the critical formation of relationships of marginality in school, culture and society, and how tensions between schools and their communities, as well as between teachers and students, originated and developed. They also signified the importance of supporting campaigns for social transformation and, in this way, they drew ethnography to a crossroads of critical and/or merely analytical approaches.

### **The Policy and Postmodern Turns**

An awareness of the need for change in the ethnography of education was, of course, not only developing in the post-colonial context, and neither the British sociological ethnography of education nor the Northern American anthropology of education were static disciplines. As Gary Anderson pointed out (1989), the political and intellectual ferment in academia in the 1960s challenged grand theories and methodological orthodoxy in anthropology, as analyses shifted from taxonomic to thick descriptions of symbols and their meaning, and, in sociology, Parsonian notions of function and system equilibrium had become regarded as too ahistorical and apolitical to do justice to the richness and diversity of social life. Geertz's (1983) concept of blurred genres may characterize the fluid borrowing that

was taking place across these disciplines, he added. The changes and challenges concerned also, though, at least in education, a turn to another study object. This was the analysis of educational policy. It began in the UK and then moved successively to other countries and regions, according to Hammersley (2018a), who described its roots as lying in the 1980s and 1990s, which were amongst the most reform intensive decades in the history of education in the UK. Major concerns were low exam achievements, falling standards and a number of market mechanisms for linking school funding with student enrollment and parental choice were introduced to combat them. Other problems and challenges arose however, like further falling standards and escalating class differences in education consumption, and the potential of ethnography to investigate how policies are shaped in practice became important, as did documenting the impact of reforms on inequalities.

Stephan Ball's earlier cited work, *Beachside* (Ball 1981), is sometimes seen as a forerunner to the policy turn and, in a sense, an original archetype, but the attempt to provide a more nuanced and realistic ground-level view of education and other welfare policies through ethnographic research wasn't limited to works like those of Ball or to the UK alone (Dubois 2009). Ethnographic fieldwork was felt to be particularly suited to uncovering the structural features of the new wave of public policies sweeping through advanced societies in the wake of the demise of the Fordist-Keynesian contract that took place subsequent to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the fall of the Berlin Wall and

was relevant for the “de-objectivation” of the collective categories created during the process of welfare state development, according to Dubois (2009). Which and what kind of new pressures the policies gave rise to and what range of strategies were employed to cope with them was considered, too. However, there was also one further interesting turn in these developments. Prior to this moment, and up to and including the work of Ball on *Beachside*, critical analyses were adopted that made use of Marxism and feminism to explain why the democratic welfare state education projects were seen to fail. This was during the era of the capital and labor agreements, Keynesian economic policies and the attempt to construct social democratic welfare state projects in education and other social services, and the question that was focused on above all was why were these investments failing (Bernstein 2003). Following the collapse of socialist alternatives to the capitalist organization of production and the removal of the threat of socialism, capital has withdrawn from its collective agreements with organized labor and a new epoch has emerged. Globalization is the name given to this epoch. Capitalism is now once again free from external regulation, taxation redistribution has been reduced, the emphasis of the state’s role in securing the conditions for providing good and equal access to a comprehensive education for all has diminished and critical researchers have turned their interests toward what was used in terms of discourse(s) in order to stabilize a new infusion into education of the concept of market politics and individual competition.

Globalization is a new phase of capitalist development. It refers to the movement of the sphere of the direct influence of capitalist interests beyond the domains of production, distribution and exchange to now involve also wider social, cultural and political changes and changes to public institutions (Beck 2000; Harvey 2006). The global networking of computers and the subsequent informatization of manufacturing, production and economic services are all crucial factors that ethnographers of education have shown interest in, along with the perceived end of the threat of alternative socialistic forms for the organization of production, which has led to the forces of capital now holding exclusive sway in all parts of the world (Harvey 2006). Interests in the ethnography of education policy are now turned toward networks and the people and events that comprise them (Juneman and Ball 2018; Kenway, Epstein, Fahey, Koh, McCarthy and Ritzvi 2018).

Postmodernism has also begun to exert influence at this time and there is now a rejection of the idea that people act on the basis of a single coherent identity and accounts of the world and the people and events in it are understood as artefactual; ethnographic anthropocentrism has been deconstructed and critiqued (Dennis 2018; Rosiek 2018). Literature and art are now described as forming equally appropriate alternative models for social research as are the reports of scientific inquiry (Denzin 2018; Meinzakowski 2018) and ethnographers have begun to turn an eye to their own works and circumstances. They have become increasingly self-critical of traditional approaches to analyzing culture and education practices (Eisenhart 2018)

and a space has opened for a more reflexive approach and the use of visual (and) auto-ethnographic accounts and ethnodrama (Denzin 2018; Holm 2018; Mienzakowski 2018; Sparkes 2018). There has been a “sensorial turn” in ethnography and anthropology (Denzin 2018; Holm 2018) and challenges from the direction of critical race theory and the study of racial and racialized constructions, discourses and production in schools. This has come from researchers who were integrating race theories and meanings into their historical, conceptual and methodological lenses and interrogating what was taking place in schools and other educational settings (Hopson and Dixon 2011). But developments were present that also cut to the very kernel of anthropological theorizing, the concept of culture itself (Eisenhart 2018).

Culture has begun to be conceptualized in new ways as dynamic and less geographically bounded. Neither cultures nor their logic are now considered as static, impermeable, geographically anchored or necessarily coherent and consistent (Eisenhart 2018; Rosiek 2018). They are instead seen to connect far-flung people through mass media, computers and global economic and other networks, and anthropologists are considered as having to be able to follow them as they develop and change and begin to accommodate multiple meanings and differences. As Eisenhart (2018) points out, anthropologists have moved away from studying culture as defined and mediated by the daily life of and activities in a bounded distinct group, such as a school classroom, toward studying culture as comprising circulating and often contentious symbols, logics and represen-

tations that move, are taken up, contested and sometimes repurposed in on-going social practices and across social, cultural and geographic boundaries (Kenway et al. 2018) in the new global context of mobile modernity (Forsey 2018).

Dating back perhaps to the linguistic or literary turn in the mid-1980s and the subsequent crisis of representation in anthropology, the effects of discursive forces in constituting people’s identities and experiences are now highlighted, as is the contingency of social processes, and the possibilities for education ethnography are questioned when it comes to documenting and representing not only what happens in schools and classrooms but also in describing what schools and classrooms actually are (Eisenhart 2018). Being able to authentically represent the perspectives of participants is nowadays more often questioned than accepted, as is the human right to prioritize humanity above other species (Dennis 2018; Rosiek 2018). Theoretical debates have shifted from the level of substantive and theoretical issues of discipline and methodology, first to problems of epistemology and questions of interpretation, then to discourse and forms of representation and then to the possibilities of representation at all (Eisenhart 2018). Discussions of ethnography of education are diverse, contentious and voluminous. Differences have been the norm, not the exception, and yet some of them have prevailed and have been recycled as standards for research practices. These “standards” are changing significantly today and they offer a significant challenge to the ethnography of education as long-term single case studies and critical research.

## To and from Standards and Back Again to What?

In Geoff Troman's (2006) introductory editorial to the *Ethnography and Education* journal in 2006 and Geoffrey Walford's and Martyn Hammersley's recent writing (Hammersley 2018a; 2018b; Walford 2009; 2018), we can read about the good practices in the ethnography of education as follows:

- Ethnography is analytical. It focuses on the study of cultural formation and maintenance in particular places and uses multiple methods for the generation of diverse forms of data. It is best characterized by the direct involvement and long-term engagement of the researcher(s) as the main research instrument. It places high regard in driving research ideas forward based largely on the situated learning of the ethnographer and the accounts, perspectives and understandings of participants through a spiral of data collection, hypothesis building and theory testing that focuses on a particular case in-depth as a basis for theoretical generalization;
- Ethnography is research that interrogates and develops theories of educational structures, practices, policy and experience and that seeks to explicate and challenge the effects of educational policies and their implementation in/on practice. It also provides accounts of how the mundane, everyday practices of those engaged in educational processes are implicated in broader social relations and cultural production, and it highlights the agency of educational subjects in these processes.

As written by Willis and Trondman in 2000 (p. 9):

Ethnographic practice and writing have to be aware of their own location and relatedness to the world [...] Equally, though, we do not want to lose the strengths and continuities, the very biases of the ethnographic tradition, in the layered and evocative, socially and historically conditioned, presentation of located aspects of the human condition from the inside, understanding that discourses/ideologies cannot be treated as if their constructed contents can be equated with lived outcomes. Furthermore, we must use these strengths for the, perhaps now more critical than ever, contribution they can make both to the critique of over-functional, over-structuralist, and over-theorized views and to the positive development of reflexive forms of social theorizing, allowing a voice to those who live their conditions of existence.

Attaining these aims is regarded as setting certain demands on the research. On the homepages of the European Educational Research Association network descriptors for net 19, Ethnography, these demands are described as and motivated in terms of the following:

- Research needs to take place over time in order to allow a fuller range of empirical situations to be observed and analyzed and to allow for the emergence of contradictory behavior and perspectives;
- Time in the field, alongside time for interpretation, is needed to enable continuous reflections concerning the complexity of human contexts and to consider relationships between cultural, political and social levels of the research site and individual, group and community agency there;

- Research will include different theoretical perspectives in order to sensitize analyses and provide opportunities to use empirical ethnographic research for the interrogation of macro- and middle-range theories.

Standing against these principles, however, are the multiple illustrations and examples of how the ethnography of education has been challenged, questioned and changed over the last century. In some senses, the changes result from internal scientific debates, discoveries, changes of heart and issues among ethnographers within the sociology and anthropology of education. In other cases, the ethnography of education has changed as Hammersley (2018b) also suggests:

- It has changed as its object has changed;
- It has changed from how it has been intertwined and dependent not only on the conditions in society but also its changed institutional conditions of production.

However, also:

- There has never been one form of ethnography historically, but several;
- With/in new patterns of globalization, including mass diaspora and dispossession, new challenges and developments have appeared.

The point here is that ethnography (in general and in education research) has always been internally conflated, internally and externally contested and transient, and although there has been a notion of a dominant form of ethnography in the sociology and anthropology of education as the face-to-face study of everyday interactions in schools, classrooms and informal learning (Delamont and Atkinson 2018),

these perspectives have always been open to innovatory grafts and they have been continually transcended and challenged in practice (Hammersley 2018b). Criticisms have always been present somewhere, and they have always been valuable and vital for how educational research can benefit from the application of an ethnographic sensibility of some kind (Forsey 2018). The aim to get inside everyday educational contexts and close to everyday practices and the people involved in them in order to access their perspectives and portray their world on these terms as the one golden way of ethnography of education has been challenged, but ethnography has changed because it has had to due to internal politics and because of the changing conditions and values both outside and inside academia. These include the changing characteristics in the construction and use of academic labor in the academic field and higher education institutions, new patterns of globalization, postmodernism, the spatial turn in social theorizing, the critique of anthropocentrism and the continuing global dispossessions by capital. These things have all led to new challenges and developments and the deepening of some existing ones (Dennis 2018).

Changes in academia are very significant, if often ignored features according to Ball (2012), Beach (2013), Beach, Bagley and Marques da Silva (2018) and Hammersley (2018b). What is characteristic of them is a deep core-marketization of education services. Not only peripheral and support services, but now core activities as well are exposed to the regulations of tender and discourses of increased productivity and effectiveness, and this creation of increas-

ingly commodified conditions of production has altered the nature of how universities are defined and run and how academics have to justify their activities and practices and form relations with students, research consumers and other social actors. Globalization is reaching into academia and leading to changes in how scholars view or use ethnography. External value assessments and competitive funding allocations now dominate over internal faculty control of research and the internal distribution of fiscal resources and, as Hammersley (2018b) also writes, academics in the social sciences (and not just ethnographers of education), have lost control over determining what is researched, who is recruited to train for research and how they are trained and schooled. The places from which ethnographers define, describe, develop and do their research are no longer the same ivory towers that were described in the past.

The growth and broader availability of new digital technologies is a development that adds further weight to these changes (Walford 2018). These technologies are able to produce, store and make very large amounts of data available for semi-automated analysis quite rapidly, and a new type of internet-based computing, called *the cloud*, has been developed by researchers and associates working with Microsoft, that gives access to a shared pool of configurable networks, servers, storage applications and services – all at a price, of course, with effects on the broader understandings of research possibilities, purposes, styles and values, which all have repercussions on how people both inside and outside the practice of ethnography view those practices and assess their value (Beach et al. 2018;

Hammersley 2018b). These modern technologies have grown in tandem with demands for increased productivity. But they can also be understood and are discoursed in different ways, such as, for instance, useful tools for improving ethnographic work and accessing “new (virtual) spaces” of interaction (Marques da Silvan and Parker-Webster 2018) or for challenging and displacing archaic forms of ethnographic practice (Kenway et al. 2018). They can seem very enticing in these respects. But it has to be recognized that, as Walford (2009) has pointed out, like the audio recorders from the 1970s, they are not only making ethnographic practices more effective – they are also actually changing research ideas and activities. Moreover, they also generate significant profits for producers and distributors alike and are contributing extensively to private profit and the realization of material capitalist interests in and from academic life, which may be far more important for the current developments than is sometimes assumed.

### **Critical Awareness and Rethinking Ethnography as Explanatory Criticism**

New histories are being made in ethnography and by ethnographers and ethnographies (Eisenhart 2018). However, at the same time, let us not forget that some issues, such as the constantly increasing global, social economic capitalism and educational inequality, have not only prevailed but have also significantly deepened now that capitalism’s rapacious quest for increased profitability has been freed from the shackles of regulation. Since the less complete, global, material economic and

even more or less the ideological removal of Communist, alternative forms for the organization of production, capitalist production is once again free to ride roughly shod across the planet, exploiting whatever value forms that can be discovered or created in the quest for more and more private profit at any cost (Beck 2002; Denzin 2018; Harvey 2006). As Geoff Bright and John Smyth pointed out in an introductory guest editorial to a special issue of the journal of *Ethnography and Education* in 2016 (Bright and Smyth 2016), it is not primarily IT and social media that proliferate in the lives of most 21<sup>st</sup> century subjects; it is a rampant capitalism and the global mass insecurities it creates that does, and the spaces of education investigated by ethnographers can definitely no longer be analytically separated from this precarious jeopardization and the often racialized hostility and symbolic as well as physical violence it brings with it for many human subjects. The ethnography of education can be a very useful tool for empirically exploring, describing, historically situating and critically analyzing this situation for a better future, they added.

These sentiments are echoed by Weis and Fine (2018), Dennis (2018), Denzin (2018) and Meinzakowski (2018), who, like Bright and Smyth, make a call for an ethnography of education that is authentic to this global condition and yet also gives space to resistant human agency that can be traced back to the neo-Marxist developments in ethnography. It is found that they subscribe to critical and performance ethnography (Denzin 2018; Meinzakowski 2018), critical resistance research in non-

formal learning contexts (Beach and Sernhede 2011; 2012; Delamont and Atkinson 2018; Dennis 2018), and in the kinds of critical postcolonial ethnography in Latin America (Millstein and Clemente 2018) and on the African continent (Dennis 2018; Modiba and Stewart 2018) that are all at the same time very different to the best practice – the so-called objective and analytical evidence-based research that is usually given legitimacy (and funding) under the present neoliberal financing regimes (Hammersly 2018b). This turns the problem into a structuralist one in the strong sense.

## Conclusions

Based on the article's content, the development of the ethnography of education has thus concerned obvious things, such as discipline, structural relations of place at both micro-, meso- and macrolevels and the individual researchers' commitments to and belief in ethnography and its values as a research method (Dennis 2018; Jeffrey 2018). There have also been influences from the substantive interests of the researcher (Hammersly and Atkinson 1983; Walford 2018), and the availability and use of technology (Marques da Silva and Parker-Webster 2018). But the influences on ethnographic form and content in educational research also include things like political ideology and commitment to the critique of the social relations of capitalist economic and cultural production and its effects (Bright and Smyth 2016), and there is also a postmodern challenge (Hammersley 2018a; 2018b) that brings a further set of injunctions into play (Rosiek 2018). Ethnography is often spoken of there as

made by viewing the world through particular lenses and as theoretically biased, personally slanted, subjective and highly relativistic fiction that can just as well be evaluated on the basis of literary characteristics as in terms of how ethnographers put scientific principles into practice in order to contribute to an evolving cultural and historical knowledge (Beach et al. 2018).

However, we don't have to surrender our critical commitments to postmodernism's most paralyzing tautologies even when experimenting with it (Junemann et al. 2018; Rosiek 2018). There may have been a loss of confidence in progress in the postmodern period, along with a fragmentation within mass political parties and social movements, but in response to the postmodern condition in science and philosophy, we can still acknowledge that the researcher's worldview and politics will always play a role in forming research questions and that approaching the object of analysis within ethnography from a neutral methodological stance is philosophically problematic (Eisenhart 2018) and, for some of us, also possibly broadly emotionally impossible as well (Beach et al. 2018). But tolerance is more likely than ideological contest at this time, particularly now that the idea of seizing state power has been tempered by the perception that the state has little power left to seize anyway. The reflexivity that comes from discussing and accounting for the choices we make and what their effects are is still an ideal to strive for, as it was also for Emile Durkheim in Paris in 1907 (Trondman et al. 2018). In accepting differences, ethnography can be a challenge for some fundamentalists within the field

of practice, but this need not be so nor should the basis of their existence as different be expressed in terms of whether they are interpretive and/or analytical and/or critical or not, or whether we do or don't use theories in shaping and analyzing the data we generate. As the crisis of representations points out, we have to be interpretive and analytical, as neutral observation and reporting is impossible and theory is important in interpretation.

These are the important points that all ethnographers of education seem able to agree on and, through them, the ethnography of education can still have a relevant role to play in the analysis of emergent education realities for the production of collective knowledge, as already suggested over a century ago by Emile Durkheim. Smyth and Bright have added a further dimension to this. It was a question that was explicit also in the work of Freire and Fals Borda and within the critical ethnography in the Nordic countries prior to the developments there being overtaken first by interactionist and then by post-structuralist perspectives. It is a question of the interests we want our research to operate in: those of the broad pursuit of a good life for all or of private accumulations by the few off the backs (and labor) of others. A further related question is what seems to be obstructing the development of ethnography for the pursuit of a good life and what can we do about this, given that we should also always try to act in the broadest possible planetary interest and, in particular, for those that experience the most precarious life conditions there, as suggested already by Durkheim over 100 years ago.

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## ETNOGRAFINIŲ TYRIMŲ EDUKOLOGIOJE TARPTAUTINĖS TENDENCIJOS IR RAIDA

**Dennis Beach**

S a n t r a u k a

Kaip teigiama Jeffrey, Walford, Delamont ir Atkinson *Wiley tarptautinių edukologijos etnografinių tyrimų vadove* (Beach, Bagley and Marques da Silva, 2018) keliuose publikuotuose skyriuose, Hammersley ir Atkinson *Etnografija: principai praktikoje* – viena iš dažniausiai cituojamų edukologijos etnografinių tyrimų publikacijų Šiaurės Europoje, ypač Jungtinėje Karalystėje. Pirmą kartą 1983 metais išleistoje knygoje etnografija aprašoma kaip tyrimo metodas, kuriuo siekiama giliau suprasti lokalias žinias ir kultūrą bei reprezentuoti šią kultūrą ją aprašant. Autoriai pažymi, kad „etnografija apima tiesioginį ir netiesioginį dalyvavimą žmonių gyvenime – stebint, kas vyksta, klausantis, kas sakoma, pateikiant esminius klausimus, renkant visus įmanomus duomenis, kurie padės atskleisti nagrinėjamą problemą – pagrindinį tyrimo objektą“ (1983, p. 1.). Panašių idėjų pateikia ir kiti autoriai. Pasak Trondman, Willis ir Lund (2018), šių idėjų ištakos – 1907 metais Paryžiuje pra-

dėta diskusija apie etnografinius tyrimus, jų galimą vaidmenį ir vertę socialiniam teoretizavimui. Į šią diskusiją įsitraukė tokie socialinių mokslų atstovai, kaip antai Emile Durkheim ir René Worms. Pastarasis pradėjo diskusiją. Pasak jo, etnografija – metodas pavaizduoti „primityvias visuomenes“. Durkheim teigė, kad etnografinis tyrimas yra prasmingesnis ir gali suteikti patikimą pagrindą analizuojant kultūras, kultūros procesus ir jų istorinę raidą visose visuomenėse, ne tik vadinamosiose primityviose. Vėliau šiuo principu vadovavosi Čikagos sociologijos mokykla (angl. *Chicago School of Sociology*). Pastaraisiais dešimtmečiais Jungtinėse Amerikos Valstijose ir Jungtinėje Karalystėje šiuo principu remiantis nusakomi edukologijos etnografinių tyrimų parametrai. Edukologijos etnografiniai tyrimai pasklido ir kitose šalyse. Šiame straipsnyje apžvelgiama edukologijos etnografinio tyrimo istorinė raida ir šiuolaikiniai iššūkiai, ypač Europoje.

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